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Place of Interview: Kleberg, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Approved: James R. Kanaman
(Signature)

Date: 9-19-77

Oral History Collection

James Kanaman

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald Marcello

Place of Interview: Kleberg, Texas Date: September 19, 1977

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing James Kanaman for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on September 19, 1977, in Kelberg, Texas. I am interviewing Mr. Kanaman in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was aboard the destroyer-minelayer USS Tracy during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Mr. Kanaman, to begin this interview, 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. Kanaman: Well, I was born in McKinney, Texas, in 1919. And I grew up and went to school . . . graduated from Frisco High School in 1938. When I graduated from high school, I had aspirations of going to Texas A & M College, but money was awful short at that time when I graduated from high school, so in turn I went to the Navy.

Marcello: Are you saying that the Depression may have influenced you in some way to enter the service at that time?

Kanaman: Oh, yes, definately so, because jobs were short, money for education--higher education--was just limited. In fact, there just was none.

Marcello: You know, this is a standard reason that a great many people of your particular generation give for having entered the service at that time. The pay wasn't great in the service, but there was . . .

Kanaman: There was some pay (chuckle).

Marcello: There was some pay. The food was pretty good. All around, I guess, the service offered a certain amount of security.

Kanaman: Well, it offered an opportunity where in private industry, at that time, there was just no opportunity because people were fighting for jobs. I had worked for a little while at a service station on Ross and Haskell there in Dallas before I went into the Navy, in fact, just prior before going into the Navy. I had college graduates come around almost fighting for my job. So, I mean, that's just a little of how things looked at that time. Of course, when I went in the Navy, I drawed twenty-one dollars a month, and that was almost as much as you could make out here working.

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

Kanaman: Well, I knew a fellow up at Frisco--Johnston--that had retired out of the Navy. I don't know, I talked to him a lot about it. And there was another fellow named Grissom. . . I think he got killed in World War II. He was in the submarines. He got killed. I talked to him, and . . . I don't know, I just got interested in it. And another boy named Robinson, Bart Robinson. . . I talked to him and they got me interested in the Navy. In other words, all sailors are recruiting most of the time (chuckle).

Marcello: Now at the time that you entered the Navy, how closely were you keeping abreast of current events, world affairs, and things of that sort?

Kanaman: Well, I always read the newspaper and kept up on current events. In fact, when I finished school I could foresee war. I mean, it was almost inevitable at that time. Hitler was taking over Europe, and Mussolini had moved into Africa, and it was just inevitable that we would get into it. I mean, it was foreseeable. You just couldn't ignore it.

Marcello: Am I safe in assuming, however, that when you thought about the possibility of this country getting into the war that your eyes were turned toward Europe rather than Asia?

Kanaman: Yes, more so, until I knew more about Asia. In later years I got to know more about . . . well, before the war broke out and Pearl Harbor was attacked, we were apprehensive of war in Asia with Japan.

Marcello: Where did you take your boot camp?

Kanaman: In Norfolk, Virginia.

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

Kanaman: Well, there was one thing that did happen there. We were . . . the fleet was coming in; the West Coast fleet had come around to the East Coast. And they were picking up men at Norfolk, Virginia. We were supposed to go into the World's Fair up in New York. But I guess the sum total of the thing was that I think Hitler told the United States more or less to get their fleet back on the West Coast where it belonged. So they cancelled, of course, you know, going to New York and went back through the Canal. I went aboard the USS New Mexico at that time, and we went back through the Canal and went up to San Pedro.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you took your boot camp at Norfolk, Virginia. Was that kind of unusual for a Texas boy to have taken boot camp there?

Kanaman: Yes, it was. It was unusual. They sent two groups. . . two groups. What it was was in anticipation . . . in other words, I went into boot camp in January of 1939, and at that time all others had gone to San Diego for boot training except for two groups. They sent two groups to Norfolk, and that's what it was, was in anticipation of the fleet coming around

and to furnish men for the fleet when it came around. That's what it was for.

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

Kanaman: Twelve weeks.

Marcello: Which meant that they had not cut back on boot camp yet. I know later on, as war gets closer and closer, they cut back the number of weeks of training.

Kanaman: They cut it back . . . they cut it back on the next group behind me. In other words, they cut them down to ten weeks so that they could catch the fleet.

Marcello: Yes.

Kanaman: In other words, I got twelve weeks of boot camp, and the next group got ten weeks.

Marcello: And then, I think, later on they even cut it back farther than that.

Kanaman: Oh, about six . . . yes, about five or six weeks. Of course, that's during the war--the war years.

Marcello: Okay, you mentioned that you picked up the battleship USS New Mexico there at Norfolk. Was that a voluntary assignment, or were you simply sent there?

Kanaman: Well, you could kind of . . . a "boot" in the Navy, of course, couldn't politick very much, but you could get your assignments or have somebody to get them juggled for you. In other words, they had a personnel section there that signed so

many men. Now if you knew ahead of time what you wanted, why, you could request it, but . . . I don't know . . . then the New Mexico was one of the most modern ships in the fleet. Although it was built in World War I, it was still one of the most modern battleships we had, and it was considered fair duty.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea about going aboard a battleship?

Kanaman: Well, you know, a country boy looking at a big hunk of metal like that, it's kind of awesome. You know, it had big guns on it. It had four turrets with 14-inch guns, then a bunch of 5-inch guns. You just look at all those guns . . . when you're not used to looking at anything bigger than a shotgun (chuckle), it is kind of awesome.

Marcello: What sort of a reception did you get when you went aboard the New Mexico? I'm referring now to the type of greetings that you got from the "old salts" and so on that were aboard?

Kanaman: Oh, they were very friendly. I know there was a big old boatswain's mate. I was about a six-foot kid--pretty husky, strong. He was looking for a primerman for a 14-inch gun, so he picked me for the First Division. Of course, I didn't stay in the First Division, but he wanted a pretty hefty man. You had to handle, you know, big powder bags and shells

and fire a 14-inch gun. Of course, I stayed there long enough and fired them a few times. But I wasn't interested in that type of work particularly, so I got into the engineering force, which I stayed in then the rest of my time in the Navy.

Marcello: Why did you decide to get into the engineering section?

Kanaman: Well, I just liked that type of work better. You know, big engines, those big 50,000 horsepower engines, that's a lot bigger than a car engine, you know. You wanted to know what makes them go, and if I'd have went on to college as I had wanted to go at that time, why, I would have probably taken some kind of an engineering course.

Marcello: How long did you remain aboard the New Mexico altogether?

Kanaman: I went aboard the New Mexico and stayed a little over a year. I knew we went into yards at Bremerton and came out of the yards . . . and it was around June or July when we went . . . left the yards in Bremerton, Washington, and went out to Pearl Harbor. As soon as we got out there, there was a . . . the B Division that I was in transferred . . . I believe it was two men to the Hawaiian Detachment and two men to go to the China Station. And, of course, we all wanted to look around, and we matched to see who'd go . . . went to . . . I wanted the China Station, so I matched with a fellow named Erdman. He got the transfer to the China

Station, and he later got killed when the war started. He got killed on the China Station and never did get out.

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

Kanaman: Oh, I liked that. I liked that. I went aboard the Tracy. When I went out to Pearl, I went aboard the Tracy. And, oh, it was a nice atmosphere out there, and there wasn't too many people out there. The Army hadn't built up their forces. It still had a primitive effect.

Marcello: Now this would have been in 1940?

Kanaman: Yes, the early half of the year in 1940.

Marcello: Now let's just back up a minute here. I would assume that most of the training that you received to become an engineman you got aboard the New Mexico.

Kanaman: No, just some of it. I guess you'd say I was still in schooling, although as a fireman, you come up fast. But I went aboard this "can," and then you get into a lot more training. In other words, you get your training faster on a "can" because you're closer to the job. There's not as many men.

Marcello: Describe the on-the-job training that you received here aboard the Tracy to become a fireman.

Kanaman: Well, they didn't have near as many men as a battleship, and you just got in . . . if you had a pump broke down, if you

had an engine broke down, bearing or generator, you just got into them and worked on them. And you didn't have enough money to go ashore all the time, so I worked with the shop man on there, and I learned to be a pretty good shop machinist by just working in the machine shop in my spare time.

