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CHESTER MILLMAN
December 7, 1978

Place of Interview: Las Vegas, Nevada

Interviewer: Ronald E. Marcello

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Oral History Collection

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Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Chester Millman for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on December 7, 1978, in Las Vegas, Nevada. I'm interviewing Mr. Millman in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was aboard the cruiser USS Phoenix during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Mr. Millman, to begin this interview, just very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself.

Mr. Millman: I was born on October 19, 1919, in Lowell, Massachusetts. We moved to Chelmsford, Massachusetts, because . . . my mother and father moved there because of my health. After we moved there, I was never sick a day. In those days, they told people . . . that I should be in the country, but I only moved three miles.

Anyway, I always wanted to join the Navy, and I kept pestering my mother for years before. At one time up in Massachusetts, it was about the most patriotic state for people going in the Navy of any state in the Union. At

one time, we were number four in the United States for people in the Navy. Were you aware of that?

Marcello: No, I certainly wasn't.

Millman: It's changed today now, but at that time everybody wanted to go in the Navy. I graduated from Chelmsford High School in 1938, and I still wanted to go in the Navy, but my parents wouldn't let me.

Finally, I went in the CCC, because in those days there was the Great Depression going on. Due to the Depression, I was underage. You had to be eighteen or more, or twenty, to get a job. Jobs only paid forty cents an hour. I kept thinking about a chief petty officer's pay at that time, and it was \$126. That was more than my mother and father were both making together. I kept pestering them, and they wouldn't sign the papers. So from the CCC . . . I was up in New Hampshire and in Massachusetts.

Then one day I took off and went to Boston. While I was in Boston, it was about eight degrees. I was there on the night of January 8th, and I had no place to stay, and I had no money. I just stayed awake all night and got up in the morning on January 9th. I went in an all-night movie for a while. I hate to tell you, but it was in a tough section of Boston, and I was propositioned by everybody and everything. As a matter of fact, a couple of vice squad detectives grabbed

hold of me and wanted me to set up a fellow to arrest him, but I told them I wouldn't. When I got away from them, I ran. Boston was a tough town in those days.

I went down to the Post Office Building, and I got there early and got in line. There were only a couple ahead of me. You wouldn't believe this, but there were about three or four hundred trying to join the Navy. Back then they only took four of us. I proceeded to take a train home; I had enough money to get a train ride to Lowell. I came home and told my mother I had joined the Navy. They weren't too disappointed. They were more sorry, I think, that I was going to go away. That was on January 9th, but they had a waiting list in those days, and it took until May to get in.

Marcello: And what year was this?

Millman: It was 1938.

Marcello: Why was it that you wanted to join the Navy as opposed to one of the other branches of the service?

Millman: I hate to tell you this. For one thing, it was the pay. The Army pay was very low. They had no Air Force in those days, so the only alternative was the Army and the Navy . . . and probably the Coast Guard, but nobody ever thought of that. The Navy in those days was the first-class service because of the pay and things like that. There used to be a saying, "The Army does the work; the Marines get the uniform; and the

Navy gets the pay." They had different pay scales, more so than they have today. Each service had its own pay scale. I don't know if you were aware of that or not, but that happened.

I waited around and got out of the CCC camp, and my mother and father gave me some spending money, but spending money in those days wasn't much. After awhile, I got a little perturbed that I wasn't going to go, even after the Navy wrote my father and mother a letter saying how well I did on the exams and things like that. After hearing everybody ask me, "When are you going to leave? When are you going to leave?" it got kind of boring. I said that I would write the Navy recruiting office in Boston and tell them that if I didn't hear from them by a certain date, they would take my name off the list, because I was getting a little impatient. All of a sudden . . . I think I mailed the letter one day, and then the next day a letter came from them. The letters must have crossed in the post office system, because in those days it was a slow system. The letter told me to report, so I went down to Boston on May 25, 1938, and proceeded to go to Newport, Rhode Island.

There we had twelve weeks of training. We had three weeks of detention, where you couldn't have movies or anything. After your days of drills and going to mess hall and back to

this one building, you were detained in a closed area. You couldn't even have visitors. After the three weeks was over . . . think they called it detention, and I think they were interested in seeing if anybody had any diseases, It was more or less like a quarantine, Then I proceeded to be transferred to the USS Phoenix.

Marcello: Let's back up here a minute, because I have a few more questions I want to ask. Did the fact that we were in the midst of the Depression have any influence on your decision to join the Service?

