

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
NUMBER
406

Interview with
Oscar Miller, Jr.
December 17, 1977

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas
Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello
Terms of Use: OPH
Approved: Oscar Miller
(Signature)
Date: 12-17-77

COPYRIGHT (c) 1978 THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF NORTH TEXAS STATE
UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF DENTON

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording or by any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Coordinator of the Oral History Collection or the University Archivist, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas 76203.

Oral History Collection

Oscar Miller, Jr.

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Date: December 17, 1977

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Oscar Miller, Jr., for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on December 17, 1977, in Denton, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Miller in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was aboard the oiler USS Ramapo during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

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

Mr. Miller: I was born on March 31, 1922, in Toledo, Ohio, and I went through my schooling there in Toledo. During that period of our history, it was kind of rough--the Depression era. After I had been in about two years of high school, I joined the CCC and spent about fifteen months in there and then enlisted into the Navy.

Marcello: When did you enlist in the Navy?

Miller: I enlisted in the Navy in March, 1940.

Marcello: Why did you decide to enter the service at that time?

Miller: Well, my father had been in the service before, and I've always been interested in the Navy. I wanted in it real bad.

Marcello: What part did economics play in your decision to join the Navy? You mentioned that you had been in the CCC, and this was still more or less the Depression period.

Miller: Well, actually, economics didn't have anything to do with my decision to get into the Navy. The only thing that kept me out was my age.

Marcello: In other words, you would have gone in earlier, had you been able to.

Miller: Well, I went in right at my eighteenth birthday. This is the lowest that you could go in on, or the earliest age, whichever way you want to say it. The only reason I went in the CCC was . . . well, that was economics. There just wasn't any work, and it was a good place. I enjoyed it; I don't regret any of it.

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

Miller: Well, I was just more or less interested in the Navy. I love water; I love ships. There was never any question there

for anything else; I wasn't interested in anything else.

It was either the Navy or nothing.

Marcello: At the time you went in the service, how closely were you keeping abreast with current events and world affairs and things of that nature?

Miller: I could care less (chuckle). After all, I was seventeen, eighteen years old, and all I was interested in was from day-to-day, which was quite common to that time.

Marcello: Things haven't changed very much then.

Miller: Basically, I wasn't too much interested in anything else.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you went into the Navy when you were eighteen, which was the lowest possible age that one could enter. Now would you have gone in under the minority cruise?

Miller: Yes. That would have been the minority cruise. You had to sign up for a six-year term at that time. And, of course, just as soon as I could, why, I went in. I went from . . . I was in Toledo, Ohio, and went in the CCC and was shipped up to Lima, Ohio; and I signed up in Toledo, coming home, you know, for a weekend or something like that. And then I took my examinations and everything and went up to the Great Lakes.

Marcello: Is this where you took your boot training, at Great Lakes?

Miller: That's true. I went up there . . . oh, let's see. It was in March, but it was still cold. It was real cold up there,

in fact. Then after . . . let's see, sixteen weeks, I believe it was--yes, I believe it was sixteen weeks of training--we went into assignment for different ships and one thing and another, I tried for the submarine service and missed it by about, oh, three or four men.

So I was shipped out to the West Coast, and I'd say there was around four or five hundred of us on a train going to the West Coast for different assignments. I didn't even know where I was going until I got out there, and they put me on a fleet tanker, the USS Ramapo. And I spent all my time in there on her. She was a good ship, had a good captain; it had real good people.

Marcello: Initially, what did you think about the idea of going aboard a tanker such as the Ramapo? You know, as a seventeen-year-old, I can't imagine a tanker being perhaps as glamorous as a battleship or an aircraft carrier or cruiser or something like that.

Miller: Well, I really wanted submarines, and since I didn't get the submarine, I was kind of disappointed. So that was just as good as any because I didn't plan on staying there too long; you know, you still had a right to transfer around. But after I got on there and got acquainted . . . it was a small company of men; I think there was something like maybe 120 men and maybe thirty or thirty-five officers. I don't

remember exactly. It was just like one big family, and I enjoyed it.

Marcello: In other words, we're talking about a crew that perhaps might be comparable to that aboard a destroyer or something of that nature.

Miller: Yes. I would say maybe even less. They would probably have more men, but I don't really know how many men they would have on a destroyer at that particular time. Of course, times changed a lot; they take on more men, or they take less. But at that particular time, I would say it was about equal to the complement on a destroyer.

Marcello: Of what vintage was the Ramapo? In other words, how old a ship was it?

Miller: Well, at that time, she'd been commissioned somewhere around World War I. She was pretty old. She was comfortable; she would wallow around in the sea, but generally speaking, why, life aboard was pretty good. We ate good; we slept good. We had some good officers. We had regular line officers; they were not . . . later on they started getting a lot of reservist officers in, and some of them were pretty "chicken." But most of them was real good people, and they treated you like family more than anything else.

Marcello: Of course, on a small ship of that sort, bad officers can make life pretty miserable, and on the other hand, good

officers, like you pointed out, can make it a very good ship.

Miller: Right. One thing in my favor when I got aboard ship was that I was the youngest man aboard ship. Everybody treated me more like a kid, well, which I was. I was a kid; I'll admit it. They took care of me and teased me a lot, but as a whole I was real happy.

Marcello: From what you say, if we can draw all this together, you feel that the morale in that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy was pretty high.

Miller: Oh, it was terrific! There was no complaining. Everybody got along good with everybody else. I don't remember any real instance of any difficulties. Oh, once in a while, why, somebody might come back drunk off of a liberty, but they'd be a little obnoxious for a while until they got sober or something. But relatively speaking, it was good; it was a good life.

Marcello: I guess the fact that all of you were volunteers at that time would have contributed to the high morale. In other words, you were there because you wanted to be there.

Miller: Well, most of them there were professionals. It wasn't a case that you had to be, that you had to do this, that you were forced whether you wanted to or not, that you didn't have any choice in the matter. No, that's not true.

In our particular case, most of us were there because we wanted to be there. I would have liked to have had duty on something else, but after I got there, I was happy. I started . . . well, being a young man like that, why, a lot of the older men took me under their wing more or less. I got acquainted with a electrician's mate, and he wanted me to start striking for electrician's mate. So after approaching the "old man," well, it was agreeable, and so I started striking as an electrician's mate.

Marcello: I guess every ship at that particular time had an individual that they either referred to as "the kid," and you happened to be that person aboard the Ramapo, at least initially.

Miller: Well, yes. I can't speak for the other ships, but in that particular case, why, I was the youngest man there for probably over a year. They had some pretty good old boys on there. There were some old-timers in there; they had hash marks all the way up to their elbows.

Marcello: Rank was pretty slow in this pre-Pearl Harbor Navy, was it not?

Miller: It was tough! Once you got a rating, you had to sit on it for a long time. I started out at that particular time as a seaman third class when I first got aboard ship, and they jumped me up to second class seaman, which was immediately after you get aboard ship. Then I changed my rate from

seaman second class to fireman third class because electricians come under the fire gang, fireman gang. You had two ratings; you had the white stripe boys and the red stripe boys. Well, I changed from a white stripe to a red stripe, which is engineering. And then I made . . . oh, I guess in about a year, I jumped from fireman third class up to electrician's mate third class; I jumped two full grades there.

Marcello: Now in order to advance like that, one had to pass certain examinations and so on, and then there had to be openings, isn't that correct?

Miller: Right, right. This is very true. Now, say, in the district that you're based out of, they would have so many openings for certain skills. The ship we was on had an opening for a third class electrician's mate, and being a tanker, why, there wasn't a whole lot of people interested in trying to transfer into it. And I kind of think maybe the "old man" had a little something to do with it, too, because he didn't want strangers coming in maybe. And also they liked me. So I studied. I studied for about, oh, six or seven months, and then I took the examination, and the best you could get was a 4.0. You had to have at least a 3.0 or a 3.1 or something like that, I think it was, to pass, and I made it. I made my grade.

Marcello: Now was that particular rating a fast-moving one at that time?

Miller: No, no. It was no faster than any of the others. Like I said, there was an opening there, and I think they more or less kept it until they could see if I was going to make my grades or not. Then after that, why, then I had to wait for a while for it to come to the Naval district command, and it filtered on down after a period of time. So by the time I got the rating, I guess I'd been in service for a little over a year.

Marcello: Well, as you say, you were involved in fleet-wide competition here.