Marcello: Was there quite a transition in going from a ship such as the New Mexico, a battleship, over to a destroyer?

Kanaman: Yes, that's right. There was a lot because everything on a battleship is regulated a lot closer and a lot tighter. In other words, if you work on a certain engine, you're just restricted almost to that piece of machinery.

Marcello: In other words, aboard a battleship you're a specialist.

Kanaman: Specialist. Then when you go to a "can," you work on everything. In other words, if you got something over here that's broke down, you work on it; when you get through, you work on something else. Actually, you become a much better machinist on a "can" then you do on a battleship because you have a wider field.

Marcello: Did you find that there was a willingness on the part of the senior petty officers aboard the Tracy to take the time to train you properly?

Kanaman: Oh, yes. Yes, that's one of the things. The men were older in relation to the men in the service now. I don't mean that because I'm older, but, in other words, at that time you had

men that were first and second class petty officers that had ten, twelve, fourteen years in the Navy; whereas in the later years, you found so many men making first class in four, five and six years. And they were usually glad to impart any knowledge they could to men that were willing to learn. Of course, they didn't try to hammer it into your head, but if you were there to get it, they would train you.

Marcello: I assume that ranks were very, very slow in that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy.

Kanaman: Oh, yes, very slow, very slow, although I was second class when the war started on then. I didn't have much time in, either. But at that time we were building lots of ships. We didn't really know what was going on or didn't look into it or didn't think about it, but the transfer of personnel had stepped up quite a lot. In other words, when World War II was over, they had to . . . I don't know . . . I never did see it authenticated anywhere, but we had more ships in the Navy than we had men at the start of the war. Now I don't know whether that's true, but we had an awful lot of ships because at Okinawa alone we lost three hundred and some ships. And if we'd lost that many in 1940, we'd a been out of ships.

Marcello: Why was it that you were transferred from the New Mexico to the Tracy? I would assume that all of the ships in the Navy at that time were not up to their full complement.

Kanaman: Well, they weren't. They weren't up to wartime complements now; they were up to peacetime complements. Oh, I just thought with the transferring out that I'd be . . . well, I'd miss the deal on the China Station, so this . . . the Hawaiian Islands was available, and I liked the looks of it there. Of course, I was just a young, single boy, and I liked to look around.

Marcello: Describe the Tracy from a physical standpoint. What type of ship was it?

Kanaman: Well, she was an old four-piper "tin can" that her torpedo tubes had been taken off of, and in place of torpedo tubes they put mine tracks on it. And we carried . . . we could carry eighty-two mines. Now these were anchor and floating-type mines. They were mines that carried 300 to 500-pound charge of explosives on them. In other words, the mines would weigh from 1,400 to 2,100 pounds apiece. In fact, that was what we did the first two years of the war. We laid all the mine fields in the South Pacific--of course, us and some other ships. Now there was eight minelayers altogether down there.

Marcello: So actually, the Tracy was a World War I vintage destroyer.

Kanaman: Right, it was. It had been through World War I. But it was still a good ship, and it could maneuver. But we operated also as a "tin can." When we run out of ships in the South

Pacific, why, we operated with the Enterprise quite a lot. Although it took everything we could do, we operated with them when we wasn't laying mine fields, because we almost ran out of ships down there. We lost a lot of ships, you know, at that time in '42 during the war.

Marcello: But at the time that you went aboard the Tracy, the Navy thought about that ship in terms of being a minelayer rather than in terms of being a destroyer.

Kanaman: A minelayer, yes. Yes, rather than a destroyer. Her main battery was . . . in other words, like on a battleship, your main battery is a 14-inch gun. Well, on a minelayer your main battery is your mines because that's your primary job, is to lay mines wherever they need them. And that . . . we layed a lot of mines.

Marcello: Describe what your quarters were like aboard the Tracy.

Kanaman: Well, they were very cramped because when the . . . prior to World War II, we carried a peacetime complement, so it wasn't as cramped. We carried about 250 men. But after the war started, we carried up over 300, which didn't leave any extra bunks, I'll put it that way.

Marcello: I'm referring now to that period, however, prior to the Pearl Harbor attack.

Kanaman: Well, now up until the war started, we had plenty of room. In the compartments where we slept we had mess tables, and

when chow went down, we would eat at mess tables. After the war started, they tore the mess tables out. You'd just eat out of a tray wherever you could find a place to latch on. But it was . . . you had to sacrifice something for the extra men, and then, too, everything combustible that you could get rid of, in wartime you get rid of it. You don't carry anything that you don't have to have.

Marcello: Describe what the food was like aboard the Tracy during that pre-Pearl Harbor period.

Kanaman: We had good food, good grub. We had . . . I know out in Pearl, when we first went out there, the first thing I had to get used to was papaya. I didn't particularly care for papaya when I first went out there, but I got to like them because they served them so frequently because, you know, papaya are grown out there. They're good food, but they are real sweet, and I wasn't used to them. But generally speaking, the food was real good.

Marcello: Now when you first went aboard the Tracy, was the food being served cafeteria-style?

Kanaman: Well, you'd get a tray and . . . when I first went aboard it was . . . no, it was not cafeteria-style.

Marcello: Family-style?

Kanaman: It was served family-style, and a mess cook brought it to the table. And, of course, the mess cooks alternated every

three months. Then it went into cafeteria-style when they had to . . . well, they called it "stripping ship," you know, after the war started--"stripping ship."

Marcello: I understand that a lot of people really liked to serve as a mess cook during that particular period.

Kanaman: Well, some people adapted to it better than others. I never did care for it, although I was a mess cook. But you made a little extra money if you were a real good, sharp mess cook; you made a little extra tip, because everybody'd throw in a buck on payday for the mess cook. It was a little extra money. There's a lot of men that were married young . . . of course, the Navy didn't really care for the younger people to get married. They didn't forbid it, but they didn't care for it. But a lot of third-class, second-class, and seaman, firemen, would get married. They didn't really have enough money to get married, and the extra money for mess cooking helped. It helped them out quite a lot.

But overall the food in the Navy was substantial, I'll put it that way. And, of course, it varied with the cooks and the commissary steward. Now he was the controlling factor in any ship on the food. If you had a good commissary steward, he'd make sure you had good food.

Marcello: In other words, he's the man who procured the food for the cooks.

Kanaman: Yes, he was the head cook. In other words, he was the, you know, chief commissary steward, but he was the head of the commissary department under the supply officer. And he was the one that would control whether the food was good or not, plentiful or not plentiful.

Marcello: Awhile ago, we were talking about your sleeping quarters, and I was wondering whether or not you had the experience of sleeping in a hammock while you were aboard the New Mexico.

Kanaman: Oh, yes, yes, I slept in a hammock for a year.

Marcello: How did you like it?

Kanaman: Well, at sea the hammock was real good. At sea, you know, with the rock and roll of the ship, you just slept in that hammock really nice. And if you was in cold weather, it was really nice, but if it was hot, they weren't so good. Or if you come back to the ship and you drank a little too much, you might have a little problem getting your hammock up. But you could get it up some way or another or sleep on the deck (laughter).

Marcello: In general, what was the morale like aboard the Tracy during that pre-Pearl Harbor period?

Kanaman: Well, we had grown into a stage of anticipation. Of course, I need to qualify that, because we had gone out to the Midway Island, and we'd been out to Wake Island. We dropped off

some Marines out there, and we knew that there was something going on. And this was about . . . starting about, say, a month before December 7th. We were supposed to go into the yard in Pearl there in late November.

But when we came back from delivering these Marines out to Wake Island and Midway Island, there was three ships of us, but they sent us on to Hilo, Hawaii, on the big island. There was a Japanese tanker sitting out there for no reason off of the town of Hilo on the big island of Hawaii. And we sat there, and what we was to do was just monitoring all their actions.

But we knew there was something going on. They had some kind of Japanese holiday that we had the orders not to cause any kind of an international incident if we could. The captain of this tanker, Japanese tanker, called our captain and insisted that we "dress ship" for them, you know, which, you know, meant putting up a bunch of flags. You know, anybody that understands what "dress ship" means knows what I'm talking about; that's for holidays such as that. But it wasn't our holiday, and our skipper wouldn't "dress ship," but he did call CINCPAC, and they in turn called Washington and got clearance on what to do. And we got orders back not to "dress ship." They said not to cause an international incident, either.

