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Interview with

W. R. Sample

March 27, 1978

Place of Interview: Duncanville, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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(Signature)

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Oral History Collection

W.R. Sample

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Duncanville, Texas

Date: March 27, 1978

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing W.R. Sample for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on March 27, 1978, in Duncanville, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Sample in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was stationed at Wheeler Field during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor and the surrounding military installations on December 7, 1941.

Mr. Sample, to begin this interview, just tell me a little bit about yourself. In other words, when were you born, where were you born, your education--things of that nature. Just be very brief and general.

Mr. Sample: Well, I was born in Shelby County.

Dr. Marcello: When were you born?

Mr. Sample: December 6, 1906. I was raised on a farm and got up and traveled around. I went to South Texas and come back and went to California and come back. I couldn't get a job and went to the Army in '39.

Dr. Marcello: You mention that you went in the Army in 1939, and you

were born in 1906. So you were thirty-three years old when you went in the service.

Sample: Right.

Marcello: Am I to assume that economics played a pretty important part in your decision to enter the service at that time?

Sample: Yes, sir, it did.

Marcello: That was in the midst of the Depression yet, wasn't it?

Sample: Right.

Marcello: How did the Depression affect you?

Sample: Well, there was no work; there wasn't nothing that you could do back down in the farming country. You just had to do the best you could.

Marcello: You mentioned that you went to California a couple of times. I assume you were looking for work?

Sample: Well, not then. That was back in '28 when I went out there. I come back, and then the Depression hit. Of course, it was beginning then, and I came back here and couldn't get a job farming. You couldn't get nothing for what you growed. A kid by the name of Simmy Lovell, he was going in the Army. He was up there in Center, and he saw me and I was talking to him. He got after me why I didn't go join the Army. So I told him, "Well, I'll go up there with you." So I went up there, and this guy . . . oh, I can't call that sergeant's name now, but he was the

recruiting sergeant there in Center.

We got to talking, and I told him I'd go if I could go to the Philippines, that I wouldn't soldier in the United States. He said, "Well, give me a couple of days, and let me see if I can find something in the Philippines." So I waited three days and couldn't find nothing. I went back up there, and he said the only thing he had open in foreign service was the Hawaiian Islands, and I said, "I'll take it," just like that.

Marcello: Why did you want to go to the Philippines?

Sample: I don't know. Well, I had an inkling to travel, and the Philippines would have been a good place; it was a nice place. Another thing, you only soldiered a half-day there, and you had Wednesday all day off and Saturday and Sunday. Another thing, you didn't have to do your shoes, your uniforms, or your bunks or anything. They had what they called house boys there, and they would do . . . I think it was for about two or three or four or five pesos a month, and they'd take care of everything. You didn't even have to comb your hair if you didn't want to (chuckle). That was one reason--it was a good place, and it was kind of far away from home. But it turned out I couldn't get there, and I guess it's one of those things.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago in our pre-interview conference

that you did want to get as far away from home as possible.

I gather, then, that the economic situation in those East Texas counties was just terrible around that time.

Sample: It was. Hell, there wasn't no work; there wasn't nothing there; and you just couldn't make it. That was all there was to it. There just wasn't nothing, so I went over there.

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

Sample: I thought it was beautiful.

Marcello: Were you looking forward to a tropical paradise and hula skirts and all that sort of thing?

Sample: Well, I had seen a few Hawaiians in side shows, and I liked their attitude and the way they sang. It was kind of fascinating.

Marcello: How hard was it to get in the Army at that particular time?

Sample: It wasn't hard at all. It didn't seem to be. Of course, I was in Houston, and I asked about the Marines and the Navy, and they said, "No, you're too old." So I more or less was just looking around. I wasn't thinking about going in right at that time, until this kid hit me up to go in.

Marcello: And you mentioned that you actually enlisted in Center, Texas.

Sample: Right, in Center, Texas.

Marcello: Did you go directly from Center, Texas, to the Hawaiian

Islands?

Sample: I went to Houston and was sworn in and went from San Francisco to Angel Island and waited there until . . . well, at that time, they was running them Army transports. I waited and went over on the Leonard Wood. I met up with a guy by the name of . . . have you ever heard of that guy that parachuted out of our first bomber that crashed in Burma?

Marcello: No.

Sample: He was a medical man. Gee, I wish I could think of his name. But anyway, he and I went over there on the same ship together. I heard he was going back to the States in '41. I went over to his office and sat down on his table and crossed my legs; of course, it ain't everybody you can do that with. So I told him, I said, "I hear you're going back to the States." He was a major then. He said, "Yes, 'Slim,' I'm going back. I'm kind of lucky, I guess." I said, "You gonna take me with you?" I said, "You know we come over together." He said, "That's right, we did, didn't we . . . on the old Leonard Wood." I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "No, I don't guess I could," you know.

Marcello: In other words, his tour of duty was actually finished before the actual attack took place.

Sample: Oh, yes. That was before. That was not too long before.

Marcello: Now when you got to the Hawaiian Islands, where were you  
you first stationed?

Sample: Schofield Barracks, in the Medical Corps.

Marcello: And I assume that this is where you took your basic training.

Sample: Yes, basic training right there.

Marcello: Was there anything eventful that happened in basic training  
that you think we need to get as part of the record, or was  
it mainly just the regular Army basic training?