Millman: Oh, sure. I didn't have enough money for college, My parents were poor. Like I said, they each made forty cents an hour-- sixteen dollars a week. The NRA was just before that, and that's when they got the sixteen dollars a week, A chief's pay--\$126 a month--looked great, with room and board furnished. Then for retirement after twenty years, you got \$63 a month. That was the retirement in those days--\$63--and that looked like a gold mine. I was an athlete in high school, but in those days they didn't give full scholarships for sports. You had to play two sports, and most of the time you had to pay a portion of the tuition. My folks couldn't afford it. I didn't want to be a burden by asking them, and I wanted to be on my own. I was turned down from one college because my hands were too small. I was a quarterback during my senior

year. It's hard to believe, but the footballs were like basketballs in those days. A football coach looked at me and said, "You're no quarterback, Your hands aren't big enough; your fingers aren't long enough." That ended my chances of getting a scholarship at Holy Cross. That's why I joined the Navy--for monetary reasons. But then again, I was thinking that by going into the Navy I might have a possibility of going to the Academy. When I got in the Navy, I found out . . . by the time I took the Academy examinations, I was too old and they wouldn't let me go. That was the end of that.

Marcello: Is there anything eventful that happened in boot camp that you think we need to get as part of the record, or was it the normal Navy boot camp?

Millman: I'll tell you, it was not uneventful. I had a lot of experiences there. Many a time, we used rifles . . . I don't know if anybody had told you this. Our rifles had all the bluing off them, and you had to emery them every night with emery cloth and oil them. You'd wear whites in those days, and if you had any dirt on your uniform, they'd really rack you for it.

One night I was walking a post--Newport was pretty foggy--and I put my rifle in a trash can after I had cleaned it up and walked my post along the water there without my rifle because the next morning I didn't want to be dirty and everything else. The next thing I know, I went back to get relieved,

and when the fellow came to relieve me, my rifle was gone (chuckle). The officer had come along and took my rifle. They proceeded to make me go out on the rifle range and pick up five buckets of empty shells or casings in the dark on my hands and knees. I proceeded to go and get the shells and things like that, but they didn't give me any other thing. The officer was pretty easy on me, and I was surprised because they were putting people in the brig in boot camp in those days for the least little thing. That was a cardinal sin-- walking the post like that without a rifle.

While we were in boot camp, one of the fellows got killed when he was cleaning his rifle. Every night we had to clean our rifles and cartridges because the salt air would rust them and things like that. They were shining them right down to the steel--no bluing on them. He proceeded to be shining his rifle, and he had it in his armpit. We shot blanks . . . and it is hard to believe, but a blank killed him. He hit the trigger guard, and he hadn't taken the shell out. It caught him in the armpit, and it killed him. He died, more or less, from a ruptured artery or something, and the blood just poured out and he died.

There were three other fellows from my home town there that ended up there in boot camp with me at the same time. Since that time, one has died. All three of us were in Pearl Harbor,

and all came through the war okay. One was aboard the Phoenix with me, but he got transferred.

Marcello: Where did you pick up the Phoenix?

Millman: Philadelphia. We went aboard in October, 1938.

Marcello: Describe what the Phoenix was like from a physical standpoint.

Millman: The Phoenix was 608 feet long, sixty feet wide. As a matter of fact--people don't realize this--the Phoenix was longer than the battleships in Pearl Harbor. The battleships were only 588 feet long. I was talking with some of the battleship sailors yesterday about this. They were amazed at the length of those bob-tailed cruisers,

It was one of our newest class of cruisers, and was a fine type of ship. I think there were nine of them built, and they were all built on the East Coast--Philadelphia, New York. Within two years, all of them were in commission.

The ship had fifteen 6-inch .47-caliber guns, and they were semi-automatic. In other words, they had brass casings with . . . they put the shell in and put a brass casing in. Ships before that used to use bagged ammunition and things like that. This type of ship had 6-inch guns, and we had eight 5-inch .25's. They had a very short barrel. Most of the people on those guns had a hearing impairment, because they had a very short barrel; they were only 125 inches long. They were open mounts, right out in the open. In other words,

if one gun was firing, sometimes it might be right over the crew right next to them, because there were very close positions.

I was on the number seven gun when I first went aboard the Phoenix. I was an electrician, but at first I was in the deck force, I worked in the Sixth Division, and I was a trainer on one of those guns. They trained the hell out of us. They kept training us days and days firing those guns. But we never used ammunition, so it got sort of tiresome. Later on, it proved that training is very beneficial.

I was also on a boat crew, officer's boat crew, and during that time I was assigned making the fancy work on these boats, because in those days you had to know how to tie twenty knots before you could leave boot camp. My first job, because the ship was new, was working for what was called a coxswain in those days, not a boatswain. Today they call them boatswain's mate third class. C.J. Horn had the officer's boat, and he was in charge of making the fancy work for it.