We stayed there and watched this ship until just about, say, ten days before Pearl Harbor. I couldn't give the exact date on it, but just a few days. And the ship up-anchored and left. And we always thought that was a "mother ship" for the, you know, small two-man submarine that later attacked Pearl Harbor, because they had no business in any way in that area.

Marcello: Were they in international water, however?

Kanaman: They were . . . well, they was in the controversial area. They was three miles out. That's where they were--just outside of the three-mile limit. In other words, if we'd have said, "Move! We're gonna sink you if you don't," it'd have caused an incident. That might have been what they were trying to incite, but we didn't know.

But everything had gotten to the point of anticipation, and they knew that there was something that was on the brink of something. Everybody felt it, but after that incident in particular, we knew that something was happening. And then after we'd been out to Midway and Wake and saw how they were strengthening those places, we knew that there was something coming off.

Marcello: When I referred awhile ago to the morale aboard the Tracy, maybe I ought to clarify that a little bit. Was the Tracy a "happy" ship prior to the war?

Kanaman: Oh, yes, yes. The Tracy was a happy ship.

Marcello: Evidently, a destroyer can be a very, very good ship to have duty or a very, very bad ship to have duty, depending upon the morale aboard.

Kanaman: Well, at that time, we had a pretty good old skipper, "Whaler George" Fahlen.

Marcello: "Whaler?"

Kanaman: "Whaler George" Fahlen. "Whaler George," we called him. Well, he married a girl out of a "sporting house" out there in Honolulu for one thing. Then after the war started, and we got out of the yard, why, he thought he had him a submarine spotted, and he got the name of "Whaler George" when he said, "Full speed ahead!" And we hit this black fish or jew fish or whatever it was, and I mean it just . . . that ship just jumped in that water. I mean, a big ship like that jumped, and the water turned just as red, and what we had got was a whale or a jew fish or something.

And then after we got our engines together, why, they had . . . we was on "easy circle," we called it, out there out of the mouth of Pearl, and there was a Japanese fishing boat in this restricted area. Old "Whaler George" just said, "Full speed ahead!" and he hit it right amidships, and he just cut it in two (chuckle). This is true. This is . . . I'm talking about two or three miles off of the beach there

at Pearl, you know. Between Pearl and Aloha Tower is where it was actually at. So we gave him the name of "Whaler George," and it just stuck.

He was a good old boy, though. He was a "dollar-a-year" man; he didn't accept any salary in other words. He was from a rich family. And he was a real good skipper. He was game for anything. He wasn't scared of the Devil himself. I don't know what he went on to be during the war, but we always liked him as a skipper.

Marcello: Was there ever any sort of a board in inquiry or anything after you hit that large fish out there or when you split that Japanese fishing vessel or anything?

Kanaman: Nope! No, sir, no problem whatsoever. No, he was in restricted waters; he wasn't supposed to be there. At that time, see, this is right after Pearl, right after Pearl.

Marcello: Oh, this is after the Pearl Harbor attack.

Kanaman: Oh, yes, this is after the Pearl Harbor attack.

Marcello: But now did he pick up that name of "Whaler George" prior to the attack?

Kanaman: No, this is after the attack that we started calling him "Whaler George."

Marcello: Oh, I see. In other words, you hit that whale or that fish and then also that Japanese fishing vessel after the Pearl Harbor attack.

Kanaman: Oh, yes. Yes, after the Pearl Harbor attack. Of course, after that everybody had a "devil-may-care attitude," you know, game for anything. It didn't matter.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk a little bit about the training exercises or routine that the Tracy engaged in prior to the Pearl Harbor attack. Why don't you describe a typical exercise. In other words, when would you go out; how long would you stay out; what would you do when you went out; when would you come in? There's a series of about four questions.

Kanaman: Well, you see, our main . . . of course, you know, we fired like everybody else. We had guns on the ship. We'd go out on the gunnery range, and, you know, a ship would tow a target. That was part of the training exercise. We always kept our gun crews broke in well. But we'd pick up a load of mines and get them from West Loch there. And we'd take them out and go off the Kona Coast out there. Of course, they weren't actual mines; they were dummy mines at that time.

Marcello: What coast would you be going off of?

Kanaman: Off of Kona, Kona Coast, you know, off of the big island. It was, you know, quiet waters out there, and you could find any depth of water you wanted. And we'd lay our anchor mines and our floating mines. Of course, they'd fire them, and then we had tugs that'd come back and pick them up. I mean,

that was part of our exercises. And then we had exercises operating with the fleet as a destroyer, also. And we also even run targets for other "tin cans" that were firing torpedoes.

But the training program then was very, very intensive. The men were well-trained. That's one thing prior . . . that's . . . that was, I guess, why you would say that when the war started, we had so many trained men that could go right ahead and take over. In other words, in '41 when the war started, I wasn't but twenty-two years old, but I easily took over jobs that men a lot older than I had been carrying throughout the Navy, you know. In other words, I was put in charge of an engine room. You wouldn't think of giving a man with four years in the Navy an engine room prior to that time. But they had to do something because the more experienced men went on to other ships, you see.

Marcello: I gather that the Tracy must have been a rather versatile ship.

Kanaman: It was.

Marcello: You've mentioned, for example, that it did take part in firing practice; it served with some of the larger ships; it towed targets; it laid mines. It'd do a little bit of everything.

Kanaman: Oh, yes. After we took Guadalcanal and Tulagi, we carried gasoline in on the decks, you know, for the first fighter

planes. They only kept a few up there. We carried it into the edge of Tulagi and kicked it off, you know, in fifty-gallon drums. Well, it wasn't no airstrip at Tulagi then. It was at Guadalcanal. But they sent some radio parts up there once, and we kept looking at these boxes, and it was radio parts all the same size, shaped just right. Finally, somebody just pried one off, and it was all whiskey (chuckle).

Marcello: Normally, when the Tracy went out on one of these exercises, how long did it stay out?

Kanaman: You're talking about prior to World War II?

Marcello: Yes, all my questions now are prior to Pearl Harbor that I'm asking you.

Kanaman: We'd go out . . . of course, when we went out to Midway, Wake, or one of those islands, we'd be gone for a month maybe. But most frequently our training exercises would go out on Monday morning and come back in on Friday. Sometimes we'd go out for two-week operations. When we were operating with the fleet, it'd be whatever the term or, you know, the period was for the fleet.

Marcello: Now did your training routine vary any as one gets closer and closer to December 7, 1941, and as conditions between the two countries got worse?

Kanaman: Yes, it seems like the training intensified, become more severe, more . . . in other words, you could feel it; you

could tell it. In other words, as it got up closer to the war, you might come in off of operations and then they'd send a bunch of men off to the rifle ranges as soon as they got back in. Normally, when you came in off an operation, it'd be a week or something. . . in other words, you'd have a week to play around--liberty and everything. But as it got closer to the war, it seemed like they stepped everything up. You'd come off of one operation, and you'd snap right into another, you see. It intensified. You could see that, tell it. Everybody was anticipating something before the war started.

Marcello: Did you sail under blackout conditions and things of that nature?

Kanaman: Well, we practiced that but prior to World War II. In other words, we might go out, and they'd black out . . . well, they had blackouts right in Pearl, too. In other words, they practiced blacking out. I know they had a couple of operations there on the whole island--all of Pearl Harbor and the whole island--that they blacked out everything, but it was just for a given period of time. Everybody knew it and . . . to adjust people. In fact, we had one blackout that included Pearl Harbor just a few days before the war started. It couldn't have been over a week, I don't believe, because we were in the yard at the time. But at a certain

time, everything just blacked out; all the lights went out; all . . . I mean everything. There's nothing blacker than the Navy yard when there's no lights in it.

Marcello: Now as relations between the United States and Japan continued to deteriorate, and as you felt the increase in tensions, how safe and secure did you feel being stationed there in the Hawaiian Islands? In other words, did you in your bull sessions and so on ever talk about the possibility of a Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor?

Kanaman: Well, it had come up . . . not exactly as it happened but in other . . . but we couldn't see them trying to take Pearl before they took the Philippines. In other words, you know, on a ship like that you're always talking about the possibilities and prognosticating and such as that, you know. But we couldn't see at least knocking out the Philippines before they could ever think about even taking Pearl Harbor. In other words, we thought any time a war started we'd get a good warning, you know.