Sample: It was just regular Army training. That was all.

Marcello: How did you get into the Medical Corps?

Sample: That was all I could get into. He said there wasn't nothing  
else open; he'd have to ship me over in the Medical Corps.  
So I said, "Well, that's all right." So I got over there,  
and then I transferred out of there into the MP's and was  
on MP duty there for . . . I believe it was thirteen months  
and twenty-one days, something like that. But anyway, I  
transferred out of that in June or July of '41 and went  
to Wheeler Field.

Marcello: In other words, in June or July of 1941, you actually trans-  
ferred into the Army Air Corps.

Sample: Yes, it was the Army Air Corps. It was a pursuit squadron  
down there at Wheeler Field.

Marcello: In other words, in transferring into the Air Corps, you moved  
from Schofield Barracks over to Wheeler Field.



Sample: Over to Wheeler Field.

Marcello: Okay, since most of your activity centered at Wheeler Field, and since that's where the attack actually took place, let's talk a little bit about your transfer over to Wheeler Field. First of all, how difficult was it to transfer from the Army into the Army Air Corps?

Sample: Well, it wasn't too difficult, because at that time, I had went through that cook and baker school up there--the quarter-master cook and baker school there in Schofield Barracks--and they was always short of cooks in the Air Corps. So I transferred down there as a cook to the headquarters of the 6th Pursuit Squadron, so that's where I was when the blitz come.

Marcello: Now why did you want to go into the Air Corps as opposed to staying in the Army?

Sample: Well, I just liked it better. I didn't have to pull twenty-four-hour guard duty (chuckle), and I didn't have to soldier; I didn't have to do nothing except pull my cook's duty.

Marcello: Describe what Wheeler Field looked like from a physical standpoint. I'm referring to the buildings and the runways and things of that nature. Describe what it looked like.

Sample: Well, you come in off of Kamehameha Highway, and there was a road what we called the back road that went straight through there and went on around and come back around by

the upper side of Pearl Harbor; that would be between Pearl Harbor and Schofield Barracks. It went around and come back in. As you drive from east to west, there would be the buildings all over there. On the south side, there would be your hangars. You had the 6th Pursuit, and you had all your buildings. There was one . . . two . . . all I can remember now that was there was the old 87th Observation Squadron and the 6th Pursuit Squadron, and I think there was another one . . . the 147th or something. The barracks was two-story buildings, and the runway would be south of them buildings just, oh, maybe a hundred yards, maybe not that far. It run east and west, right down by the back of the hangars.

Marcello: Now was it a concrete runway, or was it grass?

Sample: It was concrete. It was just big enough for B-24's or B-17's to take off on. It wasn't too big. It was a nice runway, though, but most of what we had there was pursuit jobs.

Marcello: As you mentioned, you transferred into headquarters and headquarters, 6th Pursuit squadron.

Sample: Yes.

Marcello: Describe what it was like working in the mess hall and working as a cook there at Wheeler Field.

Sample: Oh, it was nice. You only had about--I don't know--a couple

of hundred men to feed. It wasn't too bad. You had an assistant cook and a pastry man and about four . . . I believe it was five or six KP's. It wasn't too bad. You went to work at noon, got off the next day at noon, and then you was off that afternoon and the next day and the next day until noon.

Marcello: In other words, you were twenty-four hours on duty and then off forty-eight?

Sample: Something like that. It was just a loafing job (chuckle). It was nice. I got a lot of compliments in there. One old general come through there, and he said--we was all standing at attention--he said, "What you got cooking sergeant?" I said, "I got roast beef, sir." And I turned around and opened the door and pulled it out of the oven and said, "Would you like a sandwich?" He said, "Yes, I would." (chuckle) After that inspection was over, the first sergeant give me a "chewing out" about it (laughter).

Marcello: Okay, describe what your barracks were like there at Wheeler Field. Now again, I'm referring to your sleeping and living quarters and things of that nature.

Sample: Yes, well, they were great big dormitory-like buildings. Each squadron had one big room upstairs. They was lined up in cots, beds. You had your wall lockers for your clothes. It was a real slick floor; it was concrete, but

it was real nice. They were nice. It was nice to live there. A real nice climate, a beautiful climate; orchids grewed wild there all over the country, and this big fern. It was just a real paradise, that's as near as you can put it.

**Marcello:** Maybe this isn't a good question to ask you, but I'll ask it, anyway. What was the food like there at Wheeler Field?

**Sample:** I don't believe you've ever ate at a restaurant that had as good a food as they had there. They had lots of roast beef; they had chicken or turkey every Sunday, chicken mostly. You had your pork; you had your lamb; and you had a variety of stuff. There was plenty of it, and it was well-prepared. You had a pastry man that baked cakes and made any kind of a cake and stuff that you would want. Pastries of any kind, he could make them. It was nice. We had a mess sergeant, and he put out the menu and we filled it.

**Marcello:** I would assume that given your economic background when you were living over in East Texas, that Army food was pretty good.

**Sample:** Oh, yes. Well, even right today--take a day like now or this day and time--you wouldn't find better food than that nowhere. Nowhere would you find any better food.