Miller: Right, right, right. This was not just something that "you're a good old boy, and we're going to give it to you." You had to compete, and it was fleet-wide . . . well, district-wide, not necessarily fleet-wide. It was district-wide, which covered . . . we were based at Pearl Harbor, and that covered quite a bit of area.

Marcello: You were mentioning awhile ago that there were a great many professionals on board the Ramapo. You would have to estimate this, of course, but what would you say was perhaps the average amount of time a first class petty officer had in the Navy?

Miller: Oh, a first class petty officer, I imagine, probably carried

about four or five stripes, each one representing four years or more. So I'd say they had anywhere from twelve to fifteen years or even maybe even more, depending on how aggressive the guy was and what rating he was in. But we had an old electrician aboard ship--a first class; he could have been chief, I know, but he didn't want it. He liked it right there. He was more or less in charge of everything. It was about four or maybe five of us in the gang, and we had our own living quarters more or less to ourselves. We had our own area of the ship where we stayed most of the time, and it was nice. We had things pretty much our way; we had our own coffee pot; we more or less . . . nobody bothered us because nobody knew what we were doing. That helped a lot, you know (chuckle). Of course, the ship being old, it kept us busy. We had to take care of everything aboard it. At times, why, we didn't have much to do, and then other times we were busy. One of our duties was fueling at sea.

Marcello: This is a pretty tricky task, is it not?

Miller: Oh, god, it's dangerous--very dangerous! At that particular time, why, your ships would more or less come up together, and then they would tie them together with a hawser, and they would transfer about a five-inch heavy rubber hose across. Then being an electrician, we would maintain the pumps because most of them were motor driven. And under

high pressure it would pump over just so much. You didn't fill any ship up; you just more or less kept them . . . they kept . . . your line ships you more or less tried to keep full all the time, and after they had maybe used up a third of their capacity, well, we would come in and top them off, keep them topped out, because they never knew when they were going to need it. Of course, at that particular time, we didn't need them that bad, but it was a practice that they maintained.

Marcello: This was a question I was going to ask you earlier, and you mainly answered it, I think. The job of the Ramapo was to refuel the ships and such. In other words, you didn't carry aviation gas or anything of that nature?

Miller: Oh, yes!

Marcello: You did?

Miller: It depended on what we were assigned to. Now we weren't necessarily assigned to any one job; they would vary. One of our main things was that we would go stateside; we would pick up the fuel; we would bring it to Pearl; we would dump it there at Pearl. Or we would pick it up at stateside, and we would make a run down to, oh, wherever the ships were. I remember a couple of times we went down there . . . well, we went into Manila one time

and down around Guam another time, and we would meet ships down there. A few of them we'd meet at sea. But later on, after the war that got underway, we very seldom went anyplace except out at sea, where we would have a rendezvous point at sea. Most of the time we were by ourselves until after the war, and then they would convoy up maybe two or three tankers, and they would rendezvous at a point at sea. And then the capital ships would come in, and we would be assigned certain ships that we would fuel.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit more about your shipboard routine before we actually get into the training exercises and so on and such. You were mentioning your quarters awhile ago. Describe what your quarters were like, because you seem to think they were pretty nice quarters.

Miller: Well, of course, I'd had about fifteen, eighteen months in CCC, and that's pretty crude (chuckle). So after getting aboard ship, why, I found it pretty nice. We had a compartment with maybe twenty people in it, and we had more or less double bunks. It would get pretty hot in the summertime. Why, when it'd get pretty hot in the summertime, we'd go up and just string a hammock up on the topside someplace. We had tables or chairs, and we could read or play games-- mostly play poker--and things of this nature. It was more

or less . . . in this particular quarters that we were in, it might have been . . . oh, I doubt if there were twenty people in it, which is quite a small compartment.

Marcello: Now you were mentioning hammocks awhile ago. Did you have hammocks down in your normal sleeping quarters, or did you have bunks down there?

Miller: No, we had bunks. Now I slept in hammocks when I went through boot camp. I went into the old section of Great Lakes, and you stretched your hammock. You were issued your hammock and your sea bag. We would stretch our hammocks up through racks, and these racks were about seven feet off the floor. If you ever slept in a hammock, that's pretty rough.

Marcello: I've heard people praise them, and I've also heard people curse them. Now I've heard, for example, that in rough seas and so on a hammock can work out quite well because it more or less remains in the same position as the ship pitches and weaves.

Miller: Well, now I never slept in one in rough seas. We always stayed below. See, the tanker was loaded to begin with. When she was loaded, we may have had twelve feet of free-board, meaning from the water to the main deck was only about ten or twelve feet. And it didn't take an awful lot of water to come over it, because she didn't . . . a tanker

don't go up and down; she plows through it. You may be underwater half the time, especially in rough seas. Above your main deck, you had catwalks, and these catwalks were only maybe three feet wide with rails on either side. If you wanted to go from the after section to the forward section, your best bet was through the catwalk because you could hang on both sides, and the water wouldn't rush over you too much. But the main deck in rough weather, you couldn't walk on it at all.

Marcello: What was the food like aboard the Ramapo?

Miller: Excellent! Oh, it had good food! Being a small company like that and since we had the capacity, why, we had plenty of good fresh drinking water, and we had plenty of food, and then somebody always managed to smuggle some booze aboard (chuckle). Well, we had our own press shop, we had our sea stores, commissary more or less. We had ice cream; we had baked goods every day. Actually, it was some of the best eating . . . especially for a young fellow at that period in life and under those conditions of the Depression and everything, I ate good. I really enjoyed it.

Marcello: Did they serve the food cafeteria-style or family-style at the time you went aboard the Ramapo?

Miller: Oh, we served it family-style aboard ship. We had a big

mess table, and they'd set it out in the middle. You could go up and get what you wanted. They kept the meat hot, and they set it out in platters or whatever. Usually, you had maybe eight or ten people to a table.

Marcello: Would you draw mess cooking duty?

Miller: No, I never had a bit of mess duty the whole time I was in the service. When I went through boot camp, they would assign one company to this and another company to that. Well, my company was the guard company. We were assigned guard duty, and I had some miserable times on that, walking that Great Lakes shoreline in the middle of winter (chuckle). But then after I got aboard ship, why, they had regular attendants that didn't do nothing but take care of that. None of the men aboard ship had mess cooking to my knowledge. Now I don't remember anybody ever having that as a special assignment unless it was a punishment.

Marcello: Well, you know, aboard a lot of the ships, people at times liked to have mess cooking duty because on payday they would receive a little bit of extra money from the people that they served at their tables if they had done a good job in terms of keeping the table well supplied with food and so on and so forth. Some people actually welcomed it, and it might have been for that reason.

Miller: That might have been true aboard some of the other ships,

but it wasn't particularly true aboard ours. We more or less had the same people take care of it all the time. Being a small company of men, you know, naturally there wasn't any great mess or anything. They had a regular cook; they had a regular baker. We had mess attendants, and that's all they did--take care of the kitchens and the tables and everything. Of course, we cleaned up after ourself like most people would on something like that. And then being a striker for an electrician, why, I had my own duties that I had to do all the time, plus all of our trouble calls and everything.

Marcello: Talk a little bit about the on-the-job training that you received aboard the Ramapo to become an electrician's mate. First, did you find that the senior petty officers showed a great deal of willingness to train you? Did he give you a lot of personal attention.

Miller: Oh, yes, yes, very much so. I'd never have made it without him. We had textbooks and had courses, of course. I never attended any special schools; all my training that I got was right aboard ship. But then I had a first class and a second class electrician's mate, and they were sharp. And whenever we did anything, why, we'd never be in any hurry. We weren't going anyplace, anyway. If we got it done in an hour or twenty-four hours or three hours or three days later,

it didn't make any difference.

Marcello: This is an important point you make. This is the pre-Pearl Harbor Navy. Things would change after Pearl Harbor.

Miller: Right. Well this could be true, too. I imagine the present day Navy, I wouldn't like it at all.

Marcello: But the point is that there was this leisurely pace, and there was plenty of time, as you point out, to be adequately trained.

Miller: Well, when you're going to be out at sea for three or four months, where are you going? You more or less pace your work to take care of it. Otherwise, like I say, if you got your . . . if I got my work all caught up, and we had some special time and maybe somebody else need a little hand, well, we'd give him a hand. We worked pretty close with the radiomen, and, oh, we hung around in the engine rooms a lot.