You see, there was some . . . prior to Pearl Harbor there was some British warships that had come into Pearl, you know, and we talked to the British sailors, and we'd get lots of stuff out of them on things that had happened. You know, the warships would come out of the Middle East. The Warspite was one of them. I've forgotten the names of the

other ships, but the Warspite . . . I do remember it. It was a battleship. It'd been shot up pretty well. And, of course, then after working hours was over, you'd go aboard the Warspite, and then, too, you'd bring these limy sailors over for chow. They liked to eat American chow. And they were a pretty good bunch of guys, you know.

Marcello: But I understand those British warships are rather scruffy-looking in comparison with American ships.

Kanaman: Well, yes. I know I went aboard the Warspite, and these sailors showed me around, I said something about that "you sure don't keep these ships as clean as those American ships, do they?" He says, "Well, old buddy, just wait until you've been in war a couple of years. Then see how clean your ship is." (chuckle) And he was right. You don't have time to clean them up like you do . . .

Marcello: What was the general consensus among the Tracy crew concerning the fighting prowess of the Japanese Navy? Did you ever talk about the Japanese Navy?

Kanaman: Yes, we did. We just thought that we had them so outclassed that it was . . . we figured that if we got into a war with the Japanese Navy, we would wipe them out in sixty days. Now that's what we had thought, you know. Some of them had seen old Japanese warships and had been aboard them. On their big guns, you know, they'd throw the breech block up,

and then they'd have to dog them down before they could shoot them. Well, that's the idea we had with the Japanese Navy--was antique--but, you know, their navy was more modern than ours. We didn't know it then but we sure found it out (chuckle)

Marcello: Did you ever receive any information about the Japanese from any of the "old salts" aboard the ship? I am referring now to perhaps some of those old sailors from the Asiatic Fleet.

Kanaman: Oh, yes, well, that's where they got these stories of these old guns that they had these threaded bolts on them, you know. They'd put the breech block in, and then they'd lock it with these "dogs"--dog it down--and then they'd fire it. That's where we got . . . they'd been aboard these Japanese ships.

Marcello: How much credence could you give to anything that those old Asiatic sailors said, though? Now they were a pretty colorful group, were they not?

Kanaman: They were, they were. They were a real colorful group. The first one I ever run into was on the New Mexico. He'd just come off of the Asiatic Station and spent six years in Asiatic Station, and they wouldn't let him ship over there any longer. And he wasn't an old fellow. I'd say he was twenty-seven, twenty-eight years old. Of course, he was a lot older than I was at that time. I was still on the New Mexico. But he had a couple of months to do, and they sent

him aboard the New Mexico to finish his time out. And he got discharged, and then the officer of the deck had to sign your . . . he was the last one to sign your papers, you know, the officer of the deck, when you left. But this guy was an electrician, a second class electrician, and he didn't wait until the officer of the deck signed his papers. He just walked over and throwed his sea bag over the side. We was out . . . you know, we was anchored; we wasn't alongside of a dock. And he had . . . I don't know what all he had in it, but anyway it sunk when he throwed it over the side. And the O.D. just said, "Well, you got to have a sea bag before I can sign your orders." And they held him aboard there and made him draw a sea bag full of clothes. Then it cost a hundred and something dollars, I think it was--$117. That was a lot of money in '39. They made him stencil them and roll them and pack them. And he had a bag layout, and then after he got all that, then they let him leave the ship. They signed his clearance papers and let him leave. That was the first one that I had seen that had come directly off of a Asiatic Station.

Marcello: I've heard some of the Navy veterans of the period refer to these Asiatic sailors as having something called the "Asiatic stares." Had you ever heard that expression?

Kanaman: Yes, yes, the "Asiatic stares." They'd look off into the distance, and you'd wonder what they was thinking about.

Most of them from the Asiatic Station were heavily tattooed. I know we had one on the Tracy named Sudh. He even had hinges tattooed at his elbows, spider webs. . . he was just tattooed all over. He was the most tattooed man I ever saw, and he was still getting tattooed. But he had started getting those over on . . . while he was in the Asiatic Station. I guess they were cheap, and if you can say a tattoo is good . . . I never did care for tattoos, but if you can say a tattoo is good, he had some good tattoos. I mean, they were really well done as far as the picture, you know. I never did . . . I don't have a tattoo. I never did get one. I never did care for them. But he was the most tattooed man . . . and he had some good ones. And he had that "Asiatic stare," and I guess in more liberal times like now, you'd call him a "hop head." Of course, people then, if they enjoyed dope, why, they kept it to theirselves because they'd kick you out of the Navy just that quick, you know, if you got to playing with dope. Of course, they're more liberal now, and I think they allow some marijuana or they turn their back on it. I don't know which it is--turn their back on it.

But most of your . . . or not, say, most . . . but a lot of the men that came out of the Asiatic Station, after being there a long time, they were either on opium, codeine,

"coke," or something, you know, hashish. And they were a very picturesque bunch of man. You're right there. I don't know how they could survive.

If they went out and went into civilian life, it'd be rather difficult, I would believe. But most of them stayed in the Navy and they'd just . . . well, prior to World War II, they'd come back out, and then they'd just put in their two years, and then usually they could get back over there with a little influence. And if you'd get to the right people, they'd send you back there to the Asiatic Station because most normal people, I guess, didn't really want a tour over in the Asiatic Station. Now the Philippines wasn't as severe as the China Station, you know. They used to call it the China Station up on the Yangtse Patrol . . . the Yellow River. What was that? Sand Pebbles?

Marcello: Yes.

Kanaman: That is a good movie if a person wants to get a fair idea of how the China Station was around back in the '30's. Of course, I've been around over in China, but I was never there for the, you know, tour of duty that the guys used to put in from anywhere from two to six years over there. But it was an experience to know some of those people.

Marcello: I'm sure that they had all sorts of sea stories to tell.

Kanaman: No, not really. Most of them were kind of quiet. In other words, they'd talk to you . . . maybe if you went over and

had a few beers with them, they might get to talking, you know.

I know one old boy, a quartermaster, he'd been over there, and he had him a Chinese girl. He'd bought her. In other words, he bought her; she was his. And he had to leave the China Station, and he come back in the United States. I think he was actually out in Pearl for two years, and then he got back on the China Station. And someway this girl knew when he hit back on the China Station, and she'd been working as a "sporting girl," and she come and give him all the money that she'd made while he was gone. But she was still his property. That's when you could just go buy a Chinaman just like a slave. And that's actually what they were; they were yours and you could do whatever you wanted. If you wanted to cut their heads off, I guess it was alright.

Marcello: Okay, awhile ago when we were talking about the Tracy--its training exercises and routines--you mentioned that normally the Tracy would come in on a Friday, or at least on a week-end. How did the liberty routine work aboard the Tracy when you came in?

Kanaman: Well, we had, you know, three-section liberty. One section would stay aboard. Like we'd come in on Friday, and one section would stay aboard, and two sections would go ashore. And then one section would come back Saturday morning, and

then the other section would go ashore, and the section that came back Saturday morning would stay aboard until Monday morning, you see. In other words, two sections would have a weekend, and one would have a long weekend, or "seventy-two," we used to call it. Now that was unless we had an inspection. If we had an inspection, which was frequently in that part of the Navy then, why, then everybody'd have to come back for inspection on Saturday morning. But if we didn't have inspection, you usually got a "seventy-two," you know. One section would--one-third of the men, in other words.

Marcello: If you got a seventy-two-hour pass, could you stay in Honolulu or wherever for the entire seventy-two hours?

Kanaman: Well, on the ship I was on--the Tracy at that time--we could but we had to put in for an overnight pass and give an address.

Marcello: Okay, this, I guess, is what I was referring to. On a lot of ships I think that the personnel had to be back aboard at midnight if they didn't have an address ashore.

Kanaman: You had to have an address ashore to be able to stay over.

Marcello: Was it pretty hard to find an address ashore?

Kanaman: Oh, not really, as long as your money held out (chuckle). You know, the girls out there in Honolulu, they all liked sailors. It was pretty easy to get along with them.