In those days, a coxswain didn't talk to you like today. There was no familiarity in those days. There was a class distinction (chuckle), as funny as it may seem, but people don't believe it today. They were third class in those days, and it took them six, seven, eight years sometimes to make third class. They were always a plateau above you. Also, they

kind of looked down on you, because most of us fellows had high school educations, and this was a new breed coming in the Navy. At the time before that, I would say just by my own estimation that 50 per cent were not high school graduates, but they were petty officers, Here comes a new breed, and they used to think we were a wise bunch of punks who knew everything. There was a little friction over that, and the resentment went both ways. We were eager to go--a different breed. It was probably like after I was in the Navy awhile and then the college kids started coming in. We thought the college kids are wise cats who thought they knew everything. There was a little friction between the people on that level.

Today you'd never think of it, because around here during these conventions [Pearl Harbor Survivors Association] we talk about it, and we still admire those fellows. When you look back, the ones that didn't have the education were some of the better men. You took their traits and habits for granted.

As I was saying, I was making this fancy work, and I used to think, "Oh, if the fellows back home ever see me making this stuff!" This was girls' stuff, tieing these knots and making these curtains for the boats, making tassels and taking canvas . . . it was an odd way of doing it, and I haven't seen it done since. They used to take canvas, and we'd strip

the threads out that went horizontal and leave the vertical threads down. That was your working material. Up to a certain number, you'd have eight to ten or twelve inches, and that would fold over your rod, and you'd make your fancy work from that. So it was beautiful work when you got done.

Like I said, C.J. Horn, the boat's coxswain, he knew how to do this pretty well, and he was a good instructor and he was hard. You'd think he was the meanest bastard in the world in those days, and you'd call him every name. Later on, I look back at it, and I admire the man.

Marcello: As you look back on it, I'm sure that you were still treated as nothing more or less than a raw "boot" when you first went aboard the Phoenix.

Millman: That's correct. We were raw "boots." As a matter of fact, that company that I was in took people from Michigan, Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Massachusetts. They only took a company in those days every two weeks into boot camp. There was only about seventy or eighty in the company, but they came from the East Coast regions all the way down to Virginia and all the way into Michigan. A lot of them were farm kids, and they'd never seen salt-water before. In those days, they didn't have a mode of transportation to go. I was fortunate to be near the ocean and knew a little bit about the water. We were all raw "boots," is correct.

One of the fellows could never get over seasickness, and he was a diligent sailor. He was one of the best we had, and he was one of the hardest workers. As soon as we threw the line off the dock and were going down the Delaware River, he'd get seasick. It was ironic, but later on in the war, he got assigned to a "P.C.," but he wanted to stay in the Navy,

That was a difference of people in those days. When you gave a commitment and signed up for something, most of the people would want to see their commitment fulfilled. When you signed a contract, it meant something in those days. Nowadays, contracts are made to be broken, it seems like. In those days, when you gave your word . . . when you went in . . . I'd say that out of the whole bunch, the ones that were in my company, only one got kicked out of the Navy, and he got kicked out in boot camp. That is a sad experience and we all remember it.

I guess when you first went aboard the Phoenix, they certainly did let you know that you were just right out of boot camp. Oh, yes! You didn't know when the day began and ended (chuckle). They started us in the morning, and we'd holystone decks. We . . . to do our duties and . . . it took . . . years to build . . . ships . . . and the grime and dirt on the decks . . . they were . . . decks. They'd get us up at 4:30 in the morning.

We'd get out there and scrub those decks--and it was cold--with no shoes and stockings on. You'd get out there and put sand and lime on top to get the grease out, and you'd take the holystone . . . a holystone--you never hear that expression anymore--was sort of like a brick they put in boilers. You'd sort of drill a hole in it, and the handle would be the pivot point. You'd put it between your arms, and you'd bend over that and holystone those decks. We did that every day. They put sand on it to get the grime off. It took four years to build a ship, and that grime was pretty thick when we first went aboard.

They wanted the ship to look in top shape when we went to South America on our shakedown cruise. God, they'd start us in the morning, and we didn't get done until six or seven o'clock at night! We had brightwork call twice a day. Brightwork call would sound, and we'd shine the brightwork and the turnbuckles on the lifelines and things like that. It was really a job.

Marcello: In other words, like most people right out of boot camp, you were put into the deck force, like we mentioned earlier.

Millman: Right. Nobody got a chance to go striking right off. They called them "deck apes" in those days. You were just thrown in the deck force, and that was it. There was no preferential treatment like going right away to be an electrician or anything

like that. I had a chance to go to a school, but I turned it down because I wanted to be a metalsmith in the Navy. I think it was due to the fact that my uncle was a metalsmith. That was a craft, so instead of going back to a mill, I figured I'd be a metalsmith, an aviation metalsmith. I took the examination, and I guess they didn't have enough to go or something. They said, "You've got good enough marks to be a hospitalman." I said, "Not me! I'm not going to be any 'bedpan jockey!' Not me! I'll go in the deck force rather than be a hospitalman!" That didn't appeal to me too much, so that's how I ended up in the deck force.

Marcello: What was the food like aboard the Phoenix?