The "black gang" always stayed with themselves, and the "white gang" more or less stayed together. They stayed up in the front end of the ship; they had their quarters up there. We had ours in the back, in the after section of the ship, where everything was handy, and we roamed the whole ship. We had access to everyplace; there was no place we couldn't go.

And, of course, we didn't have any Marines aboard or anything like that, and it was all informal. I mean, you saw the "old man" early in the morning, and you saluted him, and from then on you wasn't bothered.

Marcello: You mentioned that everything was informal, and I think this is generally the case with a working ship such as the type that you were aboard.

Miller: Yes, we weren't a fighting ship. We had drills. We had two 5-inch guns amidship. We had antiaircraft guns forward, and they had antiaircraft guns aft. We had machine gun pods off of the bridge-- .50-caliber water-cooled jobs. We had small arms aboard ship. We had pistols; we had shotguns. We had a lot of shotgun shells, and we used to shoot all the time over the side of the ship. It was good.

And then the "old man" was a fisherman. Oh, boy, he loved to fish! Well, I fished a lot, too. I loved it. As an electrician striker, why, I had certain duties that I had to take care of, and then plus the fact that I was an engineer in the "old man's" gig, which is his private ship. It was a little power launch about twenty-six, twenty-eight feet long. And if we were going by some small island . . . I know a lot of times when we were going down to the South Seas, if we come by someplace and he saw some fish or something, he'd stop the ship, and we'd

go fishing (chuckle). Or being slow, I mean, the old tanker, she probably go top speed over maybe eight or ten hours. That's pretty slow when you get a gig that'd do maybe fourty or fifty miles an hour if you really pushed it. Why, it didn't take you long; you could just run up on one.

Marcello: You mentioned the shotguns awhile ago. Am I to assume that these could be used for skeet shooting, trap shooting, and things of that sort?

Miller: That's what we used them for. Yes, that's what they were primarily for. They had clay pigeons that they'd throw over the side--you know, hand throwers--and we'd shoot that way. Or you'd throw cans or something out in the water and shoot them with rifles. Or even floats . . . we even made floats, and we'd lower one of the boats over the side and take it way out someplace and tow it and shoot at it and one thing and another. It was good training. It got you familiar with your equipment. I was assigned on one of the 5-inch guns. I was assigned as a pointer.

Marcello: This was your battle station--as a pointer aboard one of the 5-inch guns.

Miller: Right. Yes, this was my battle station.

Marcello: Do you remember which particular 5-inch gun?

Miller: It seems to me it was the port one. I wouldn't . . . of

course, we worked either one, but most of the time I stayed on the port gun.

Marcello: Was this 5-inch gun a dual-purpose gun, or was it strictly a broadside gun?

Miller: It was dual. It would go all the way for high elevation or shoot right almost directly in the water beside it. In fact, we used it at shooting at towed vessels or sacks and one thing or another from airplanes. Every once in awhile, we'd be near one of the Naval bases, and they'd tow something out for gunnery practice.

Marcello: On a vessel such as the Ramapo, how much time is devoted to actual battle training, that is, going to general quarters and things of this nature?

Miller: Well, you never really knew when you was going to have one, and whenever the "old man" got up and he felt "the heck with them; I'm going to put it through them today," why, he's just liable to run over and hit the button, and everything goes from there. They tried for efficiency; they tried for accuracy; and they tried to keep you alert. Of course, when I first went in there, nobody had any idea . . . well, at least I didn't have any idea I'd ever need it. Of course, I didn't know what the political stand was of the country--I didn't care. But basically you devoted . . . oh, I couldn't give you any specific hours, but I'd say two or

three times a week you would have some kind of a drill. Maybe they'd go for seven days a week at a time, and you would have a drill--one right after the other--for abandoning ship or battle stations, any kind of disaster that couldn't possibly happen to you--anything like that.

Marcello: I would assume that on a ship such as the Ramapo, everybody was very, very fire conscious, were they not?

Miller: Oh, yes.

Marcello: Even more so than aboard any other ship.

Miller: Well, as far as that goes, we weren't any more apt to be set afire than anybody else. In fact, we were probably less apt. Crude oil by itself won't hardly ignite. And, of course, if we were going, say, from Long Beach or San Pedro . . . that's where we usually took on our oil. If we were going from there and maybe going out to sea and meet at a rendezvous point, why, we would carry mail, or we would carry ammunition, or we would carry . . . we carried a lot of aviation gasoline in drums, plus all our regular oil. But most of the time it was safe.

Marcello: That crude oil is very, very thick, is it not?

Miller: Oh, it's the awfulest stuff you every tried to get rid of! That was one job that they had that I hated! Of course, I never got in to it, being an electrician striker, but your "deck apes," they would have to clean those tanks

after we would get back. After we would empty them, they would have to steam them all down and clean them, because that stuff gets crusty and it clogs up once in awhile. And they'd get in there, and they'd clean them down with a high pressure steam hose and one thing and another and wash them out and clean them up. Of course, at that time the tankers would be empty, and we would be riding real high. You would probably be thirty feet or so out of the water from the waterline from the main deck. And then they would paint and everything like that. Of course, we were always taking care of our equipment, so I never had that kind of a problem. I was lucky.

Marcello: At this stage, maybe I should mention that Dr. Larry Bowman is sitting in this interview, and, Larry, do you have any questions you want to ask at this stage--any general questions?

Bowman: None right now, Ron. There were a couple of technical things you brought up that I wanted to ask about. Those shotguns intrigued me. I didn't know Naval vessels carried shotguns, but you explained it was for recreational purposes.

Miller: Well, another form of recreation we had was swimming. If we got a nice warm day or something, maybe the "old man" decided it'd be a good time to go swimming, so we'd just stop the ship, and they would lower a boat over the side.

They would have shotguns or rifles or even machine guns-- they would carry a few of these old Thompsons--and they would put a boat over the side to more or less take care of anybody from sharks or anything like that, and everybody'd go swimming. It was just a simple matter of lowering a ladder over the side to get back out of the water. Of course, everybody jumped off the ship. Since it was only ten feet down to the water, why, what the heck (chuckle)! But you'd stop. So you lost an hour or two--so what?

Marcello: As you point out, all in all, life aboard the Ramapo in that pre-Pearl Harbor period was a pretty good life.

Miller: Oh, it was an excellent life. I enjoyed it more than anything, I think, than I could have had up to that time-- companionship. I really did enjoy it.

Marcello: When did the Ramapo move to Pearl Harbor on a more or less permanent basis? Now you mentioned that obviously you were plying back and forth from the island to the West Coast to pick up fuel and so on, but was the Ramapo more or less stationed at Pearl Harbor at the time that you picked it up?

Miller: Well, I picked it up in San Pedro, California, when I first went aboard it, but it was stationed at Pearl. That was the Ninth Naval District, I believe it was.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of being stationed in the Hawaiian Islands?

- Miller: Oh, I thought that was terrific! Of course, it's a lot different . . .
- Marcello: Anything could be better than Toledo in the wintertime, I guess.
- Miller: Well, Toledo or Lima. Lima was pretty rough as far as that goes--in the CCC. I thought it was terrific. At that time now, you got to stop and realize that at that time it was strictly a Naval station there. The tourists weren't anywhere or anything like they are now.
- Marcello: There were just two major hotels there--the Royal Hawaiian and the Ala Moana--right?
- Miller: Well, I remember the Royal Hawaiian, but I don't know nothing about the other one. But there wasn't a . . . it was either civilians that lived on the island or Naval personnel or Marines or Army. It was the military or the civilians; it wasn't many tourists or anything over there at that time . . . or at least I didn't realize it. Of course, I could care less about a tourist at that time. But it wasn't anything like you see it now. Of course, I haven't been back there since . . . oh, I guess the last time I was in there was in 1943, I believe it was, 1943, 1944. Yes, the latter part of 1943. So it went under quite a few changes since then.
- Marcello: Well, let's talk a little bit about the training routine or exercises in which the Ramapo would engage after it got to

Pearl Harbor. Would you be accompanying the battle fleet out on any maneuvers and so on that it undertook during this period?

Miller: Not necessarily. We would meet them out there. They would go out under their maneuvers, and we would meet them out there in a certain spot. Then they would . . . say, if they were going from Point A to Point B, we would meet them some place between A or B and top them off. And then after we were empty, well, we would head back to either Pearl or we would head back to San Pedro. Most of the time we went back to San Pedro, because they tried to keep as much oil in Pearl as they could. If we were in between runs, why, we would run from San Pedro to Pearl and empty and then go right back.