Marcello: I was going to ask you what you normally did when you went on liberty there in Honolulu after having been at sea for a week or for however long.

Kanaman: Oh, it usually depended on how your finances were. There used to be a place out there--this is prior to World War II --called the "Rendezvous." That was a big dance pavillion, and they usually had a pretty good orchestra, and there were always a lot of girls out there. That was the main place you went. Of course, you'd go over sometimes and just go to a movie and eat chow. And they had recreation clubs on the base there. Of course, prior to World War II, we had kind of a boxing team on the Tracy--several of us--and we'd do a lot of exercise and get up every morning and run all around the base and run over to the submarine base and down around the . . . we had kind of a routine. We'd run four or five miles every morning. Of course, we'd get up before everybody else was up, you know--maybe six o'clock in the morning, something like that--and run and come back and have a good appetite for breakfast.

But usually your married men . . . we had quite a few married men on the ship out there, and usually they'd talk somebody into standing-by for them if they had the duty. And you'd usually let them go because you didn't have money to go ashore all the time, anyway.

Marcello: Did you frequent Hotel or Canal Streets very much during that period?

Kanaman: Oh, yes, yes, I knew Hotel Street real well, Beretania Street, College Street.

Marcello: Was the last one College Street?

Kanaman: College Street. It ran alongside the river. I don't know why it was called College Street; there was no college on it unless it's a college I never heard of. Nuuanu Street, that one carried you up to the Pali out there. And Hotel, that was the street that, you know, the "Y" was on. You know, the YMCA was way up at--what--Hotel and Richards? Somewhere up in there, I think.

Marcello: And I guess the YMCA was a rather . . . it was kind of a gathering place and so on and so forth.

Kanaman: It was kind of your headquarters, if you wanted to call it that. Yes, usually . . . I don't know . . . if you come ashore, that's where you got off of your cab or the bus or however you came in. You usually got off there, and if you were coming back to the ship, you'd go to the "Y" and stop and eat a sandwich maybe, get a cup of coffee. They had a library there, and they had a place to lounge around. Most of the sailors kind of used it for a focal point, I guess you'd say.

Marcello: I guess as one gets closer and closer to December 7, 1941, and as the fleet was continuing to build up, weekends in Honolulu must have been wall-to-wall sailors.

Kanaman: They were, they were. When the fleet was in out there, you just didn't care about going ashore. In fact, there where we were down by 1010 dock, they used to have a place called the "Tin Roof." It was just a tin shed, but they had beer in there, and you'd go in there and drink beer, you know, and go back to the ship. In other words, you'd go over there and drink half a dozen beers late in the evening. We had an old dog, "Brownie," and if we went over at the "Roof," he'd go and drink beer just as long as we would, you know. He would wobble back with us (laughter).

Marcello: Awhile ago you mentioned that you were on the boxing team aboard the Tracy. I gather that athletic competition played a very important role in the life of that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy.

Kanaman: Oh, yes. We had ball teams on there. We had hardball games, and I played on a softball team, too. And there was boxing. You know, we had smokers, too. You know, then the Navy was great on three or four round bouts, you know. . . minute bouts, two minute bouts, depending on how experienced a fighter you were. Of course, we just did it to have something to do more than anything else. And we had softball teams.

Marcello: Now I'm sure that there was a great deal of drinking that went on during the weekend after the fleet had been out on maneuvers and so on and so forth.

Kanaman: No, you had different types of drinkers in the Navy. You had some people that went over to the "Roof." They drank a little while and go back to the ship, you know. But then you had some serious drinkers, and I think that they lived just to drink. In other words, they were really alcoholics. Well, they still have them in the Navy today. They don't even care for women, I don't think. Most of them, they just go drink. They drink up everything that they make. Like a lot of us there, we weren't really hard drinkers. We sat around--a bunch of us--with nothing to do, and someone would say, "Let's get a pony keg of beer." Everybody on the ship there would chip in to get a pony keg of beer. I don't know . . . we just sat there and drawed beer off it for a long time--just everybody off of the ship that wanted a drink, you know. But we was right there by the "Roof" and . . .

Marcello: A lot of people say that if the Japanese were going to attack Pearl Harbor, the best time to have done so would have been on a Sunday morning. And what these people are implying is that, since there was a great deal of partying and so on on Saturday, many of the sailors would not be in any condition to fight on a Sunday morning. Now how would you answer an assertion of this sort?

Kanaman: Well, that's a false statement. I mean, there are no grounds to it, and it's just as wet as it could be because for the simple reason that most liberty was up at midnight. Well, at eight o'clock in the morning you've got eight hours of sleep. You know, you can get awful drunk eight hours before, and with something like Pearl Harbor I don't care how much you drink, you're going to be sober in just a . . . it won't take you long. So that was false.

Marcello: Would it be more accurate to say that a Sunday morning was a good time for an attack because it was still considered mainly a period of leisure so far as the Navy was concerned?

Kanaman: That's what it is. In other words, everybody was just taking it easy on Sunday morning. You don't have anything to do; you don't work. In other words, there's just the work that has to be done.

Marcello: It's a holiday routine in Navy terms.

Kanaman: It's a holiday. A lot of people don't even get up for breakfast on Sunday morning, you know. And that's the way it caught everybody. They were just sitting around taking it easy; maybe some of them were off playing golf; some of them was just maybe walking around the base; and a lot of them were maybe just sitting around reading a book. See, at that time I guess sailors were thought of being kind of illiterate, rum drinkers, and such as that, but if they'd really known

sailors real well, they were probably one of the better read group of people other than formal education of people in the United States. I imagine we read just a lot more.

Marcello: Well, I guess this was a cheap form of recreation, considering the pay that you were receiving at that time.

Kenaman: Oh, yes. But sailors used to read a lot. I know I used to always keep a book of some type around reading it. There were just lots of sailors doing the same thing. You'd swap books. You'd go to a library and get books. Of course, you had a small library on your ships, but they were usually old books. You would get current books if you'd go to the library. Sailors were actually pretty well-read bunch of people, and they would keep up on current events better than most people.

Marcello: What was your particular rank at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack?

Kanaman: Second class. I was a second class machinist's mate.

Marcello: What sort of pay were you drawing at that time?

Kanaman: Seventy-two dollars a month. That's . . . well, I imagine you go into the Navy making . . . now you make around $300 a month when you go into . . . of course, a first class was making $84, and the chief made $96; and then when you got permanent appointment, you made $113 or something like that. In other words, the chief is only making $113 a month, but that was a lot of money then--quite a lot. In fact,

$113 a month back then had more buying power now then, I guess, $600 or $700 a month would.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us up to those days immediately prior to the Pearl Harbor attack, Mr. Kanaman, and what I want you to do at this point is to describe in as much detail as you can remember what your routine was during that weekend of December 7, 1941. Let's start with Friday. Now I'm assuming that the Tracy came in that Friday.

Kanaman: No, we had been in about a week. So, we was in the yard. They'd already torn our main engines out. We'd taken all of our ammunition off the ship.

Marcello: Now did you go into the yards after you had been serving a term of surveillance over at that Japanese tanker?

Kanaman: We came directly from that to the yard. We were about a week or ten days late going into the yard. See, we was supposed to have already gone into the yard, and they held us up out there for that, you know, for our periodic yard overhauls. And they had already jerked our main engines out, and, of course, we had our machinery tore down. And I don't remember just what happened on Friday before that, before Pearl.

Marcello: It goes without saying that the Tracy was in no fighting condition during that weekend.

Kanaman: No, we wasn't in . . . there was no way we could get underway. In fact, a lot of our men . . . some of our men went

to the . . . see, on the Cunningham. . . she was tied up outboard of us, and they didn't have enough men aboard. In other words, they needed some more men, and so some of our men went aboard it. Mostly engineers went aboard the Cunningham. They had a recreation camp out at Nanakuli--Nanakuli Beach, I believe it was. And a bunch of men off of this Cunningham had gone out to Nanakuli Beach; therefore, that's why they were short of personnel. And they'd have been back Monday morning. Some of our men went to sea on the Cunningham. This was after the war, after the attack. They just slid off and got on their way in a hurry. And incidently, there's an incident that happened there before. . . prior to that time. They had said that a "tin can" couldn't back down and drop depth charges, but the Cunningham pulled out, and their sonar gear picked up one of those two-man subs right off of the Curtiss. Incidently, this friend of mine was on the Curtiss, also. He lives down there in New Orleans; I see him every year, sometimes twice a year. But the Cunningham picked up this two-man submarine, and they backed down and dropped depth charges, and they got the sub, too, and sank it.