Millman: You could almost know the menu every day. We always had beans on Wednesdays and Saturdays--beans in the morning on Wednesdays and Saturdays. They always made bean soup. The odd part of it is, before I joined the Navy, I wouldn't eat beans because, coming from Boston, having Boston baked beans, I sort of didn't care for beans at the beginning of my time in the Navy. It was ironic . . . when I first came home in 1945, they had beans. My mother said she'd give me something different from the family when they had beans. I said, "I'll take some," and she almost died of shock. All these years, before I left home, I wouldn't touch a bean.

I did make one vow, though, as long as we're talking about

eating. I said I would never eat chicken after I left home, because my family had chickens. I had to clean the chicken coops and things like that. That's why I didn't want to be a hospitalman, probably. I couldn't stand it. When I left home, I said, "I'll never eat chicken again," which I haven't. That's probably amazing to you.

Marcello: In general, how do you rate the food aboard the Phoenix?

Millman: I'd say it was very good. I had no complaints about the food. It was just that it was the same menu. You didn't even have to look at the menu to see what it was. The odd part about the menu on the Phoenix was that after a while the menu never changed for years. One man would go in there as a cook striker and later on pick up where the other cook left off, and he'd be cooking the same things. So the menu never changed in years, and it got a little monotonous. You could almost know what the menu was every day.

I was a heavy eater, very heavy eater--I still am--but I never gained much weight, though. I'd say I was one of the heaviest eaters aboard the ship. They'd give you all you wanted if they didn't run out. I'd have three or four helpings.

When we first came aboard the ship, we had mess cooks that would come along and slosh out the food. That was not too good. I didn't get seconds and thirds then. It was later

on when they had the trays and cafeteria-style eating; that's when I could get all the food I wanted. The other way, they would come down with so much, and you got allocated so much for a table, and that was it. When they changed it over--a couple of years afterwards when they went to the cafeteria-style--that increased my chances of getting more food.

I can't complain about the food--a lot of starches and potatoes and things like that. Frozen chicken . . . but when they had chicken, I wouldn't eat it. I'd eat the rest of the stuff. They had ham. It was just a little monotonous eating when you look back. If your wife served you the same thing today, you'd probably get rid of her (chuckle)--the same food day after day.

Marcello: Did you ever have mess cooking duty?

Millman: Yes, I did. It didn't last long. That's later on. I went into "E" Division, I had mess cooking duty. I think I was only on it three days, and I was taking . . . like I said, it was cafeteria-style. I had these big, deep pans and I was taking the soup from the elevator, which went down between the deck and the galley. I was carrying it over there, and I hit it on a thing, and the soup poured all over me and burnt me and burnt me pretty well. But I didn't dare go to sickbay or anything, because in those days you didn't have

much choice of justice. If they could show fault, it was simply your fault.

Marcello: I'd gather that mess cooking could be profitable on occasions, however, especially when payday came.

Millman: Right. If you had a good mess cook, you'd tip him. They'd hustle a little more to get things then. Most people who got put on mess cooking had a dirty job. I escaped it for years . . . for two years. Some fellows--poor guys--got mess cooking one time after another. If the boatswain's mate didn't like them, he'd be back on mess cooking. He'd get off a quarter and then back on again. You had no recourse to protest too much. You didn't dare protest because your life depended on the boatswain's mates and quartermasters and electricians who you worked for, so you didn't buck the system. You went along with what they told you to do, because you had no recourse to buck it.

Marcello: What were your quarters like aboard the Phoenix?

Millman: I first slept in a hammock. It's hard to believe we did this on a new ship, and it's hard to believe that they were the most enjoyable sleeping quarters aboard ship when you wanted to sleep. In rough weather, the hammock stayed still, and the ship moved under it. The only bad part of sleeping in a hammock was that you couldn't break it down until seven o'clock at night, because the hammocks were strung in the mess hall;

and you had to get them down and get out of them at 5:30 in the morning. If you had a mid-watch, you didn't have any recourse to go in a bunk; you had to lay on the deck someplace and sleep and rest at night. They "blew hammocks" on the bugle, and the boatswain's mate would blow it on his pipe at seven o'clock at night, and that was when the hammocks could be strung--at the beginning. Near the end of it, though, it got a little below seven o'clock, because as soon as the mess halls got cleaned out--months after this--fellows started putting hammocks up at 6:30.

To make the hammock more comfortable, you'd use a stick in the head--they called it a "head stick"--to divide the hammock apart so you could put your pillow in there, and it would give you a little wider space. You were issued in the Navy a hammock and a seabag. You slung them together and carried them wherever you went.