**Marcello:** What was the morale like in the Air Corps there at Wheeler Field before December 7, 1941?

Sample: Oh, it was just like a big family. Everybody practically knew everybody. If you didn't know his name, you knew who he was and what he done. There was hardly any rank. Of course . . . I can't think of his name; I'll recall it after while. When I was in the medics there, this Lieutenant Taylor that got one of the Zeros, I was working there in the dispensary, and he sat on a bench there and talked to me and give me a picture of hisself and told me where he was from and this, that, and the other, but I never did see him after that.

Marcello: Now probably the fact that all of you were volunteers had a lot to do with the high morale there at Wheeler Field, too.

Sample: They were all volunteers, because you had no draft or anything like that. Your draft didn't start in until late '41; I believe it was late '41. Because I knew some of the boys from up in Wisconsin.

Marcello: You were mentioning rank awhile ago. I assume that rank was pretty slow in that Air Corps before the war actually broke out.

Sample: Really, it was, but there wasn't too many people there. I mean, you had a lot of men, but your ranks did come kind of slow. But I made a "first and first" cooking down there in the Air Corps, and I don't think that was better than a master sergeant.

Marcello: Now when you say you made a "first and first," that is a military term, and what does it mean for the people who might be listening to this tape later.

Sample: It's a rating. I don't really understand just exactly what it is, but I know it's a rating of a "first and first." In base pay, you don't wear no stripes; it's a specialist. That's what it is; it's a specialist rating.

Marcello: Is it like a 1st sergeant, specialist 1st class?

Sample: No. It's just a "first and first." And I don't know how they determine that "first and first," but anyway, the pay was about five dollars more a month than a master sergeant.

Marcello: Now in the Air Corps at that time, did you have to take written tests and so on to advance in rank?

Sample: Oh, no. No, we never had. We never did all the way up through it. In the Navy, you do.

Marcello: I also gather that athletics and sports played an important part in the life of that pre-Pearl Harbor service. Is that true?

Sample: Yes, they had a big arena there. They had boxing there one night a week. There was a sergeant in the 19th Infantry by the name of Yankoff--he was a Russian--and he kind of promoted it and had a lot to do with it. He was infantry, and that was mostly what was fighting. They had the fights, and they had a few guys that came over there . . . enter-

tainment. Betty Hutton, I believe, came over there one time, but that was after the war started.

Marcello: I gather that those smokers or boxing events were well-attended during that period.

Sample: Oh, yes. Heck, yes, there was a lot. They really turned out for that. Well, it was something to do, you know, and it was a little excitement to see who was going to . . . they'd try to match an infantryman against the artillery or something like that or maybe the 35th Infantry against the 27th Infantry and like that or maybe two of them out of the same outfit. They just had a boxing arena there, and they put on some good shows.

Marcello: Now essentially, what purpose was Wheeler Field supposed to serve? As we mentioned awhile ago, they had fighter planes there. The field could actually handle bombers, however, but essentially it was a fighter base, was it not?

Sample: Yes, right.

Marcello: Now was it designed to more or less protect Schofield Barracks and that area in there?

Sample: Well, it was just like it is today. If the island would have been invaded, they would have been up in pursuit, yes, which they did. I guess they would fly escort for bombers in case they were needed and if the fuel supply would let them fly, too, because we didn't have no air-to-air

refueling systems then.

Marcello: Let's back up just a minute here and talk a little bit, also, about your activities over at Schofield Barracks when you were in the MP's. I think perhaps this is an important part of the story. What sort of work did you do as an MP?

Sample: Well, we just walked patrol. They guys would get out and go down to Honolulu or anywhere else . . . up in Wahiawa, Honolulu, and around Hasbe's beer joint. If guys'd get drunk, we had trucks to pick them and take them back and deliver them to their squadrons and turn them over to the charge of quarters at night. So that was what I was doing there. Then they transferred me after I don't know how long, but they transferred me down to the stockade down there. I done guard duty down there and took prisoners out on details.

Marcello: You mentioned several minutes ago that one of the reasons you wanted to get out of the MP's was because of the relatively poor hours and so on that you had to work.

Sample: If a man went into anything for a career, you wouldn't want to stay in that, because there was no promotion in it, and it was day and night work. You go on a patrol on pay-day nights for about three nights and you'd get in about two and three and four o'clock in the morning, and maybe



you'd be off, though, the next day to catch up on your sleep. But it was boring, tiresome.

Marcello: In other words, you were normally working when everybody else was playing.

Sample: That's right. You had quite a bit of tight security in that. You couldn't talk about certain things, and you just had to "humble down" too much to one or two guys.

Marcello: Now awhile ago you mentioned that one of the towns that you would normally patrol would be Wahiawa.

Sample: Wahiawa, Honolulu, and Hasbe's beer joint.

Marcello: Now Wahiawa was very close to Wheeler Field, was it not?

Sample: Yes, well, it was walking distance, about a mile maybe.

Marcello: And this was where Hasbe's beer joint was located?

Sample: No, Hasbe's was located over . . . it'd be on the west side of Schofield Barracks, on the outside of the post.

Marcello: It was not actually in Wahiawa then.

Sample: No, no, it was up toward Kole Kole Pass.

Marcello: Now let's talk just a little bit more about this Hasbe character, because I think he's kind of important in the story concerning Pearl Harbor. Now the name that we're talking about is Charlie Hasbe.

Sample: I think that's right.