Marcello: In other words, you're saying that the Cunningham dropped its depth charges and actually backed over them . . .

Kanaman: Backed over them to drop them because they picked it up. She was sitting right off of the Curtiss there at Ford Island,

you know. And this friend of mine, he remembers all of that on the Cunningham. Of course, we was busy over at the repair base there at the time, which is just a short distance away from there. And they survived that--dropping those depth charges--and got the submarine, too. But that was the first time that a ship had ever backed down. But that was a point of either get it or it would get another ship.

Marcello: Now did you say that you did not remember what your routine was on that Friday?

Kanaman: No, I couldn't say just what my routine was on the Friday prior to that. I couldn't say what we did, or . . . I know at that time I was working quite a bit. We tore down a bunch of machinery. I really never thought about what I was doing on Friday prior to Pearl.

Marcello: How about Saturday?

Kanaman: Well, we didn't have an inspection, I'm sure, because in the yard you go to work on your machinery, and we was working on our machinery. That's about what we had done.

Marcello: Now I get the impression from what you said that when you go in the yards not everybody is actually working aboard the ship, since you had people to spare to send over to the Cunningham.

Kanaman: Well, the reason we had men we could to send to the Cunningham is because we couldn't get underway. In other words, we

didn't need our engineer force and our guns. We didn't have any ammunition for our big guns. Of course, we didn't have anything we could fire. The only thing we had we could fire on December 7th was Browning automatics and Lewis machine guns. These are the ones with the old drum on top. That's what I was shooting on December 7th. And we had to tear open lockers to get them. But everybody that was in the state of the . . .

Marcello: Do you recall whether you had liberty that Saturday?

Kanaman: Well, if I did I'd come back early. More than likely I had stood by for somebody and let them go ashore. I never had really thought about it until you asked me.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us in, then, to that Sunday morning of December 7, 1941, and once more what I want you to do at this point is to describe your routine from the time you get up in the morning until all hell broke loose, so to speak.

Kanaman: Well, the best way I can pin the time of the initial attack on Pearl Harbor was that it was right at colors. In other words, that's . . . say within a few minutes of eight o'clock, one way or another.

Marcello: Now had you gotten up and gone to breakfast and so on?

Kanaman: Oh, yes, because an old boy . . . he was from Texas, too. Let's see, Riley or something like that, he was a boatswain's

mate third class, and he was making colors. This plane just kind of run over the area kind of loosely strafing everything. And he just hung the flag, and he was running up the deck just hollering like the devil, you know. Everybody was below. The first wave of planes, it seemed like to me, come down from the submarine base and hit the battleships first.

Marcello: Now when were you aware that an attack was actually taking place, and how did you get the word?

Kanaman: This boatswain's mate was making colors, and he went right by my quarters, and he was hollering like the devil, you know. Then we heard these things busting, you know, bombs busting and torpedoes busting, you know, big explosions.

Marcello: What was your battle station aboard the Tracy?

Kanaman: Well, right about then my battle station changed. I had been on a gun--a 5-inch gun--but when we went back to sea I was in the engine room. I stayed in the engine room all during the war. In fact, that was the last . . . I came off the gun after Pearl Harbor. But the gun I had been on was a surface gun, you know, for like a barrage against a mountain or troops or something like that, not antiaircraft.

Marcello: Okay, so you're down in your quarters, and this sailor comes running past . . .

Kanaman: Well, he had to holler down a hatch on a four-piper, and everybody thought he was crazy, you know. Everybody was

just taking it easy lollygagging around. You know, you'd eaten breakfast; you'd had your coffee. It seems to me like we was still drinking coffee. I don't know. That's what it seems like, but things like that leave your memory, you know. You don't know what you was doing.

Marcello: Then what did you do at that point?

Kanaman: Well, we come up and started looking.

Marcello: Did general quarters ever sound or anything?

Kanaman: Yes, general quarters sounded finally, but we was already on topside before they ever sounded, because sitting in port like that, general quarters just don't ever go, you know. And usually like that, you've got your youngest officers and everything aboard. I imagine they was in a state of confusion just . . . I remember the duty commander was a Mr. Ross. He was an engineering officer. He was the duty commander--nice fellow. He was the duty commander.

But they got the klaxon sounded, and general quarters went, but we was already topside looking and trying to figure out what in the devil was happening. And, you know, you're just amazed. You can't believe it. You know, you're kind of spellbound.

Marcello: I would assume that the bulk of your officers were not aboard that weekend.

Kanaman: No, they weren't. They were just . . . it didn't take long before they were aboard, though.

Marcello: Okay, so what did you see then when you came out on deck?

Kanaman: Well, we saw these dern planes. We thought at first that it was some kind of dummy maneuver or something, you know. That's the first thing that enters your mind. Well, it's like at that time you used to have . . . this is the early days of frogmen, and they'd come aboard your ship, and you were supposed to be watching for them. You'd have guards posted. And we thought, well, hell, that's some kind of maneuver, you know, associated with stuff like that. In fact, that was very new then, you know--the frogmen. In fact, I don't know whether they even called them frogmen or not. I think the terminology is underwater demolition men or something. They could slip aboard and blow up your ship. You were supposed to catch them. And we thought it was some kind of a maneuver like that, but then when all these flames started busting out over there, why, you knew dern well that it wasn't a maneuver of some type.

Marcello: What sort of a view did you have of Battleship Row from where the Tracy was in the yard?

Kanaman: Well, we was in the . . . Battleship Row was down at Ford Island, and the repair base was over here (gesture), and we was right here (gesture). The Rigel was on that side of us (gesture), and the Helena was back of us, and we could over . . . I mean, we looked straight at it.

Marcello: Did you have a clear, unobstructed view?

Kanaman: We had a clear, unobstructed view of the Arizona and the Oklahoma. Now the Pennsylvania was in the dry dock, the 1010 dry dock, you know. And the California and the West Virginia and some of them were up farther. We didn't have an unobstructed . . . now you could see them, but you didn't have an unobstructed view of them. But you could see all this flame and fire busting loose, you know, and then, well, we decided, "Well, man, this is crazy as the devil here!"

Marcello: How long did you remain a spectator before you finally got to what you were supposed to be doing?

Kanaman: It seemed to me like it was a lifetime really, but actually I imagine it was just minutes before it finally got through, you know, that it was no drill. And, of course, then we started running and getting some guns, and they . . . the officers in charge over on the Cunningham said they needed some men, and men went over there. I mean, you just go wherever you can help, you know.

Marcello: Now what did you personally do?

Kanaman: We went up and broke in some lockers and got some guns. We got an old Lewis machine gun--me and a guy named Sekot. We got a Lewis gun and put it on a stanchion out there. You know, we had drums that you had to put your shells in.

And, you know, after the initial attack, then there was

a lull in there. And then that's when they come back and really hit us. That's when they got in our area there. They dropped a bomb right between us and the Rigel, but they didn't hit anything.

Marcello: Now by the time you got the Lewis machine gun set up, had the first wave already been completed?

Kanaman: They'd already passed. They already passed, but then there was another wave that come in that followed that.

Marcello: How difficult was it for you to get the machine gun and the ammunition?

Kanaman: It seemed like it took us forever, but I bet it wasn't five minutes--I don't know--because we went up and knocked . . . got a fire ax and knocked a lock off the armory and got in it and got the machine gun, and more guys got Brownings. And when this plane come over and dropped a bomb between us and the Rigel . . . well, the Rigel had machine guns out, too. They was too close for, you know, an antiaircraft battery, you know, regular antiaircraft battery. Of course, if you had 20-millimeters or something like that . . . of course, we didn't have them at that time.

But we shot this one plane and it landed . . . it knocked it down over by the hospital. So we knocked a plane down, but I don't know how many dozens of us were shooting into it, though, either, because everybody was shooting into it. It didn't seem like the plane had any height at all on

it. You could see the pilot in the plane looking over in it, and I don't know whether . . . it looked like he was grinning. Of course, he could . . . it just might have been an illusion. You could see the pilot; he was looking straight at you.