You asked about a hammock . . . going back to boot camp days, you asked if anything ever happened there. Yes, something really did happen to me in a hammock. One time we used to scrub those and had to get them up once a week in boot camp. We would hang them outside. So we'd get us some salt-water soap--a bar of soap that's about eighteen or twenty inches long and about two or three inches square. I could never get mine white, so one day I saw a couple bars

of Bon Ami. I cleaned my hammock with Bon Ami, and, boy, it came out white! We strung them up there, and I'll never forget this as long as I live.

The captain came by, and he saw that white hammock. He wanted to know how I got it so white. It looked so good because . . . it really looked good. He got hold of my company commander, and the company commander and I went up to the captain. He was congratulating me on how white my hammock was. Then he asked me, at the end of the conversation, how I made it real white, and I told him.

He blew his top because I used Bon Ami. It was more expensive than that soap. In those days, they were penny-conscious. It was terrible and you couldn't waste nothing.

Even when I was in Horn's boat crew . . . people don't believe this today, I knocked a can of brightwork polish over the side. We were only issued one can a week. I dove over right in the cold water of the Delaware River and got after that can before it went four feet down. I went after it on impulse, I guess. It was something about money . . . the frugality in the service was something in those days, and it is hard to believe.

I can't put myself back to those days and think about how everybody was so cost-conscious. Like, they wouldn't issue cleaning rags and things like that. If you laid any clothes

adrift, they'd pick it up and rip it up and use that for scrubbing the bulkheads.

I had something like that . . . I had towels . . . later on, when I became an electrician's mate . . . we used to wash our clothes every day and take a shower every day. The space for taking a shower for about 200 or 300 men was a room about eighteen-by-twenty feet. Today each guy has to have his own little stall and everything, but in those days it was pretty crowded. You'd get thirty or forty guys taking a shower at once, and they had water hours and different things. You only could use so much water.

Later on, talking about scrubbing clothes, we used to scrub our own clothing. We had our own bucket. To get a bucket was something. As you get into the system . . . you didn't get a bucket right away. You had to connive and things and fight to get your own bucket. You'd lock your bucket up. They had stanchions with clips on them that had a place to lock your own bucket up . . . and you shined the bucket. The bucket was shiny. You couldn't just take a bucket and just wash and leave your scum on it and that was it. When you'd get done washing your clothes, you'd clean your bucket up and things like that. Before an inspection, you always had it shined.

Later on, after I was aboard the ship about two or three

years, I kept me some clothes, and I happened to see my name on some clothing in the trash can. One of the boat-swain's mates had taken some of my clothes that must have been adrift. He found them adrift, so he ripped my name off, and they were using my own towels for scrubbing. I couldn't say anything because I couldn't say anything to those fellows.

So every night I used to go down and gather up his clothes when he'd wash his clothes and take them and throw them over the side. He was a Rebel [Southerner] fellow. One day he says, "Let's catch that son-of-a-bitch that's stealing my clothes!" I had done it for three or four days, because I was just getting even. That was the only way to get even in those days. His name was Mike Farley. I'll never forget that as long as I live, because he wanted me to help him catch the thief. He was from the hills someplace. Boy, he was a worker, though!

Marcello: Other than sleeping in the hammock and so on, I would assume that your quarters aboard the Phoenix were cramped like they are aboard most ships.

Millman: Very crowded. They originally had them three bunks high and even amongst the ammunition hoists and things like that. We had a peacoat locker in a compartment. That's where people used to write and things like that. You had to stand up to write, because that's where you hung your peacoat. It was

very crowded. There wasn't probably more than two feet between the bunks when we had them down. When they were up, you had about four or five feet. We used to play cards sitting on the deck when the bunks were up.

Marcello: How long did you sleep in a hammock altogether before bunks were put aboard the Phoenix?

Millman: Oh, bunks were aboard the Phoenix. I was just one of the unlucky ones to get assigned a hammock. They had bunks aboard the Phoenix. When the ship went into commission, they had, I think, about 600 people on it. Not everybody had bunks, and I'd say 150 or more slept in hammocks.

Marcello: So how long did you sleep in a hammock there?

Millman: It was about six or eight months. As bunks became available, they'd let you move to the bunks. You couldn't move on your own; you couldn't make those arrangements.

Frankly, a hammock was very comfortable. It is hard to believe that a hammock is very comfortable, more comfortable than a bunk. In rough weather, like I said, you could get a good night's sleep. It was just the idea that you couldn't "hit the bunk," or as we used to say, "hit the fart sack," which was an expression of an extreme. That's what we called the hammocks. It was just the idea of availability--getting it down and getting it up and tying it up and things like that.

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

would you describe it? In other words, was the Phoenix a happy ship?

Millman: I would say, yes. Well, you traveled with different crowds. I don't know what you would describe as a happy ship because there was strict discipline on the ship. I would say that you ran around with your same crowd, and you enjoyed yourself when you were off the ship, and you had a good time.

Marcello: I guess what I'm saying is, were most of the people aboard proud of the ship?