Marcello: And on many occasions, I gather you would refuel those ships right there in the harbor, right there at Pearl.

Miller: No, no, no.

Marcello: You never did that?

Miller: No, no, no. They had their own fueling facilities there.

Marcello: Their own tank farms and so on and so forth there.

Miller: Oh, yes, yes. In fact, we would unload at these storage tank farms, and they would pump it out of us up into the storage tanks. About the only thing that I would say that they would have in Pearl for loading would be maybe gasoline

for aircraft or something like that. But, no, at no time to my knowledge did I ever see any fueling going on between ships in Pearl, Out of Pearl, out at sea, yes, but not at Pearl. The same thing is true on your West Coast. Anything going up and down the West Coast, they would just go into San Pedro or Long Beach or wherever they were assigned.

Marcello: I would assume that considering the number of ships at Pearl Harbor, the oil storage facilities there must have been rather extensive.

Miller: Well, I assume they were. I never really paid that much attention to them. All I know is there was a lot of tank farms around Pearl Harbor itself. All around the perimeter of the bay area was storage facilities of one kind or another, or warehouses. They had a lot of great, big, long wharves, and off to the side of them they would have all kinds of warehouses. These great, big, old long wharves would have extensions coming out from them, and they would be able to put maybe two and sometimes even three ships on either side of them. Then they would have cranes and . . . I know in particular this one area where we went to a lot of times, we had a big overhead crane that they would use to load whatever they had--oxygen bottles, ammunition, or whatever they needed aboard ship.

Marcello: This is getting way ahead of our story, but things could

have been worse on December 7, 1941, if the Japanese had hit those oil storage facilities as well as the ships in the harbor.

Miller: Oh, they hit them. They had saboteurs take care of a lot of them. The saboteurs were pretty extensive. In fact, I'd say that the saboteurs probably did as much damage or more damage in a lot of ways than the attacking planes did.

Marcello: Well, like I said, this is getting ahead of our story, and we'll be back and pick this up later. Was it easier to transfer the oil into those tanks ashore than it was to refuel ships at sea? I'm sure it was.

Miller: God! Did you ever . . . can you imagine two major ships coming alongside of each other? Now you have to get maybe anywhere from thirty feet to maybe up to sixty feet . . . that's about as close as you can get to each other. They're lumbering along there, and maybe the tanker decides it wants to list to the port, and your other ship is going to list to the starboard. Well, that hose isn't going to hold all that weight. And when it does, it parts; and when it parts, those flange on that hose come apart. I have seen them come back through the side plates on the cabin area, or just anything. I've seen guys getting an arm broke or maybe get their ribs caved in or get cut all to pieces by that hose. Not only is this hose coming back with a terrific

force--like a rubber band when you stretch it to the breaking point--but it's also got high pressure oil coming through there to whip that thing around like a fire hose, and they can do extensive damage. Oh, and the mess! Oh, Lord, the mess! The worse thing is getting that oily, black, slick, slimy stuff up, and you have to get it up because the "old man" ran a tight ship. He wanted it clean all the time; I mean, there was nothing, no smudges. If there was a spot of rust, you chipped it off and painted it, and it was clean all the time. That's one thing about the Navy--they were clean. There was no dirty ship. I don't care what you went on, it was clean. You didn't have to worry about that end of it.

Marcello: Now did your training routine change any as one gets closer and closer to December 7th and as conditions between the United States and Japan continued to deteriorate?

Miller: If they did, I never noticed.

Marcello: In other words, it was more or less business as usual--the same routine right up until December 7th.

Miller: More or less, yes. I would think so. Of course, I don't know what the capital ships were doing, they may have been into an intensified training session--I don't know. I know aboard our ship, we had about the same leisurely pace more or less, and nobody bothered us.

Marcello: As one does get closer to December 7, 1941, and as conditions between the two countries did continue to worsen, did you or any of your shipmates in your "bull sessions" ever talk about the possibility of the Hawaiian Islands being hit?

Miller: Not to my knowledge. We never gave it a thought, as far as I can remember. Maybe it was my youth--I don't know--but I don't remember anything on the political end of it. I wasn't interested in politics; I really didn't give a darn what was going on in the rest of the world at that time . . . never thought about it. It's not that I wouldn't probably care if I knew anything about it, but I didn't know anything about it and I didn't try to know. We didn't have newspapers. Oh, we had radios; we listened to programs. But most of the time, our duties kept us fairly busy--that and playing poker or reading. I always liked to read a lot, and that kept me pretty much occupied, and I never paid much attention to the political scene.

Marcello: Did you have any of the old Asiatic sailors aboard the Ramapo?

Miller: Oh, yes, yes. I had a chief boilermaker aboard the ship that had been in the Asiatic Fleet. He had one of these . . . he had his ear punctured, you know, where he'd wear the earring, which was a sign of the Asiatic sailor at that

time.

Marcello: Bet that was evidently quite an outfit.

Miller: Oh, they were rugged! There were some mean men in that fleet! Yes, we had them, and we had a lot of old sailors. I tell you what, a lot of the old-timers had been on board ship so long a time, and they knew where the good "gravy" jobs were, and they would apply for these tankers or supply ships--that was good duty for an "old salt." He didn't have any worries and didn't have the heavy routine like they would probably have aboard some of the more capital ships, the fighting ships, line ships; and it was good duty, and they'd go after it, especially the special rated people, you know, your boilermakers, your machinists, and stuff like that. And they'd take care of themselves. They knew--just like anybody else--where the "gravy" jobs are.

Marcello: Did those old Asiatic sailors ever talk very much about the Japanese? Perhaps they'd come in contact with Japanese on the China Station or something.

Miller: Well, possibly, but I can't honestly . . . I know they talked about some of the duties that they had over there, but they were more or less the wild-type of duties . . . wild adventures that some of them had aboard. Well, actually, it would be ashore, you know.

I know this one old boilermaker, he bought himself a

girl. A Chinese family had sold their daughter to him, and he kept an apartment there, and she did all his laundry, kept the house for him, and he really worshipped her. And then when he left and come back to the States, why, he granted her more or less her freedom, if you want to call it that, although he didn't think of her as being a slave or anything. But he did have certain liberties, let's say that. But he used to tell some of the ways people lived at that time, and I guess it was rough. Some of those people over there in China lived pretty, pretty low as far as our standard of life would be. Even at the time this was taking place, it was bad.

Marcello: Isn't it true that most of those Asiatic sailors had plenty of tattoos all over themselves.

Miller: Oh, tattoos were the big thing. I know we had one little old boatswain's mate, and I don't think anything from where his collar hit to where his wrists were . . . about the only things that weren't tattooed were his hands, and every other inch of his body was covered with tattoos. He had a great big eagle that went across his back and down his arms on his back, and, oh, I'd never seen anything like that. When I first went aboard ship, my God, I was looking . . . why it was just like looking at television now, as far as I was concerned, at that time. But even after seeing all those

tattoos, for some reason or another I never wanted one.

I never got one . . . never had one.

Marcello: Now was this the particular sailor one of the old Asiatic sailors?

Miller: Yes, yes, he was an old Asiatic sailor. Oh, God, they had some real tattoos--oh!

Marcello: Did you ever hear them talk about something called the "Asiatic stares"? I've heard it said that some of those Asiatic sailors gave more or less the appearance that they were always "spaced out" to use a modern term.

Miller: No, I can't recall anything like that. No, to the best of my memory, I don't recall anything like that. But they were a different class of people, especially the ones that had been stationed, say, on land stations or something over there, or maybe some kind of a river patrol or something like that. Now they were the real old Asiatic sailors. Now they lived within this land itself and on the land.

But I don't remember anything on dope, or I don't remember anything . . . about the biggest thing that I can say that most of them would get into is heavy drinking. Every once in awhile one came back with a nice dose of social disease or something on that order. Drinking was the biggest problem.

Being young, I remember the first time I was over in Pearl, you know, I came back aboard ship, and I was standing up there on the main deck. I'd just had been given permission to come aboard ship, and about that time here comes the Shore Patrol with a whole doggone truckload of our people, and some of them were so drunk they couldn't stand up. And so the "old man" swung a boom around, and they'd lower it down, drop the cargo net down, and the Shore Patrol loaded them all on. They'd take the boom up, swing it back over to the other side of the water, drop it up and down in the water four or five times, you know. He'd bring it back, drop them down on the deck, unhook one side of it, pick it up, roll them out of it. Then the deck watch would grab them by the arms and one thing and another and take them down below. That was it.