Marcello: He was Japanese.

Sample: He was Japanese. He was a full-fledged colonel in the

Japanese army.

Marcello: Which, of course, you were to find out later on that this was the case.

Sample: Oh, yes.

Marcello: Now was Hasbe's beer joint located in some sort of a town, or was it sitting out there alone?

Sample: No, it was just by itself. He owned most all that property and everything right around it--just a big place out there, a big beer joint. Of course, it was open all the time, but on payday nights it was lots of people out there--lots of soldiers there. They'd have these girls' singing troupes from down in Honolulu to come up there and put on a show for them.

Marcello: And this is one of the places that you had to patrol.

Sample: One of them, yes, sir.

Marcello: Now at the time that you were having duty out and around Hasbe's place, did you ever have any reason to suspect him of being some sort of a Japanese agent or anything of that nature?

Marcello: Well, yes, because one night I was out there and I'd been hearing about little stuff. I asked one of these girls that was a waitress there how Hasbe was, and she said, "Oh, Mr. Hasbe's fine. He's downtown tonight." A little bit later on, I asked the . . . I guess you'd call him a "bouncer"

--he was kind of an overseer there; as they say in Japanese, the ichi ban hanchō. So I asked him, and he said, "Hasbe isn't feeling very well tonight; he's in bed." Back in the back, he had his sleeping quarters in the back. So that raised my curiosity a bit.

Then the next day we was out on pistol practice on a dry run--you just sight in and call your number--so I asked this guy, a lieutenant, about it. I asked him what went on up there at Hasbe's, and he said, "Well, I'll tell you, if you ever mention that again, I'll have you court-martialed and put in the stockade!" Where I made my mistake is that I didn't go to see Major Gee; he was a G-3 there in the Army. He was a short, stocky guy and a heck of a swell guy.

Marcello: Why do you think that lieutenant threatened you when you mentioned the unusual activities taking place up there at Hasbe's?

Sample: Well, it could have been that they was investigating it and didn't want too much talk out on it. . . . too many people to know about it and get started talking about it and spread it around and probably let him get wise to it.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that, even prior to having gone up there to Hasbe's at that particular time, that you had previously heard bits and pieces about things that were

taking place up there. Can you elaborate on that a little bit?

Sample: Well, not too much because I didn't really know too much about it and didn't go into it too much. I don't know, I just didn't realize it.

Marcello: On a typical Saturday night, would there be a lot of drunks in Wahiawa and Honolulu or around Hasbe's place that you would have to bring back?

Sample: Well, nothing much during the week; it was mostly on payday nights for about two or three days.

Marcello: When was payday at that time in the Army or the Army Air Corps?

Sample: It was around the 30th, I believe.

Marcello: You got paid once a month.

Sample: Once a month. But you could draw a little old book of what we called them "show gadgets" or PX checks. They would charge it to what you had coming, and you could go to the PX and buy what you needed. It was just a PX check. It was a little coupon, and it was good for whatever amount you bought.

Marcello: But there normally was quite a bit of hell-raising on the weekend of payday?

Sample: On payday nights, yes. We've sent as many as six truckloads out of Honolulu on payday nights (chuckle).

Marcello: I would assume, certainly, as one gets closer and closer to December 7, 1941, and as the Pacific Fleet moved out to Pearl Harbor that Honolulu was probably wall-to-wall bodies on weekends.

Sample: Oh, yes, it was a lot of them there.

Marcello: After you moved over to Wheeler Field and had become a cook, I would assume that when you had liberty you would occasionally go into Honolulu or the surrounding area.

Sample: Oh, yes.

Marcello: What did you normally do when you went on liberty? You personally.

Sample: Oh, I'd go down there to the Black Cat Cafe and sit there and drink.

Marcello: The Black Cat Cafe was a pretty famous place at that time, wasn't it?

Sample: Oh, yes, it was. It was right across the street on Hotel Street from the YMCA.

Marcello: Hotel Street ought to bring up some memories. Hotel Street, Canal Street, Beretania Street.

Sample: Yes, it does. I remember one time I stopped right in the middle of Beretania Street. There was a dime buried in the asphalt, and I stopped traffic to dig that dime out (chuckle).

Marcello: I would assume that on the weekends one had to stand in line for virtually everything down in downtown Honolulu.

Sample: Yes, some few things . . . not many. Of course, you was limited to . . . you didn't have the supplies that you had before. You had a lot of recreation. I know they put on this dance-a-thon out there--it was marathon dancing--and I got to know one of those girls pretty well. She gave me a big autographed picture of herself. She lost out in the marathon dance, though. Then they had another guy outside, and he'd lost out. He was buried six foot down in the ground in a casket and all that kind of stuff. There was always, of course, swimming everywhere. Haleiwa Beach was known as Soldier's Beach. I'd go out there a few times and pick up a few shells, just whatever you wanted to do.

Marcello: What were you making in terms of salary after you got out to Wheeler Field? Do you recall?

Sample: Twenty-one dollars a month.

Marcello: Well, no, it was twenty-one dollars a month when you first went in the service, but you mentioned you were a sergeant by the time you got out to Wheeler.

Sample: Oh, that went on up to around . . . I don't remember exactly what it was . . . eighty or ninety dollars. But after I got on down to Hickam Field, I was drawing around three hundred dollars or better.