Millman: Oh, yes! In those days, if you said one word about the Phoenix, you'd have a brawl on your hands anyplace. In Philadelphia, even after putting the ship in commission, it wouldn't take much to have a brawl start, and there were many of them. In those days, you took great pride in your ship. It was your home, and it was just like your family. If somebody said something against your ship, it was something that would be taken personally.

For example, the other night here, one fellow said something about the Phoenix, just kidding around, when he came up to visit our table. I looked to my left, and my wife was just amazed. The fellow next to me--I forget his name right now--he was really upset automatically. That was so many years ago that I couldn't believe it. He was ready to tear into that fellow, and the fellow was only kidding.

But you never say anything about another guy's ship unless you want to fight your way out of a beehive.

Marcello: How do you account for the high state of morale aboard the Phoenix, or the fact that these men were so proud of the ship?

Millman: I think it was our bringing up. You might not agree with me, but . . . I think we weren't too well-educated, but we were patriotic. Our country came first. We were all real poor, and we had a closeness of family and things like that. Frankly, I think poverty brought us closer together. That might have had some psychological effect because we thought, "This is our ship; this is us. We've got to hold onto it." Maybe I'm wrong, but even today people are very proud of serving on their ship. Maybe in those days, we'd say, "We'd like to get off the goddamn thing," and things like that.

It was tight discipline, and I think that is what has broken down the services today. I think discipline is one of the basics you've got to have to keep a unit in good shape. Although we resented it, it proved itself many times that discipline is one of the most important things to have in any military outfit.

Marcello: Did you put the Phoenix in commission, did you say awhile ago?

Millman: Yes, in October.

Marcello: So were you essentially a plankowner then?

Millman: Right. Like I said, I didn't get off it until 1945, so that's another reason for my attachment, probably. It was the only ship I was on in the Navy. I got off it in May, 1945, after spending nearly seven years aboard it and all in the South Pacific. I really didn't want to leave it when I left it because . . . I was in the Philippines. We all figured the ship would be coming back to the States, and I didn't want to get up and come back with all the havoc of going through all these receiving stations and things like that. So I sort of didn't want to leave the ship; I wanted to ride her back to the States. As it was, I was transferred because it came up to that they wanted to get all the old plankowners and the old-timers off it. I was transferred off it, because a fellow of the same rate, which, I think, had been assigned to transfer off it ahead of me--I was a chief electrician's mate then . . . and it came about that they found out I had more time on the ship than he did, so they canceled his orders and put my name to go off. The fellow got really upset. He was disappointed and sick, almost crying. I didn't believe it. I said, "I'd gladly give up my chance to go back. I'd just as soon stay aboard." Even though I was married and everything, I'd just as soon stayed aboard the Phoenix and then take a chance of going back on it. They wouldn't listen to me, and they said, "You've got

to go, because they want to get all the old-timers off it. You've been on board longer than he has, so you go," That was it.

Marcello: When did the Phoenix move to the Hawaiian Islands on a permanent basis?

Millman: April 2, 1940 (chuckle),

Marcello: You seem to remember that date quite well.

Millman: Yes. People tell me that I've got a fabulous memory. I remember it was a foggy day, and I was in a boat crew at the time, and we'd left off in Long Beach. It should have been a two-week cruise out there for everybody. It was going to be maneuvers; it was going to be war games. Our home port was changed from Philadelphia to, I think, Long Beach at that time. The whole fleet was only going to go out for two weeks.

You might not believe this, but in those days, we had a shortage of fuel then. Even for short-range battle practice on the guns, they wouldn't take the ship out and practice training on the target. They took a motor launch and took it out about 2,000 yards and put a target on it. That would go back and forth, and you'd practice on that. The ships in those days didn't get underway too much because of the fuel situation and the cost of moving them around. Most all your training was simulated training, and so you ended up

only going out when you actually did the firing. So it was a big day when we went out to fire.

Marcello: How often would you fire the guns?

Millman: We'd fire quite often; but we'd only fire once a year for short-range battle practice. Another fellow and I--his name was Comeau, a Frenchman from Fall River, Massachusetts--he was a pointer and I was the trainer on the gun. The pointer did the firing, which held the thing, and I was a trainer. They had a sight-setter, and they had a first loader and a hot shellman on a 5-inch gun. We were on the number seven gun. Horn, the same fellow, was the gun captain on it. Each gun had a petty officer as a gun captain. As we would go out to fire, Comeau said to me, "Chet, you get on that target as soon as you get on that seat." We were the second set. They had two sets on every gun that fired. The first set would have another trainer and pointer. The second set would be Comeau and I. The fellow who was a trainer would be the sight-setter for the second set; I was the sight-setter for the first set. As soon as the first set was done firing, Comeau says . . . when we come up for the second set to fire, he says, "Chet, as soon as I get on the target, I'm going to freeze the firing pin. You get on that target and hold it." We were talking . . . because it meant five dollars extra a month, and five dollars a month was something--a whole year.