Marcello: Well, let's talk a little bit more about the liberty routine, since you brought up the subject. How would the liberty routine work for the crew when you were in Pearl?

Miller: Well, you were assigned watches. You were assigned liberty sections. They maintained a certain percentage of the personnel aboard ship all the time. And if your watch . . . if your particular section was not on duty, why, you were granted liberty, but at the time at Pearl, there was no overnight liberty. You had . . . oh, I'd say you'd start

about seven o'clock or eight o'clock--somewhere along in there--in the morning, and you had to be back aboard ship, I think, at one or two o'clock the following morning. You had no overnight liberty.

Marcello: Was this mainly because of the lack of facilities ashore. In other words, there weren't too many places to stay.

Miller: No, and I think a lot of it was to keep them out of trouble, too. I guess that was it. I never went and got into it, so I really don't know what their reasoning was. Or maybe it was just so doggone many people from all over everything that, like you say, there wasn't any facilities. At that time there wasn't any. You didn't have any USO; you didn't have . . .

Marcello: I guess the YMCA was the big hang-out at that time, was it not?

Miller: Who'd go to the YMCA?

Marcello: I mean, it was a gathering point.

Miller: "Fruits," maybe, but, no . . . no, we never . . . we got off the ship, and we went to the first bar.

Marcello: But wasn't the YMCA one of the points where most of the taxis stopped and so on and so forth, and it was more like a central place--not that you would engage in any activities there,

Miller: To my best of memory, I've never been in the YMCA at Pearl.

I don't even know where it's at in Honolulu. I never was in it. They'd always dump you out at the square, more or less, by the statue. But, no, you'd catch your . . . when you got off your liberty docks there at Pearl, they would have buses that would run into Honolulu, and you just got off wherever you wanted.

Now one thing I will say. They had some tours that was sponsored by your Naval personnel. Whoever was doing it, I don't know, but they would take you to different parts of the islands . . . or the island. I never did get on any other island. We went by them or one thing or another, but I never was on the beach at any of them. But they would take you to different parts of the island itself, and, oh, we'd make . . . they'd go completely around. It was pretty. Oh, it was beautiful. I really enjoyed it. I think that one of the most fascinating things that I found at that particular time was the first time that I ever saw any pineapples growing.

The real experience was one of my first liberties, and I can remember that real plain. I wanted some ice cream, and I asked for a sundae, and they looked at me real funny. They didn't know what a sundae was; they tried to give it to me in a cone, and they just tried to give it to me in a plain dish--everything, you know.

But it was things like that . . . and, oh, they had one of the most beautiful theaters there that I think I was ever in. I always liked movies. It was out there off of Waikiki Beach, and it was a beautiful thing--I remember that very plain. And then I would play around on the beach and one thing or another.

My fascination was always fishing. Oh, I loved to fish, and I would get as much fishing in as I could when we'd get around some of these places. Some of the finest fishing in the world was around Guam. Oh, that's beautiful water down there; you could see down there in that water, oh, 100 or 150 feet. You could see the chain from the anchor, and it'd go sweeping way out. And the fish! You never saw such pretty fish as around there. In fact, I used to catch a lot of fish right off the fantail of the ship when we'd be moored out in the bay or someplace like that. And I caught enough fish to feed the whole ship--fresh fish. That was a little thing that didn't amount to much, but it was fun to me.

Marcello: Well, again, it does indicate what your particular routine was aboard ship and also what you did when you were on liberty. I gather that on weekends the bars were just full in downtown Honolulu.

Miller: Yes. That's where everybody more or less went to, was the

bars. After all, there really wasn't too much else to do. You couldn't go around the big hotels because that was "officers' country"--the Royal Hawaiian. Their personnel more or less catered to the officers.

Marcello: And given your pay, that was perhaps more than you could afford anyway.

Miller: Well, your pay was . . . of course, you got to realize that there would be times there when you wouldn't even draw your money. Oh, you'd draw a little bit of it for aboard ship if you wanted a few sea stores or something like that. You may have had two or three months' pay coming to you at a time, and you could draw any part of it or all of it. And then if you got ashore on a liberty . . . we used to save our . . . really, there wasn't too much in Pearl Harbor itself because there was already half a million sailors and soldiers and Marines and everything in there, and the competition was pretty heavy. Trying to find women in there was almost impossible--there wasn't any. What girls were there were more or less the native people there--people that lived there full-time--families of officers who were stationed there. They didn't have anything to do with the military, so you really didn't get too much to do with civilian life.

They had some big cathouses; they had some four and five-story cathouses. I've seen lines with maybe three or

four hundred people standing in line. You're allowed your fifteen or twenty minutes in there, and that was it.

Marcello: Is this down on Hotel and Canal Streets and so on?

Miller: Yes, they had . . . oh, there was quite a few of those. I'd say there was . . . I know of four or five big cathouses right in that general area . . . tattoo parlors, all kinds of little shops to wander in and out of. Of course, who bought of the stuff? What are you going to do with it? There really wasn't all that much going on at Pearl Harbor or Honolulu for servicemen.

Marcello: On a typical weekend in Pearl, would there or would there not be a very many drunks, so to speak, coming back aboard the Ramapo, on a Saturday night, let us say.

Miller: Well, you could always say that probably half would come back pretty well "looped." That was the main recreation. But surprisingly, there wasn't really all that many fights. The Shore Patrol was pretty heavy. Oh, they had all kinds of Shore Patrol in Honolulu. Then you had your Military Police, and then your Marines. But there was plenty of that type of people around.

Marcello: But even in the case of these Saturday night drunks, would they generally be in pretty good shape by the time reveille sounded the next morning?

Miller: Sure! Them old boys had been doing it for years. They'd be drunk tonight, and in an hour they'd be sober. Now all they had to do was . . . when they'd go ashore and they'd come back, and if they had that midnight to four o'clock watch, they'd hit it and be right on it. There wasn't too many to my memory. I don't remember an awful lot of them that would be . . . you had certain ones, of course, that would get "wiped out" completely, but most of them would do a lot of heavy drinking, and they didn't get to the point to where they were incapable of taking care of themselves or whatever. But you would have a few, like I said, and you more or less knew who they were.

I remember one of the times . . . I'd never been drunk in my life until I went over there in Pearl. I got drunk on rum, and to this day I can't stand it--just drinking plain rum, oh! But I came back aboard one time. I walked up the gangplank, asked permission to come aboard ship. They granted it, and I was standing there waiting there for permission. The officer of the deck walks up to me, and he says, "Having a good time?" "Yes, sir." "Did you bring anything back?" "No, sir." BAM!!! He hit me right across the stomach with his billy club. I had a bottle hid in there, and with those tight whites you could almost read the label on it--but I didn't have anything, see. He

says, "Well, you go on down below now." And I went down there shaking glass and whiskey out of my pant legs (chuckle). It was something--a little thing like that.

I was fortunate in the fact that, being on a tanker, we would come back to San Pedro or Long Beach, and from there into Los Angeles was just a short drive. Well, you'd come in on that old inter-urban, and, boy, those things would move! Now there was a good time for a serviceman to have a good liberty. That was a real "going" town. It still is, I guess. But I really always enjoyed that--that and San Diego. We would go into San Diego ever so often.

Oh, one of my duties aboard ship was running the movies. I was a projectionist.

Marcello: This was another one of the jobs that an electrician's mate or an electrician striker got.

Miller: Right, right.

Marcello: I remember I had interviewed a man who was at Kaneohe who was an electrician striker, and one of his jobs was to run the movie projector there.

Miller: Yes. Also, being a projectionist like that, I had more or less the selection of what kind of movies, or films, we would get. Now I would go over and draw them out, and we'd trade them with other ships and one thing and another. That was good. I got some good movies out of it that way.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us to that weekend of December 7, 1941. So let's talk in some detail about that particular weekend, Mr. Miller. I assume that the Ramapo was in Pearl that weekend. When did it come in?

Miller: Oh, I can't honestly say. I'd say about a week before then.

Marcello: Where did the Ramapo tie up when it came in?