Marcello: How low were these pilots flying?

Kanaman: I don't believe it was over a hundred feet high, not over two hundred feet.

Marcello: What was the weather like that day?

Kanaman: Clear, bright, clear. Clear as it could be.

Marcello: In other words, a good day for an air attack.

Kanaman: Oh, yes. I don't guess there was a cloud in the sky till after all the smoke and everything started, you know.

Marcello: Let's just back up a minute now. I assume that you were relatively inactive all during the first wave.

Kanaman: Yes. We were kind of amazed, you know. In other words, it just hit like that (snaps fingers). See, they hit . . . I guess they hit Pearl before they hit anywhere else on the island.

Marcello: Would it be safe to say that you were more or less a spectator during that first wave?

Kanaman: Yes. We was . . . the first wave, I'd say, didn't last more than five or ten minutes.

Marcello: What sort of damage did you see being done during that first five minutes?

Kanaman: I saw them ships blowing up over there across Battleship Row.

Marcello: Describe what it looked like and what went on over there.

Kanaman: Well, you could see all this fire and smoke, and it didn't seem like it was . . . of course, this was several minutes later before the Arizona sunk. Of course, the Oklahoma rolled over. This was . . . you know, it rolled over sideways. And, of course, the Pennsylvania was in the dry dock, and the California was sinking but it didn't sink, you know. The Nevada got underway, and it got out and it was banked, you know, ditched up there closer. Everything was in a just tremendous state of turmoil, and there was just . . . see, these torpedoes ruptured fuel tanks, and there was just a vast amount of fire. And people got into boats, and they was going in . . . sailors were jumping off of ships. They was burning, you know, so I guess they had to.

Marcello: And this bunker oil is very, very thick, too, isn't it?

Kanaman: Yes, it is thick oil. But I guess why so many were saved out of that is because it seemed like this fire was burning off of the water. And these sailors could, you know, get some air, and these boats were going right into that damn fire. I saw lots of boats just going into it and picking up sailors.

Marcello: What sort of thoughts did you have when you saw the Arizona blowing up and the Oklahoma turning over?

Kanaman: Well, we thought we'd lost everything. In other words, that was a tremendous blow to absorb when you're used to wartime, you see. Of course, we still had lots of ships. We were fortunate that we didn't have any carriers in there. But then your battleship was the ultimate. When we lost all of these battleships, what in the devil were we going to do? We've had it. But it later proved out better that it wasn't the carriers that we lost.

Marcello: Now in a situation like this, that is, during the actual attack itself, I would assume that there is a tremendous amount of noise in terms of explosions and guns firing and people yelling and things of this nature.

Kanaman: No, there wasn't so many guns firing. Nobody was ready to fire them.

Marcello: This was during the first wave.

Kanaman: Yes. And during the second wave there wasn't too many guns firing, but there was guns firing in the second wave. But the thing about it is. . . you know, you've seen movies, and you see all this whistling and everything. You don't have that. I don't know why they put that in movies. I guess that's for the effect, but you don't have all that whistling and stuff. You're just silent until the guns, actual guns, go off, the bombs bust, and it's a lot different from the movies.

Marcello: Okay, so you mentioned then that during the lull between the two attacks you do procure this Lewis machine gun and ammunition, that is, you and another shipmate.

Kanaman: Well, Sekot. Well, the other guys, too, but I mean we had one kind of together. We was working it together.

Marcello: Okay, now were these stanchions designed specifically as a mount for these Lewis machine guns?

Kanaman: Oh, no. We just had rope and tied up to it where we could swivel it around. No, we just had it tied up with a rope on it.

Marcello: Okay, so describe now what happened . . . you're ready, I assume, when the second wave came then.

Kanaman: Oh, yes, we were sitting there "ready for bear."

Marcello: Okay, describe what happens this time now.

Kanaman: Well, then they come in, and that's when they was hitting the base there.

Marcello: Now what sort of planes are coming in during the second attack?

Kanaman: Well, they were strafers and bombers. There wasn't . . . I don't believe there was any torpedo planes in on the second attack. At least, I'll put it this way, I didn't see any torpedo planes. Torpedo planes all hit on the first wave.

Marcello: Well, visibility probably wouldn't have been too good for those torpedo planes in the second attack.

Kanaman: No. They were just bombers, and, of course, they had machine guns. I guess it was .50-calibers that they were carrying, because they dropped the bomb right between us and the Rigel. Why they didn't pick one of the others, I don't know, because there . . . well, there wasn't too much space between us--fifty feet something like that.

Marcello: Describe what happened when that bomb was dropped.

Kanaman: Oh, it was just a little shrapnel and blew water . . . shrapnel all over the place. We didn't lose anybody, though; I don't think the Rigel lost anybody at that particular instant. But the plane . . . there was so many of us shooting at it that we don't know who . . . of course, we all liked to credit ourselves for knocking it down, but I don't think there was anybody ever credited with it. The Helena was behind us shooting at it, and the Rigel had men shooting on it, and we was shooting at it, so . . . I imagine what it was was that so many shot at the plane that someone hit it in a vital point or killed the pilot--one.

Marcello: What sort of reaction did the crew have when it saw the plane get hit and go down?

Kanaman: They was ready for another one then. It's surprising how mean you can get when something like that happens to you, you know. You get blood-thirsty; you want revenge.

Marcello: Did you fire at any other planes besides that particular one?

Kanaman: No, that was the only one we had a good shot at.

Marcello: About how many rounds do you think you fired altogether?

Kanaman: A whole drum, that's all (chuckle).

Marcello: Which held how many? How many were in it?

Kanaman: It must of held about 300 rounds, something like that--200 or 300 rounds. Of course, we was inexperienced at that time for shooting at airplanes, and, you know, later in the war you learned how to shoot planes, you know. You had to learn how to lead them, but, of course, then you just started shooting when they come in sight, and you kept shooting until they fell (chuckle). We was real proud of getting that one anyway.

Marcello: So what did you do, then, during the aftermath of the attack?

Kanaman: Well, you know, we were getting radio messages after . . . this is after . . . well, we was standing-by. We stood-by. We thought we was going to have another wave, you see. We stood-by there. You see, we was getting radio messages on the ship. Now I'm not talking about official radio messages, but that there was a landing out at Barbers Point, that the Japanese were landing to take over the island. So we had a detachment of men . . . I had a Browning automatic rifle; I was getting ready to go out to Barbers Point to go get them. Me, Dillard--I don't know--there were about twenty or thirty of us. There was supposed to have been a truck coming over to pick us up. We kept waiting, waiting, waiting. Now this is, I'd say, ten o'clock in the morning.

Marcello: In the meantime are you hastily trying to put the ship back together again and make it seaworthy?

Kanaman: No, that was impossible to do at that time because these big engines, you know, 25,000 horsepower engines, you know, you just can't . . . the turbines are over in the machine shop in the yard. In other words, it's impossible to put them in that way because they have to be . . . they have to finish their machining on them, clean them up, balance them.

Marcello: I assume you never got out to Barbers Point.

Kanaman: No, we didn't go out to Barbers Point. But then later, late in the evening of the 7th, I went out to the California, and I was on her all night.

Marcello: Now why did you go out to the California?

Kanaman: Trying to keep it from sinking. Well, we carried the . . . she didn't have no power; it was black. There were a bunch of men in there that had been killed. We carried them off. We was carrying all kinds of weight, anything that weighed, off. Now this is later. This was late in the evening, though, when I went aboard there.

Marcello: Now I assume that this was standard procedure, that is, the crew of a ship such as the Tracy, which was not seaworthy, would go and help on other ships wherever they were needed.

Kanaman: Anywhere you could help in any way, that's what you did. And they just grabbed a bunch of us off and said they needed men out on the California. I said, "Well, let's go." Of course, we . . . it was just as black as it could be down

there, and that was my first real close involvement with a lot of death.

Marcello: Now where were you working aboard the California?

Kanaman: Well, it was around on the second deck where the torpedoes had hit. And there was a guy sitting up, you know. . . just how rapid the attack was, there was a guy sitting up by the hammock netting just like this (gesture) maybe just with a pair of shorts on and a skivvy shirt. And they'd be burnt black--just as black as that right there (gesture). And we'd put them in blankets, and they had these tugs alongside, you know. We'd put them in blankets, and the skin would just pull off of them, you know. You know, in trying to carry them on a blanket, they'd slip.