We also got an "E," a white "E," so I got on the gun. I think we had our four shots off before all the other guns had their second or third shot off. Debris comes pouring down on you from the other guns.

Another thing . . . I'll never forget this because we had a lieutenant junior grade, a Naval Academy man--he later became a flyer and an admiral--named Robinson. He came tearing down cursing us up one side and down the other because we fired so fast, wasting ammunition. Boy, he was mad! He was more than furious. He called us every name in the book.

They took the targets back about four or five hours later after the tugboat brought the targets in. They took them in the fantail, and everybody usually would go back and look and see the shell holes and who had the best scores. They painted the shells, and as they would go through the target, they would leave a trace of the paint. I don't remember what color ours was; but anyway, I wouldn't go back. Heck, I was afraid that guy would kill me.

All of a sudden, the guys come looking for me and say, "Hey!" They were all really glad, and I wondered what the hell they were all so happy about. We ended up with the corrected score as having the fastest time in the fleet. We had four hits in six and two-fifth seconds . . . it was

very fast, anyway. All that depends on the combination of the first loader and the gun crews because the ammunition . . . it is the first loader and how fast he can load those. With the corrected score according to the roll and pitch of your ship and the kind of day it is, probably it actually took us eight or nine seconds; but it was due to the fact that they were taking these other factors that they said it was only six and two-fifths seconds or something like that. The first loader could only load about four shots in six or so seconds.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of moving to the Hawaiian Islands on a permanent basis?

Millman: We didn't know. Nobody knew we were going to the Hawaiian Islands on a permanent basis. None of us had the idea; nobody had the idea of going on a permanent basis.

Marcello: How about when you did find out that you were going to be there on a permanent basis?

Millman: They never actually told us we were there on a permanent basis.

Marcello: Sooner or later, you knew you were going to be there on a permanent basis.

Millman: It sort of got into a permanent basis, but I, myself, did not know we were going there on a permanent basis. While we were in the Hawaiian Islands, we went to South America--my ship did. In those days, they believed in showing our power,

you know, showing the "big stick" like Teddy Roosevelt. We went to South America, and that was one thing that the Navy did in those days--we showed our force around the world. We had the good ships, and we went on sort of a goodwill trip. Goodwill, hell! It was the idea that we were the United States, and we had the ships, and we had the power. That's why we went to South America. We went to South America from the Hawaiian Islands. We went all the way to Panama and then from Panama down to Valparaiso and then to Lima, Peru, and then came back to the Hawaiian Islands.

Marcello: Did you like the idea of being in the Hawaiian Islands?

Millman: No. There was nothing for us to do. It was just going ashore, going to these "houses" and having a time drinking. Our liberty was up at midnight, and you didn't have liberty every day. You only had so much money, and the only attraction in those days of the Hawaiian Islands was down on Hotel Street--the joints and the girls--and it was back to the ship. There were sugar cane fields all the way into Honolulu--I can't believe I've made several trips out there since--on the two-lane highway. It was a very primitive area in those days, but it was beautiful when you look back. The sugar cane fields were right down the harbor on all sides, practically,

No, I didn't enjoy the Hawaiian Islands. I played baseball and things like that, but it was like being out on a rock

because you didn't have that much to do in Hawaii. You could go down to Waikiki, but that was not a big thing in those days. You would hang out in all the dives and joints and places like that. There were no facilities at all on the beach for you to use much, so it was quite a drag.

When I got orders to go back to the Hawaiian Islands for duty in the Navy--I retired from the Navy--I didn't want to go. They couldn't get me to go to Hawaii. I got ordered to shore duty in Hawaii in 1952. I said, "I don't want that. I'd rather go anyplace but Hawaii." But I had made my commitment to this fellow that he could send me anyplace. He had got me a couple of electronics schools, and he wanted me in a security group. I ended up going to Hawaii. I enjoyed my second cruise out there because it was different. They had beaches there, and it had improved a heck of a lot--the facilities and things like that,

Marcello: When did you get into the "E" Division, and how did this process come about?

Millman: I got in the "E" Division in 1940. Prior to going in the "E" Division, I had put in a request one day to go on special liberty. In those days, if you didn't have liberty, you couldn't go ashore unless you got a stand-by to take your duties; and you'd have to pay \$5 to somebody to be a stand-by for you. A fellow I knew that grew up with me had moved to

California, and I wanted special liberty to see him,

I put a chit in to go and see the commander. You had to go to a request mast, and they also had other people up there for disciplinary things. They had mast every day--captain's mast and "exec's" mast, So I put a chit in to go off on special liberty this weekend, and the commander, who later became commodore, was named Boak. He was a sharp man, and you really had to look "spic 'n span." So I proceeded to give him my chit. He looked up and says, "Disapproved!" The chit of a couple of fellows ahead of me he had approved,

I said, "You just approved his, and he isn't even on stand-by." That was the worst thing I could have said . . . and I kept talking. He told me, "Go below! I don't want to hear another word out of you!" I went below and I was still muttering when I got down the steps. He must have read my mind, because it flashed through my mind that I'd wait until he got ashore and then I'd go to the head of the department, who had the duty that weekend, and I'd put my chit in with him. So I did that. His name was Tibbits, and I put my chit in to him.