Miller: Well, this particular time, we were tied up at . . . well, we'd come from the States, and we were full of oil. We had aviation gasoline in the storage compartments forward; we had ammunition, mail. We were going to Manila. We had our orders and we were supposed to leave about two days later, which would have probably been somewhere around Monday or Tuesday morning. And in the meantime they had moved us from the oil docks, where we usually tied up, over to the cargo part or these big, long docks--like I was telling you about--under one of these cranes, and they had loaded four torpedo boats aboard our main deck. To try to give you an idea, you had your after section which was kind of high, and then you dropped down to a flat more or less area. The full length of the ship was three or four hundred feet long. I don't know exactly. Then you came up to your higher superstructure on the front part of the ship. Well, in the middle sections on the main deck,

they had set four torpedo boats and lashed them down, and we were going to take them to Manila as part of that "Mosquito Fleet" out there.

Marcello: Were you looking forward to going to Manila?

Miller: Yes. I'd been there once before, and I enjoyed it. This would have been my second trip there.

Marcello: Was it a pretty good liberty port?

Miller: Oh, yes, it was excellent, excellent. Prices were cheap; you could get a lot. And it was an exotic country to me. I mean it was entirely different from anything I'd ever seen. Don't forget that I was from . . . at that time, I was from up around the Great Lakes area, and that was pretty exotic.

Anyway, we were sitting there, and I had had the duty during the night.

Marcello: This is the night of December 6th?

Miller: Yes. And I didn't have any liberty or anything the next day; in fact, I'd already had my liberty, and I probably wouldn't have got anymore--I wasn't expecting any more before we left. And I was sleeping in. You could sleep in . . . on Sunday you didn't have any duties other than just certain things that had to absolutely be done--you know, certain watches.

Marcello: I guess this was why Sunday was probably a good day for an

attack. As you point out, it was a day of leisure, more or less.

Miller: Yes, nobody had anything other than an absolute watch that was maintained, you know, like boilerman or anything like that.

Marcello: Had Saturday night been a rather uneventful night so far as you personally were concerned? Did you observe anything unusual happening?

Miller: No, no.

Marcello: When did you have the watch?

Miller: I'd had it from . . . let's see, I think it was from . . . you had four-hour watches, and I had mine from midnight until four o'clock. So I was sleeping in and, but I wasn't worried; I could get breakfast anytime.

Marcello: Did no more than the usual number of drunks come in that Saturday night?

Miller: I couldn't tell you; I don't remember.

Marcello: Well, it must have been fairly routine then.

Miller: Yes, it was nothing unusual about it in any way. Like I said, the first indication I had of any thing being wrong was when I started hearing all the noise and the bombs going off.

Marcello: Now where were you in relation to Battleship Row?

Miller: Right across from it. If you're not familiar with the harbor . . . you had your Battleship Row running, oh, more or less in

more of a straight line, but then like a "T" coming off of it, you had part of your bay area coming way back in there, and then at the far end of the bay was where your liberty parties landed. It was a wharf area, a dock area, and more or less all of the ships would send their people up to the liberty docks in boats off of their ships. And all these storage areas and wharves and everything was . . . if you was looking down toward the battleships, they would be over to your left, and we were right on the end of the first one off of the big bay area from the Battleship Row. And then right across from us on the other side of the wharf area was a couple of . . . well, in particular there was one light cruiser, and I'm trying to think of the name of it. I can't remember right now.

Marcello: What sort of a view did you have of Battleship Row from where you were tied up?

Miller: I would say it was about 500 or 600 yards.

Marcello: A clear, unobstructed view?

Miller: Clear, unobstructed view of the Arizona, the New Mexico-- right along through that whole area there. We was the last . . . well, whichever way you wanted to look at it, if you was coming from the battleships back, we was the first area, the first wharf area, and we were right on the very end of it; our fantail was sticking out into the open

bay area-like. The New Orleans . . . that's what it was-- the New Orleans. I'm pretty sure it was the New Orleans, which was the cruiser that was moored up right across from us. I'm pretty sure it was the New Orleans.

Anyway, I was asleep and, oh, all at once I heard all this commotion, and that's when the first bomb went off. I woke up and the battle stations alarmed.

Marcello: Did it sound almost immediately after you heard this initial explosion.

Miller: Yes, basically. I can't remember any particular long lag of time or anything like that. It seemed like it was almost instantaneous.

Marcello: Now at this time did you realize that this was the real thing, so to speak, or did you think it was simply another drill?

Miller: No. No, to my knowledge, we never had a drill in Pearl; all our drills were out. And so we were being attacked; that's the word that was passed down, you know. A guy would stick his head down through the hatchway and holler that we were being attacked. We had certain watches aboard ship. You had your gangway watch, officer of the deck, stuff like that. As soon as it all started, why, they started . . . they sounded the alarm. The captain--I'm trying to remember-- I don't think he was aboard ship; I don't believe he was. Well, anyway, they sounded the alarm, and all our ammunition

was stored down below, and we didn't have anything . . . all we had to do was stand there and look at them.

Marcello: In other words, general quarters sounds, and you dress and you go to your battle station.

Miller: I didn't have time to dress. Whenever you're having a general alarm, you drop whatever you're doing, and you go because you're working against time.

Marcello: So you're in your skivvies, in other words.

Miller: I was in my shorts. I was in my shorts when at the time when I . . . and I stayed in my shorts probably, I'd say, most of the day because I remember I got real bad sunburn-- I sunburn real easy.

Marcello: Is this 5-inch mount out in the open more or less?

Miller: Yes, it was above your main . . . say, your decks your main decks was down, and then part of your superstructure was on your fantail section, and then they were in pods that hung up higher than the superstructure was on the after section of the ship. You had one port and one starboard gun.

We immediately went to our battle stations, which in itself gave us another . . . give us a better view all together. Now I can remember seeing those planes coming down over the little rise over . . . like a hill. They would come down over that area where your liberty dock was-- the torpedo planes, I'm talking about--and they would come

down, and they would skim along top of the water, and they'd drop their torpedoes. I can remember this real well, but they would drop their torpedoes just before they would get to where our ship was. We could see those torpedoes hit the water and bounce and then go down. And all this was going on at the same time.

And then there was attack planes strafing, you know, machine-gunning everything. I remember one of our men was running up on deck and looking up, and he got shot with a machine gun. In fact he died; he was a very good friend of mine, and he died right . . . and the machine gun slugs was all in the wooden section of the deck around us.

All the confusion of the planes coming in . . . it seemed like they was coming all from three or four different directions, and high flying--the high-level bombers. And then you could hear the dive-bombers dropping in. They would be coming in screaming, and, oh, God, it was a terrible sound in itself!

I remember at one time . . . we hadn't had any ammunition. Now this is all taking place within just a few seconds, I mean, possibly two or three minutes at the most. The officer in charge, if I remember correctly, he shot the lock off of the ammunition locker, and we immediately started getting ammunition up.

Marcello: Must all the ammunition be hand-carried, or do you have any sort of a conveyor aboard the Ramapo?

Miller: No, they have . . . now on our ship, we had a little . . . sort of like an elevator that brought the ammunition up, and then we had storage lockers around where we stored it when we were in and when we weren't using it.

Marcello: Now from the time general quarters sounds until the time the ammunition arrives, how much time has elapsed. You would have estimate this, of course.

Miller: Three or four minutes, I would say . . . I don't know.

Marcello: It seemed like an eternity, I'm sure.

Miller: Oh, with everything going on, you have no concept of time in itself. Unless you experience it, you really can't . . . you just can't conceive all this confusion, all this noise.

Marcello: In the meantime, are you able to observe anything that's happening over at Battleship Row?

Miller: Yes.

Marcello: What do you see taking place over there?

Miller: I saw the Arizona blow up.

Marcello: Describe this.

Miller: It just seemed like there was just a red ball of fire that flew out of it . . . intense black smoke. I really didn't realize that it was sinking at that particular time.

You could see the other explosions taking place on the

other ships close to it, and in the meantime explosions were all around the dock area around us.

I remember looking over to the ship across from us-- the cruiser. They had this awning out over the ship for the sun, and I remember watching a guy cut that. He took his . . . most of the . . . oh, especially the Asiatic sailors carried knives, and they carried them in the back-- they were hunting knives more or less--and he cut this because he didn't have time to unlash it or nothing and so he could get his guns up. I remember this.

I remember seeing the liberty party boats trying to get back to their ships, and they were trying to machine-gun them and bomb them at the same time. I remember seeing some of those hit.

I remember all the bombing around . . . for instance, I remember seeing these oil tanks, these storage tanks, up on the side of the hill and around the perimeter . . . I remember seeing some of them on fire, which they told us was saboteurs later on.