Marcello: And you went to Hickam Field after the Pearl Harbor attack, did you not?

Sample: After Pearl Harbor, yes.

Marcello: Okay, as one gets closer and closer to December 7, 1941, and as relations between the United States and Japan continued to deteriorate, how much thought did you give to the possibility that there might ever be an attack there?

Sample: Well, I didn't know where it was going to come, but I was talking to my dad there--he wanted to know why I went in the Army. I told him, I said--that was only the 28th day of December 1938--I said, "Well, Dad, within two years we're going to be into war, and I'll be located and I'll have a little something coming in." I said, "I won't be running around here with nothing. I'll be located, and I'll have something and be stationed."

Marcello: Now when you thought of war, did you think of it primarily coming in Europe rather than against Japan?

Sample: Well, it was already in Europe. It was practically all over Europe then.

Marcello: But what I'm saying is, when you thought of the United States getting into the war, did you think primarily in terms of them getting into it in Europe?

Sample: Yes, because I told my dad, I said, "Within two years we will be in war," and he didn't seem to think we would . . . or I don't remember his answer. But I figured we was going

to be and which actually we were. Well, it was two years to a day.

**Marcello:** Now how closely were you keeping abreast of world events and things of that nature?

**Sample:** Heck, I was just running helter-skelter over there having a good time and doing what I was supposed to do.

**Marcello:** When you thought of a typical Japanese, what sort of a person did you usually conjure up in your own mind? Now obviously, you must have seen quite a few of them there in the Hawaiian Islands.

**Sample:** I had one Japanese friend there that his name was Bob . . . I called him Bob; I can't recall his last name right now. But he was one of the friendliest guys I ever met. I used to buy whiskey by the cases, and I'd stash it in his house. There never was a bottle of it missed that he didn't pay me for it. He told me after the war started--I was out to his house one time--and he told me, he said, "This is a Japanese house. This is a Japanese home, and you can live here as long as you want to, and it won't cost you nothing." He was that way from before until plumb on up after. I met a lot of barbers--a lot of girls that was barbers there--that I used to go in and get haircuts and shaves from, and they was always nice. On Christmas, they'd always give you a little drink of hot sake. They was nice. There



was a tailor there; he made some shirts and things for me.

Marcello: Now were these people right on the base--on Wheeler Field?

Sample: No, no. They were off right down outside of Kunia Gate going into Schofield Barracks. There was a lot of shops down there. They went plumb on down to the Wilson Bridge, which was over the bayou on the Kamehameha Highway going into Wahiawa. The fact of the business, Wahiawa was just outside of Schofield Barracks.

Marcello: In other words, all those businesses were located outside Wheeler Field because of the personnel living around there.

Sample: These that I'm talking about, they were outside of Schofield Barracks.

Marcello: I see.

Sample: There was a street that went up to Kunia Gate, and then you go on down Kamehameha Highway, and then you went into Wheeler Field down there.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us up to that weekend of December 7, 1941. What I want you to do at this point, Mr. Sample, is to go into as much detail concerning what you remember on that weekend of December 7th, 1941. Let's start on Friday; that would make it December 5th. Can you recall what your routine was on Friday, December 5th, and Saturday, December 6th? Do you recall what you did on either one of those two days?

Sample: No, I don't. I guess I was a cook, because I was off on Sunday. I probably was on duty.

Marcello: Now when you say you were on duty, that meant you simply had to be in the mess hall during that period.

Sample: Yes. See, we went to work at noon, and we got our supper ready. Then we served breakfast and then dinner the next day. Then we were off, and then the next shift come on. They fixed the supper and the breakfast and the dinner, and the next one and so on down. But we fixed three meals, which would be supper, breakfast, and dinner.

Marcello: So when was your shift over during that weekend then?

Sample: It was probably over on Saturday noon, but I don't even remember. But I know I was off Sunday all day.

Marcello: Do you recall whether or not you went into Honolulu or off the base at all on that Saturday?

Sample: Oh, I probably went to Wahiawa, but I don't recall whether I went to Honolulu or not.

Marcello: Normally, what would you do when you went into Wahiawa on a Saturday night?

Sample: Oh, just walk around. There wasn't nothing to do. Go find a beer joint and sit and drink.

Marcello: Now normally, on a Saturday night there at Wheeler Field, what would be the condition of the men when they came back

on the base?

Sample: Oh, some of them would be pretty "looped up"; some of them wouldn't be. You know, on an average, it was a pretty good bunch of guys.

Marcello: In other words, it was more or less a mirror of civilian life, so to speak.

Sample: Yes, it was. Headquarters and headquarters of the 6th Pursuit was more like a big family. Everybody got along good and never had no arguments about anything; it was just one big bunch of men that got along good.

Marcello: Now is it not also true that if one didn't have the duty, Sunday was kind of a day of leisure?

Sample: Oh, yes. If you wasn't on duty, you could go anywhere and do whatever you wanted to do.

Marcello: Could you stay in bed more or less as long as you wanted to on Sunday morning?

Sample: Oh, yes, on Sunday there was no regulation against being . . . there was no time that you had to be up.

Marcello: Sunday was a good day for an attack, in other words.

Sample: Yes. Perfect.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us then to that Sunday morning. Once more, I want you to go into as much detail as you can remember as events unfolded on that Sunday morning. Do you remember what time you got up?