And we got the men off of there, and then we started getting anything. . . I guess we carried off so . . . one thing that sticks in my mind was a big bag of money--change, you know. It was quarters, dimes, and nickles, and half-dollars. We was getting this over on the tug, and, you know, it was so heavy that it took about four or five of us just to drag this dern thing.

Marcello: Was this change from vending machines and so on, or what?

Kanaman: Well, I guess from the ship's service, such as that. But we was dragging that off and got it on that tug, and it took four or five men just to move it across there. That must have weighed 700 or 800 pounds. I remember that--that was

one of the things we moved.

Of course, we was on that. . . it was about four o'clock in the morning. . . I don't know. . . give or take. It was still dark. This is the morning of the 8th, and that's when they had these planes come in from the States to come out to Pearl. And these deck guns on the California, they cut in. They was manned, you know. They was manned. They cut in and started shooting. I was down on the second deck, and all I had was a flashlight to see with. And I mean I broke out of that place. I was . . . I was down there, you know, . . . and the California was sinking. And we was messing right down . . . in other words we was . . . if there was any kind of hit, it'd sink the California. See, there was men caught in the Oklahoma, trapped in there, and, you see, they was rapping on the side there for days there after the Oklahoma turned over.

Marcello: Did you get up on deck to witness the fireworks that were taking place there.

Kanaman: Oh, yes, I got out on the deck. I liked to have broke my neck getting out of there.

Marcello: What did the sky look like?

Kanaman: Well, it was dark . . . and the shell, you know, it busts up there. You can see the shells when they bust up there. They finally got a message in, but everybody was . . . I

wouldn't say gun-shy, but I mean they just started shooting at anything.

Marcello: I'm sure there were a lot of trigger-happy servicemen around there.

Kanaman: Yes, there were. There were lots of trigger-happy men. And if you had to walk through the yard at night, well, man, you was singing loud or hollering or doing anything to make some racket to let everybody know you was coming (chuckle). "The Greek's" . . .that used to be the restaurant there in the yard, you know. It was open at night, and we were down there in the repair base, and we were, oh, 200 or 300 yards, I guess, from it.

Marcello: And that was called "The Greek's?"

Kanaman: "The Greek's." It was the yard cafeteria, is what it was, and a Greek run it, and we just called it "The Greek's." And for two or three weeks around there . . . a couple weeks . . . I don't know . . . around ten days. But if you went up to "The Greek's" to get a sandwich or something at night, you just started singing and hollering. Usually, two or three were together, you know, making a lot of racket, so everybody'd know you were coming.

Marcello: I assume that must have been a pretty gruesome experience for you having to remove those bodies and so on down on the second deck of the California.

Kanaman: That was. That was a . . . well, you're not adapted to anything like that.

You know, there's one thing I do remember. We had an old boy named Zacheck; he come aboard there. He was one of the men killed on December 7th. But before that we used to sit around and talk to him. He had out the maximum insurance. It cost him--I don't know--around. . .let's see, seventeen dollars a month which is over half of his pay. And we used to . . . he come from a very poor family, too. Of course, everybody was poor then. But he come from a big family that didn't have much money. But we used to kid him . . . and he would send most of the rest of his money home. We'd tell him how stupid it was to carry all that insurance. But he was killed on December 7th, and I've often thought about that. That old boy must have had some kind of intuition or something that the rest of us didn't know about. But he was a good old boy--good old country boy--a Polack from up in the Northeast somewhere. But I know me and a friend of mine on there used to sit around and talk about that how we used to critize Zacheck for carrying all that insurance, and then he needed it worse than anybody.

Marcello: Describe what the harbor looked like the next morning, that is, Monday morning, December 8th.

Kanaman: Oh, that was a dim, desolate, bleary day. Everything was burnt. . . and oil, you know. The Arizona was sitting down there with just her mast sticking up. The Oklahoma was turned over; the Pennsylvania was burned quite a lot in the dry dock. The ships were all hemmed in there that wasn't sunk. The California was almost sunk, and all this oil and residue from the fire was . . .and I got a good early morning look at it because it was . . . when we come off of the California, it was around daylight, and we hadn't had anything to eat since the night before. I don't think I even had a cup of coffee all night when we worked on there. Of course, then you didn't worry about things like that. You just went on and got it because you're going to try to keep one of our ships from sinking.

Marcello: What did you do in the ensuing days and weeks that followed?

Kanaman: Well, then after the 7th and the 8th, then we got to work on our own ship and got it back in commission. And about half the time it was . . . see, we was supposed to have been in the yard about six weeks or something like that. But I think we was only in there about three weeks because I know when we came out we went on patrol right outside the Naval base there, I mean, outside of Pearl Harbor--just outside.

She didn't take too long because we run that for a

little while, and then when the Battle of Midway was coming up, I know we grabbed a load of mines and went out and mined around French Frigate Shoal. It was out near Midway there because they . . . I guess they didn't want them to take French Frigate Shoal if they took Midway. And then we went on out to Midway and got in that fracas a little bit.

Marcello: In backing up a little bit, we were talking briefly awhile ago about the midget submarines and so on. Did you ever witness any of that activity, that is, the destroyers dropping the depth charges or ramming these midget submarines or anything of that nature?

Kanaman: No, I didn't actually witness any of it, although I later saw the submarines after they were rammed. You know, they had one set up on the submarine base over there, and then they had another one that they toured the United States with. I actually think that was made up of two submarines. But they got about three or four midget subs out there at Pearl, you know, during the next day or two. I got some good looks at them after the thing was over, you know. As far as their activity, I didn't get to see any of the activity, actually, because, of course, the submarines, you know, was submerged.

But I don't think they really got the most out of their submarines that they expected to, or maybe there was a lot we didn't know about. Maybe there's a lot of those midget

submarines that got into Pearl, and maybe they did part of the damage we credited to the planes. I've often wondered about that. They did a lot of damage with torpedoes, and they could have been midget submarines. Maybe they had everything so synchronized that they were supposed to hit at eight o'clock. It could have been a lot of it from submarines.

Marcello: According to the records, the activities of those midget submarines were a total failure. They actually didn't do anything at all in the Harbor in terms of damage.

Kanaman: Well, they got one there just coming in--just at the edge of Ford Island. They got it, and this friend of mine was right there on that and saw that. And them some of the guys on the ship that was there, they was standing on it and saw all of that. We know that that submarine didn't do any damage, and they got three or four others. In other words, they were, I think, a total failure unless there's something that we didn't know about.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Kanaman, I have no further questions, and I want to thank you very much for having taking time to talk with me today. You've said a lot of very interesting and important things, and I'm sure that scholars will find your comments most valuable when they use them to write about Pearl Harbor.

Kanaman: Well, there's a lot of it that has got a little dim in the years, of course. It has been quite a few years to pass since then. Yes, I'd like for somebody to write a book. Did you ever . . . I guess you've read some of the books of Pearl. Did you ever . . . you know the plane that was up on December 7th--the civilian plane?

Marcello: Yes.

Kanaman: Tommy Thomason. He was . . . they called him "Tailspin Tommy." See, he had been on the Tracy. I knew him well, and, in fact, I was over to his house after Pearl. See, he was working for Mrs. Gamble out there at that commercial airport, and he was up on a flight, you know, training. They were giving him a flying lesson. See, he had spent eight years in the Navy trying to get into aviation, and he just absolutely couldn't get into aviation. He had a commercial pilot's license, and he'd paid for it himself, and he got all of his aviation training. But that old boy could tell more about what happened on the . . . because he was up in a plane. He could see it.

I talked to him after Pearl Harbor, and he was kind of like me. At first, he couldn't believe it. You know, the planes never did try to shoot him down, and they flew all around him. He said there was a dozen of them that could have shot him down. Old Tommy Thomason, he was from

Arkansas. In fact, we used to call him "Arkie," but after that they called him "Tailspin Tommy." But he could be an awful big help to you, but I wouldn't know how in the world to go about finding him.

Marcello: Well, again, Mr. Kanaman, I want to thank you very much for having talked to me.

Kanaman: I sure enjoyed talking to you!