And the planes just kept coming in and coming in and coming in. It seemed like it was for hours

Marcello: I assume that initially you were observing the torpedo planes, is that correct?

Miller: The first thing I saw was the torpedo planes, because I think

they came in first.

Marcello: Which is logical because they would need . . .

Miller: Surprise! Their's was a surprise, yes.

Marcello: . . . surprise, and they needed to have everything as clear as possible. They would have trouble coming in through all that smoke and so on and so forth later on.

Miller: I imagine it would be dangerous from other planes diving into them or dropping something on them, too. But anyway, I remember them first.

Marcello: How low were they flying?

Miller: It looked to me like they were almost in the water. I would imagine they were twenty-five or thirty feet, maybe fifty feet above the water.

Marcello: Could you distinguish the pilots in the planes?

Miller: Well, we were close enough that I could've hit one with a baseball by throwing it at them.

Marcello: Do you recall what he looked like . . .

Miller: No.

Marcello: . . . in terms of dress and so on?

Miller: No, no, I don't remember any distinguishing . . . I can remember the planes. I didn't even know whose they were at first, until somebody said they were Japanese. I never associated anything with Japanese up to that point.

Marcello: Okay, so what happens, then, after you finally get ammunition

at your gun?

Miller: I start shooting. My gun crew . . . I know we shot down two planes. I remember watching them burn as they came down.

Marcello: What does this do for your morale when something like this happens?

Miller: It helps! Believe me, it helps!

Marcello: You might describe these incidents in a little bit more detail if you can remember them.

Miller: Well, they were high-level bombers coming in.

Marcello: This must have been later on, then.

Miller: Yes.

Marcello: Was this after the lull?

Miller: No, no, no. This was after the torpedo planes had come through. See, the torpedo planes . . . to my memory, they came in first and then your dive bombers started screaming and coming in right after them, almost on top of them in fact. And then you had your high-level bombers come in. Well, by that time we had ammunition up, and we started shooting at the dive bombers, and we started shooting at high-level bombers. I never saw . . . I don't remember seeing any more torpedo planes after that. We were just shooting just as fast as we could at almost anything. Anything that moved got shot or got shot at.

Marcello: So anyhow, the high-level bombers are coming in, and these

were the ones where you got two of them.

Miller: Yes, we got . . . they were coming in, and I couldn't estimate how high they were. My job was as a pointer to lead them, and then the other half of the gun crew . . . he was a trainer, and he would more or less elevate vertically while I handled it horizontally. We would get on target, and then he did the shooting because he had the control. When he got on target . . . I always tried to stay ahead of them a little bit, you know. The time it would take from the shell to leave to where the point of impact would be, I would always try to estimate that lead, and we had variations in the sights that would help us on this. I'd get on one, and then he'd try to get on it; and if we both got the same time, well, we'd shoot and we shot down two of them that way.

Marcello: How many people were on the gun crew altogether?

Miller: Well, let's see, it was a five-man crew. You had the pointer, the trainer, two ammunition loaders, and a gun captain who more or less supervised the whole thing and who loaded the shells. You had two men . . . one guy would probably take the ammunition off of the elevator and hand it to the other guy, and he would give it to the gun captain, and then the gun captain would catch it in the butt of his hand, and he would shove it into the breach. He

would look down the breach first to see that it was clear, and then he would shove the shell in it. Then as soon as he was clear, why, he'd holler and the trainer was ready to shoot, and he would shoot. This was a pretty fast operation.

Marcello: So how many rounds did you get off in a minute? How many rounds were you getting off a minute during the attack?

Miller: Well, during the attack, I don't know how many, but I'll tell you one thing--there was no place to stand. Those hot shells--and believe me, those things are hot--was all over. Ordinarily, during practice, why, you would save the shells, but this time we didn't; we were just kicking them out of the way. I remember they were getting so thick that I couldn't work my controls right for my feet dragging on them. I just had two little more or less stirrups that I kept my feet in, and we were kicking them over the side to get rid of them, and I imagine the other gun crews were doing the same thing.

Marcello: Now by this time, I would assume that all the ships were putting up a great deal of resistance.

Miller: Oh, everything . . . everything was shooting then! I mean, the sky was just black with antiaircraft fire! Of course, that was when they started knocking them down; they started taking those planes down after that. Now that last batch

of planes that come through there, there were damn few of them that got away.

Marcello: Could you actually detect a lull between the first wave and the second wave, or did things seem to be going fast and furious all the way through?

Miller: They seemed to be one right . . . everything just seemed to tie together. In fact, it seemed to me like maybe they would make a run and then come back around again. Now I don't know whether they were or not, but it seemed like there was always something going on after the torpedo planes came through. I don't remember ever seeing them come back after the first initial attack.

Marcello: Now you also mentioned that the Ramapo did come under some direct strafing. You might describe this in some more detail, if you remember.

Miller: Well, the machine guns, they would . . . wherever they saw personnel anyplace, they would try to shoot. I don't know whether they was trying to kill them or just confuse them or get everybody all out of "sync" or whatever you want to call it. Anyway, your dive-bomber would come in, and he would make his run, and they had attack planes, I guess, more or less with them, and they did this strafing, the machine-gunning. I don't remember the dive-bombers actually doing . . . now they might have . . . after they made their runs

and got rid of the bombs, they might have started attacking. But they were trying to keep everybody away from the guns. Any personnel that they saw, they shot at.

Marcello: Now was this an occasional thing so far as the Ramapo was concerned, or did the Ramapo come under several of these strafing attacks?

Miller: Well, it was an occasional-type of thing. I don't think it was just a concentrated attack on that ship as a ship. I think it was just more or less that he was running down through there because there was a bunch of them. I mean, these slips where the ships were all moored up . . . he was just more or less coming down across all of them. But, no, I don't believe they actually was picking on the Ramapo as the base ship by itself. It was just shoot, period.

Marcello: What thoughts or emotions are going through your mind while this entire attack is taking place?

Miller: Well, I was very confused at the very beginning and didn't know what was going on. Then after we realized that our people were dying, I got mad. I got very mad, and then I wanted to kill; I wanted to kill anything or everybody I could think of that was doing that to us. Then after it was over with, that's when you got sad.

Marcello: Now you have the noise of battle and so on and so forth. What are the contrast after the action has stopped, so to

speaking? Does it seem real quiet?

Miller: Yes, after all the shooting and everything, it would get quiet. Of course, this was later on. I'd say the whole attack probably lasted three or four hours at the most, but then we stayed on station all day. I remember after the initial attack I did get some clothes on. In fact, one of the men brought me a pair of pants and a shirt. I never did get any shoes on until later. And then they started . . . after all the fighting was more or less over with, they brought some sandwiches--the cooks did--and coffee and one thing and another.

Marcello: What sort of an appetite did you have?

Miller: None. I really wasn't hungry. I don't remember even eating a whole sandwich. I'd take two or three bits out of it and lay it down or throw it away and drink coffee or something like that. I was all "hepped up," you know, under that high tension. I was just jumpy as the devil. Just touch me and I'd just almost jump out of my skin. I was very confused . . . very confused, and I don't understand why.

Marcello: What are some of the rumors you hear going around at this point?

Miller: Well, we heard that they were coming back, which they never did; we heard that they'd landed troops, which they never had. I think the rumor from that was the saboteurs. Oh,

the saboteurs were terrible at that time, as far as I know.

Then we kept wondering about how the other forces were, you know. Like we heard that they completely wiped out everybody over in the air station; we heard that the downtown was all blown up. And as far as I know, they didn't even attack down in the town.

Marcello: You mentioned the saboteurs awhile ago. Did you from any direct observation see the activities of these saboteurs? Or again, did you hear all this?

Miller: Well, we could see some of the results of it, but to actually see him, no, I never did see him. We were too far away, but we could see some of the things that they had done, especially to the oil tank farms because they couldn't have possibly bombed the tank farms, which were rather far away, when they were concentrating on the ships. That's what they were after; they were trying to put the ships out of commission. We never did understand why they didn't come back. I guess it was mainly because they just couldn't-- I don't know--at that time.

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

Miller: Oh, God, yes! I'm telling you, I remember one time after the initial battle was over and you'd had your lull, there

was a flight of pelicans that came in, and, man, they opened up on them! They did try to get a few planes in the air from the air station, and we even fired on them.

Marcello: Now this is that evening, is that correct?

Miller: During the day, during the afternoon. That evening . . . well, in the afternoon more or less, they moved us; they had us moved because we were too vulnerable right there. I mean, if we went up, we'd have took half that wharf there up with us.