Sample: Oh, I don't remember just what time I got up, but I was dressed by eight o'clock--fully dressed. I probably went down and had coffee before that.

Marcello: What were your plans for that Sunday? What were you going to do?

Sample: I was standing up on this upper deck looking right straight down at Pearl Harbor and wondering if the aircraft carrier Hornet was in. I was thinking about going down and having Sunday dinner with this chief petty officer. His name was Weatherman, and he was the weather man on this Hornet. I was thinking about going down there and having dinner with him; that was a few minutes before eight o'clock. So we was standing there--me and two more guys. They was talking to themselves; I was just standing there looking and thinking.

Marcello: What sort of a day was it in terms of climate and weather?

Sample: Beautiful. Beautiful as you ever saw.

Marcello: A good day for an air attack?

Sample: It was just clear. There wasn't a cloud, I don't think, in the sky. We heard three planes, and we looked to our right, which would be west, and they was about 300 yards from us or maybe more.

Marcello: From what direction were they coming?

Sample: They were coming in from the north . . . a little northwest.

Marcello: Through Kole Kole Pass?

Sample: Kole Kole Pass, they come through there. They come over Lualualei and then over Kole Kole Pass.

Marcello: Describe their flight coming in. Were they flying low, at a fast speed?

Sample: Yes, I'd say they wasn't over a thousand feet high. One of these planes--we had a big hot-topping place out there where they built roads and air strips and stuff--they fired at these men out there on this scaffold; they were working out there. This one guy standing there by me said, "Wonder what he's shooting at?" This other guys said, "You see that mosquito on his wing? He's shooting him off." Just about that time at the west end of the runway . . . the fueling station was there; that's where the fueling station was. The first bomb hit there at five minutes until eight o'clock.

Marcello: Now was it one of these three planes that dropped that bomb?

Sample: No, they were headed on into Honolulu. They were going right straight into Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: Okay, so what happened when you heard and saw that bomb being dropped there at the fuel depot?

Sample: Well, we didn't know what was going on. We began to wonder what had happened to the Navy and this, that, and the other; they claimed that they had everything under control.

Marcello: Did you know these were Japanese planes yet?

Sample: No, we didn't, really. The first three, we didn't. But after these dive bombers came in . . . they was two-passenger. They had a pilot and a gunner in there, and it was open cockpit--old-type planes, stationary landing gears. The next plane come in after that first one missed the filling station . . . the next one come in; he dropped his bomb and up went the fueling dock. They just come right on up the hangar line and got every building and every plane. All them planes was lined up on the runway for Saturday's inspection.

Marcello: I was going to ask you why they had the planes lined up in the nice, neat rows.

Sample: Well, on a Saturday . . . well, General Short sent an order out that he would be up for an inspection: "Have all planes pulled off the dispersed positions and put on the runway for inspection." Well, we was out there in drill and went through this inspection, and he said, "Disperse the planes on Monday morning," and back to Honolulu he went. So Sunday morning they got all of our planes except two or three or four P-36's . . . older. That's all we had.

Marcello: Okay, so just to back up a minute. You initially see these three planes coming in, and they do some strafing out there in the hot-topping area. Is that what you called it?

Sample: Yes, that's what it is.

Marcello: Okay, now then around five minutes until eight o'clock,  
the dive bombers come in.

Sample: Yes, they came right in.

Marcello: The first plane makes his run and drops his bomb but actually  
misses the fuel depot.

Sample: Yes, right.

Marcello: The second plane comes in, and his bombing is accurate.

Sample: He got it.

Marcello: Okay, what do you do at that point then?

Sample: Well, we didn't know what to do.

Marcello: Up until this point, you're spectators, so to speak.

Sample: Spectators up until that happened. After that happened, it  
just went up like a blank mind. All you could do was stand  
there and look and squat behind the railing, which was a  
big concrete railing around the building about waist-high,  
in case they strafed the buildings, which they did strafe  
a lot of them. They strafed the hospital and the infantry  
barracks up there.

Marcello: Now mainly, were these dive bombers dropping their bombs,  
and then as they came out of their dive, were they strafing?  
That is, the man in the back seat, was he strafing?

Sample: Yes. They wasn't over fifty foot above the ground, and  
they were strafing up the hangar line. After they dropped

the bomb, they went right on out over the hangar line. They would be flying east, and I don't know where they went to from there. Of course, we didn't go out . . .

Marcello: But was it that tail gunner that was doing most of the strafing?

Sample: He was the gunner; he was the guy that was doing the strafing, and the pilot was doing the bomb-dropping.

Marcello: Could you distinguish the features of these people?

Sample: Oh, you could see them, yes. Oh, sure.

Marcello: What'd they look like?

Sample: Well, you could tell they was Orientals. You could see the color just like you and I sitting right here. Some of them would be smiling with a great big old grin. Then about the second or third plane that come in got the barracks that I was in.

Marcello: When you say he got the barracks, what do you mean?

Sample: Well, the bomb . . . some of them said it didn't release completely right--we don't know and never will know--but it come through the north side of our barracks and went down and exploded on the mess hall floor.

Marcello: Now you are still up on the second floor yet.