Marcello: Now you were loaded at that time; you were ready to go.

Miller: Yes. And in probably in another eight or ten hours, we'd have been at sea. But anyway, they moved us. The first thing they did was to take the torpedo boats off of us; they unloaded them back off. Then they moved us around to the backside of the island. You know, your Battleship Row is more or less an island.

Marcello: Right there at Ford Island.

Miller: Right. And in the back part of it is marshy; it's marshy land and it's not as good as the front part of it as far as mooring. They put us way back there by ourselves, and it was dark at the time. Well, the next morning we were right beside a hospital ship, and we didn't even know it. And as soon as they realized where we were, they made us move again.

We had rumors of ships sunk and blockading the bay area where we got out.

Oh, I remember one thing; we were out of small arms ammunition and I was on a crew, and we took one of the small boats, and we went in and got some ammunition--crates of it--small arms, you know, pistols and stuff like that. We didn't have much aboard ship, and we got a lot of pistols and stuff like that. We didn't have much aboard ship, and we got a lot of pistols and one thing and another. While we were there we . . . there was just about six of us altogether that went in to get this stuff. They had captured one of these little two-man subs. They was telling us about it--some of the guys that was in on the capture. They sent divers down and hooked on to it and cabled the thing and pulled it up out of the water (chuckle). That made us feel good.

And there was a lot of planes shot down, like I said. We even shot down some of our own. I don't know if I helped on them or not. I don't know.

Marcello: Now were these the planes that were coming in off the Enterprise deck that night?

Miller: I don't know where they were coming from. They were just planes coming in. They tried to tell us that they were "friendlies," but, like I said, anything that moved in that air

got shot at--I don't care whose it was.

Marcello: Do you remember the firing at planes that particular evening?

Miller: We were firing at anything. I don't particularly remember any one incident other than . . . like I said, I remember shooting at anything that moved.

Marcello: In the meantime, what did the harbor look like? I'm referring to the surface of the harbor and things of that nature in the immediate aftermath of the attack?

Miller: It was dirty; it was full of debris, all kinds of floating oil, just everything. Of course, Pearl Harbor never was a pretty harbor as far as being clean anyway, but it was worse. And all the burning . . . you had fires all around; you could see them. You could see all the smoke and everything from the battleships and all the warehouses that was bombed and one thing and another--debris from that. Everybody just threw stuff in the water to get rid of it off a ship. You know, it would be peices of canvas where they would tear them down and get rid of them . . . crating, anything like that.

Marcello: Anything flamable was being thrown overboard.

Miller: Well, if it was burning, yes, if it would burn. Anything that would burn, you would get it out of the way; you got rid of it just as fast as you could. You didn't have time to . . .

ordinarily, they wouldn't throw anything like that in, but at that particular time, why, I know I remember seeing parts of planes stuck here and there on the beach and one thing and another.

I don't remember . . . this seems off, of course. Of course, I wasn't really . . . the only one death that I can honestly say I saw was the one aboard our ship. I don't remember seeing any corpse or anything floating in the water. I don't remember . . . I remember a lot of people hurt, you know. After we got ashore, I know I saw a lot of people that was bandaged up and one thing and another, but there was little of it aboard our ship.

Marcello: Would you still describe your emotions in terms of outrage rather than fear?

Miller: I don't remember being that afraid. I would say I was outraged more than any thing else--to think that somebody would do that to us when we hadn't done anything to anybody. I don't remember our being aggressive or anything like that. Our routine was such that we weren't around other people that much. I mean, I never saw a Japanese plane or ship or anything like that up to that time. I didn't even know they were mad at us (chuckle)!

Marcello: Larry, do you have any questions that you would like to add at this time relative to the actual attack itself or

the immediate aftermath?

Bowman: I have just one question. You said that your ship was tied up about, what, 500 or 600 yards from Battleship Row?

Miller: Yes.

Bowman: How far from the Arizona were you?

Miller: About that distance.

Bowman: What was it like when the Arizona exploded? Was there quite a concussion and a raining of debris around you?

Miller: Yes, yes, yes. It was just like a big ball of fire, and smoke and one thing and another, and an awful noise. It was probably two or three times greater than anything we'd heard up to that point.

Bowman: It must have been a stunning experience to have that go right before your eyes like that. Did you know a ship could blow up like that, that a ship could just be destroyed in an instant like that?

Miller: No, I never realized one could blow like that. I never really gave it that much thought as to whether it would blow up or not. You know, after all, the things's all steel, so you wouldn't think it would. But when it did go up and one thing and another . . . of course, at that time when it blew up was when we was beginning to get to our busiest. We were beginning to get our ammunition; we were beginning to fight. And after you get to fighting, you didn't really

have time to look around. Mostly, the observations I made were before we started fighting . . . right before we started our firing . . . or afterwards.

Bowman: Did the thought occur to you during the attack that you're manning a 5-inch gun on board a ship that's loaded with all sorts of fuel, which is nothing but a stick of dynamite ready to go off?

Miller: No, all I wanted to do was kill them. I don't remember thinking of anything about that at that time.

Bowman: If the Ramapo had gone up, you'd have come down somewhere near Guam, wouldn't you?

Miller: Very likely, if there would have been anything left (chuckle).

Marcello: In a situation like this, I assume you really don't have that much of an opportunity to see the so-called "big picture." In other words, you knew what your job is, and you saw . . .

Miller: No. All I saw was right where I was at. I had no idea of what was going on any other place. I was busy at that particular thing and doing that one thing alone. I have no idea what was . . . I don't even know what was going on on the front end of the ship, because I was too busy right there. Of course, afterwards you could get an idea; you looked around then. You could see all the damage and everything. You have no idea of the damage that was done. Oh, it was

. . . I can't remember now all the damage that was done. Of course, it's been a long time ago. But I don't remember ever thinking I was going to get hurt; it never once entered my mind that I was going to be hurt.

Marcello: When did the Ramapo finally get out of Pearl?

Miller: About two or three days later, they got us out and we went back to stateside and got some more oil.

Marcello: Did you have any submarine scares or anything on your way back to the States?

Miller: Oh, no, not then. We didn't have any problem going back. Of course, we had our own patrols--such as they were--then; we had airplanes flying all the time. We had submarine alerts, and they started putting . . . before we ever left, they put the submarine nets up across the entrance, and we had to go through some "red tape" while they took them down let us out, and anytime we ever came back in.

But after that we more or less . . . I never got back into Pearl more than two or three times after that. After that we always went out to sea. We would come in; we'd pick up oil at the States; we'd go back out to sea. I remember we sat out there one time for about thirty days and just went around and around on a spot. We'd go maybe a mile and then another mile and come back, but we'd always stay basically in that spot. And then at night I

remember we had ships come in, and we'd fuel them. That was real hectic while fueling was going on. Any other time, why, there wasn't much. We had several bad scares as far as submarines--I never say any.

After I'd went through Pearl, like I said, we was doing most of our stuff at sea. I went with the fleet. We followed a fleet when they went into the Coral Sea. I never got in any actual battles or saw any, even. We were more or less at a rendezvous point waiting on it, and we were rendezvousing out when they went into some of the other skirmishes that they had along about that time. Pearl was the last actual fighting that I got in to.

We went in with--let's see--the USS Sumner . . . and I think it was the USS Neches, and another tanker or two. The Sumner was a survey ship. We went into a small island called Tongatapu, and we were the first American ships that had been in there since Worle War I. We went in and made harbor facilities, which they have now become a big major harbor for the South Pacific. We went in there and dynamited that reef, opened up areas for ships to come in for mooring. It was a beautiful little island.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Miller, I have no other questions relative to the actual attack at Pearl Harbor. Is there anything else about Pearl Harbor that we need to talk about and that we

haven't brought out at this point?

Miller: I don't really know. I mean, offhand I don't remember, you know . . . oh, there's all kinds of stuff but I don't remember--incidents that happened.

Marcello: Well, I want to thank you very much for having taken time to talk with me. You have said a lot of very 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.

Miller: Well, I'm glad to have helped you in any way. Like I said, it's hard remembering a lot of that stuff between the time it happened and the time now; and you've heard so many different versions that it's kind of hard to remember what actually happened and what you actually experienced and not something that you've picked up off of somebody else. I tried to the best of my memory to give you the things that happened to me, and I hope I was accurate with them.

Marcello: Well, I think you were.