Sample: I'm still on the second floor. But it took out the whole north side of that building and piled everything up in there, and there was seven guys in the mess hall that was



killed.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that the bomb exploded in the mess hall in the barracks. The mess hall where you worked was right there in the barracks?

Sample: Yes, it was right under where I was standing.

Marcello: Theoretically, you could have possibly been down there on duty when that bomb struck.

Sample: I could have been, yes. If that would have been my tour of duty, I would have been there.

Marcello: Okay, about how much time has elapsed at this point, that is, at the time that the bomb was dropped in the barracks?

Sample: Oh, not over a couple of minutes. Three or four minutes at the most.

Marcello: Describe the jolt or the vibrations and the explosion and so on.

Sample: Well, the whole building shook. The whole wall went out. It just blowed everything up in a pile in that kitchen. It hit just right . . . it just blowed everything up in a pile.

Marcello: Okay, so what did you do at that point then?

Sample: We was running back inside. In fact, I was standing inside the building when that come down. There was a sergeant, and he was about four or five foot away from me or maybe six or eight feet from me, and it killed him just right there right then. It knocked me to my knees and hands. It didn't last

long. After that we went trying to get the guys up and out, trying to pick up the dead boys and get them out.

Marcello: I assume that during this entire period Wheeler Field wasn't able to put up any resistance. You really had nothing to resist with, did you?

Sample: Yes, we had those two P-36's. This Lieutenant Taylor . . . and I forget the other lieutenant's name. Lieutenant Taylor got up and got one, and this other lieutenant got two. They was down at Haleiwa Beach, and they heard it, and they started back in. They was machine-gunning them when they turned around just as they crossed Wilson Bridge. They went back to Haleiwa Beach and got in these two planes. I believe that I'm right. I think these two planes was at Haleiwa Beach or down there somewhere. But they went back and got airborne, and they got three of them--the two of them.

Marcello: Were there any of the personnel putting up ground fire there at Wheeler? I'm referring now to rifles, pistols, or anything of that nature.

Sample: Well, the supply sergeant was in downtown Honolulu, and all of our guns was locked up, and he had the keys with him. We had one machine gun--one .50-caliber machine gun on the fire station--and it was operated by the prisoners that was in the little old stockade there in the fire station.

Marcello: Did nobody make any attempts to break into the armory and get out the weapons?

Sample: No. I got issued a .45-caliber pistol and 200 rounds of ammunition at about three or four o'clock that afternoon.

Marcello: Approximately how long did the attack last there at Wheeler Field?

Sample: Well, it didn't last over . . . I don't guess it lasted ten minutes.

Marcello: And everything had been destroyed by that time.

Sample: Everything there had been destroyed. I was out on the runway and walked down through there and counted ninety P-40 engines. We had a good pursuit squadron there.

Marcello: Okay, so what did you do then when the attack had actually been completed?

Sample: Well, all we could do was go and help and do what we could to help pick up the dead and get them loaded.

Marcello: Now at that particular stage, how would you describe the reaction of the personnel there? Were things getting organized, or was there still a great deal of confusion and panic?

Sample: There was confusion. There was people . . . you couldn't hardly find nobody to do nothing. When you could find some of them, they wouldn't help. I had one buck sergeant

refuse to help me pick up some dead boys out of the kitchen. I threatened him with a court-martial if he didn't help me, which would have been pretty severe.

Marcello: Okay, so you mentioned, then, that you were looking for the dead and the wounded. Where precisely were you working at that time then?

Sample: In the headquarters, 6th Pursuit--in the kitchen.

Marcello: And how many people were killed in that bomb hit?

Sample: I believe there was . . . let's see, there was three guys . . . there was about six or seven--I don't remember exactly how many--but they were all killed. All the KP's--I believe it was either six or seven of them--but I don't remember just exactly how many.

Marcello: I would assume this was a rather gory job, was it not?

Sample: Oh . . . gory. You'd try to pick up somebody, and you'd get blood all over you. In fact, I was bloody all over trying to pick them up, hug them up to try to lift them. A dead man is one of the hardest things . . . I've picked up a lot of stuff in my life, but that's the hardest.

Marcello: You're referring to the fact that the dead man seems to weigh so much more.

Sample: It's just like picking up a sack of water or something else. You just can't hardly lift him; I don't know why.

Marcello: How long did you engage in this sort of operation . . .

in gathering the dead and the wounded?

Sample: Oh, it wasn't but just a little while, because we had them all out and they was put on trucks and took to Honolulu.

Marcello: What'd you do at that stage then?

Sample: Just went out, went wherever I could and looked, watched a dogfight. It was up northeast, way up high--two planes. I hid behind a tree; I didn't know whether I'd get shot or not. I was just like . . . something . . . I just don't know that I can tell you just exactly. I didn't know what to do, where to go, and what was happening. I knew that we'd been bombed.

Marcello: Were there a lot of fires and so on there at the base?

Sample: The fires were in the hangars and the planes; that was all big fires.

Marcello: That, of course, is what the Japanese were going after. Like you mentioned awhile ago, probably something happened that that one bomb hit the barracks. They probably were not deliberately trying to hit the barracks.

Sample: No, they was after a hangar right straight in front of us. That must have been about the third plane that come in, because the first two got the filling station. The third one is the one that messed . . . somebody that was watching it said that the bomb hung for just a second and throwed it off of its line. He was diving down and this bomb kind

of tilted just a little bit off . . . didn't go straight.  
It just kind of tilted down just a little bit more than  
the others.

Marcello: How would you describe your own emotions during the attack?  
Would you describe your emotions as being fear?

Sample: I was scared. I didn't know what in the heck to do. I  
was scared; sure I was. Everybody else was scared. We  
was all wondering what was happening to the Navy. We could  
see it boiling with black smoke down there. You see, before  
the bombing, there was a sergeant--he was in the Signal  
Corps--who was out there on the coast somewhere on listening  
phones. He called in and told them--that was about seven  
o'clock or maybe a little before--that it sounded like  
there was hundreds of planes taking off about a hundred  
miles at sea. They told him he'd better go home and sleep  
it off; he'd been up too long. He's the guy that got the  
lieutenant's rating out of that deal.

Marcello: Now you mention that you got a .45-caliber pistol and 200  
rounds of ammunition around five o'clock that evening.

Sample: And then we stood on the side of a hill all night long in  
the rain.

Marcello: It rained that evening.

Sample: Rained all night.

Marcello: What were some of the rumors that you heard in the aftermath

of the attack and as you were out there on that hill?

Sample: Oh, there was a lot of talk about the island going to be invaded, and that was the one reason that we were out there on guard.

Marcello: Where was this hill located?

Sample: Right southwest of Wheeler Field.

Marcello: How many of you were there on this hill?

Sample: There was about twelve, fifteen, twenty, maybe thirty.

Marcello: What'd you talk about? What sort of conversation did you have?

Sample: We didn't hardly talk. You tried to stay dry and warm. You get wet; you get cold. That night air over there is pretty chilly. You can always sleep under a spread over there. In the daytime, you're comfortable; it was hot.

Marcello: You had no tents or shelter halves or anything like that out there?

Sample: No, no, no. All you had . . . if you was lucky enough to have a raincoat, that's all you had . . . with a gun.

Marcello: I've read that there were quite a few trigger-happy servicemen around that night? Did you hear very much firing?

Sample: Oh, yes, yes. You could hear them shooting all over the place.

Marcello: Did you fire any?

Sample: No. The next morning just about sun-up, there was a bird

down on a pineapple stalk, and I shot him off.

Marcello: Why did you do that?

Sample: Just to be shooting, I guess. Well, I was pretty good with a pistol, and I told a guy that I was going to kill that bird. He said I couldn't hit him, and I said, "I can hit him." I did--I killed him. I guess it was an English sparrow. But when that bullet hit him, it wasn't nothing but a powder of feathers.

Marcello: If you had 200 rounds of that .45-caliber ammunition, you must have been pretty well loaded down, because that's pretty heavy.

Sample: I had all my pockets full. I said 200; it might not have been that many. But I know I had a pocket full of it.

Marcello: How long did you stay out there on that hill?

Sample: All night. The next morning we come in about a little after sun-up.

Marcello: We haven't mentioned chow at this point. Did you have an appetite, or did you eat any at all on December 7th?

Sample: I don't remember, to tell you the truth, whether we ate or not. We didn't serve no meals; we might have had sandwiches or something--what they could fix.

Marcello: Were you fully expecting an invasion to occur? Did you believe that rumor?

Sample: No, really not. You know how a guy is at war. It's just



like everything else; you hear everything except the truth and you didn't pay no attention to none of it. But you'd wonder what was going on, but you couldn't ask nobody. Nobody knew nothing; they wouldn't tell you if they did.

**Marcello:** When you had a chance to look at things a little more calmly, describe what the damage on the base looked like.

**Sample:** Well, our building was a shambles. All our planes and hangars was completely gone. That's about it.

**Marcello:** Did your attitude toward the Japanese change?

**Sample:** Oh, Lord, yes! But those Japanese people there on the islands . . . the ones I knew were just as good a people as you'd want to meet. All before, during, and after the war, I had Japanese friends there that never changed. They was just as honest as an American was.

**Marcello:** What was the morale like on the base after the attack?

**Sample:** It was kind of spotted. They began to ship those people out, move them from on down in other places. You didn't have as close a contact with the guys after that. After the first week, they started shipping the guys out. Some of them went . . . well, there was one boatload of engineers out of the 3rd Engineers that was headed for the Philippines. I don't know where they went; I just knew some of the guys out of there. They began to move

them out. Of course, they kept some of the infantry there for quite awhile, but they finally moved them on out. I don't know where they went.

Marcello: When did you finally move out of Wheeler Field?

Sample: That was, I believe, February or March. I don't remember when.

Marcello: Of 1942?

Sample: Of '42.

Marcello: So you weren't there, yourself, too long after the attack took place.

Sample: No. No, I went down to a big school down there in Honolulu and started flying and pulling tow targets for that gunner school.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Sample, I think that's probably a pretty good place to end the interview. I want to thank you very much for having taken time to participate in our project. You've said a lot of very interesting and important things. I'm sure that scholars are going to find your comments very valuable some day when they use them to write about Pearl Harbor.

Sample: Well, I don't know anything else that I really could add. Only, the Navy didn't have no guns. They had to pull all their guns for a big inspection on Saturday, and Kimmel told them they were to re-assemble them on Monday morning.

So that's the way we were caught.

Marcello: Well, again, I want to thank you very much.