No sooner had I walked in the door, he said . . . because he knew me. He was the gunnery officer on board and was in charge of the gunnery department. He had wanted me to be a

trainer and a director. I didn't want no part of that, because I figured if I got locked into that, I'd never get out of it. I'd be on the deck force all my life, and I'd started thinking about becoming electrician before that. I just wanted to get into something I could use if I got out of the Navy. Being a fire controlman didn't appeal to me because you couldn't do anything with it on the outside market. Anyway, he said, "Oh, God! The commander told me you'd do this. He wants to see you. He hasn't left the ship yet. He told me that if I came up, he had an idea you would do this. He said to have you report to his cabin."

So I go up and, oh, God, you can't believe how I felt. I felt like, "Oh, God! What should I do? Jump over the side?" If we were at a dock, I probably would have gone over the hill. Anyway, I go on in and go down to his cabin and meekly pound on his door. I can hear somebody in there just singing away, so I meekly pound a little louder . . . and meekly pound a little louder.

All of a sudden, I hear a female voice that says, "Come in." I walked in and sitting in there was the commander's wife. She started talking to me and was a very nice woman, so I told her my story. He stepped out of the shower, and all he had on was a towel around him, and he was a little shocked. He was kind of stubby. He yells, "You!" She says,

"Wait a minute, please, I think the lad has a good request. I don't think there is any reason why you shouldn't let him go ashore."

She ended up inviting me to take his boat ashore, They were going to be leaving shortly, and I had to be ready. All I had to do was take my jumper off and put another one on, which I did. So I proceeded to go ashore. I was going to go up in the front of the boat, In those days, enlisted men didn't sit in the back of the boat; they had to go up to the front of the boat--of any boat. The officers had the back. Class distinction thus displayed was the reason for that. So I was going to go up and get down inside the front of the boat--the officer's boat--and she called me back, and I sat in there for forty-five minutes, riding into the beach. That must have been when we came back from South America, because that was in Long Beach.

Marcello: So how did you get into the "E" Division then?

Millman: I was leading up to that. I put a request in. The commander had told me, "Never put in another request in to me," because of that other incident. All of a sudden, somebody says, "There might be an opportunity to get in the 'E' Division." I said, "I'll start investigating how you do it." They said, "You've got to put a request in."

So I went up and took an examination. It wasn't much of

an examination; at least I didn't think it was much. It wasn't hard. The engineering officer said to me, "We'll get you in 'E' Division. We'll just go up and get you transferred over." The engineering officer took me by the arm after I had taken the examination with the "E" Division officer.

Marcello: You passed the examination, and you are essentially taken into the "E" Division?

Millman: Yes. It was all done. The commander blew his top again, because there I had come again with another request when he had told me not to. They must have talked with him, because they approved it and I went in the "E" Division. That was about in 1940.

It didn't take me too long to make third class after I got in there. In those days, your course books were mostly true and false and fill-in-the-blank questions. I think you cultivate a memory by doing those exams. To make seaman, I used to spend two or three hours a night studying every night of the week. You would memorize pages and pages. Then I got in the "E" Division, and I was a third class electrician, and that's what I was from then on.

Marcello: When you got into the "E" Division, where was your battle station?

Millman: It was different. I had several battle stations, but most of

mine were around the 5-inch guns and ammunition hoists,

Marcello: During this period here, prior to the Pearl Harbor attack, when you were assigned to the "E" Division, you mentioned that you were working around the hoists in terms of your battle station. What exactly would you be doing there around the hoists and so on? What was your function?

Millman: Mine was the electrician, and they make sure the hoists work. They come from the lower levels, and you'd check them out once a week with the ground test to see if there were any short circuits in the circuitry. I had all the 5-inch ammunition hoists. After awhile it didn't take me too long to get a circuit myself when I became third class and second class. It was more or less trouble-shooting and things like that on the ammunition hoists.

Marcello: In other words, your battle stations would be fluctuating or shifting from hoist to hoist as problems arose.

Millman: No. On topside, anything with the guns or the telephone systems . . . I was the electrician, more or less, for the 5-inch battery. Anything that happened in that area was my responsibility during an attack. We stood watches in the engine room on the generator plants and also in the electrical shop. You had the twenty-four-hour watch there from one day to the next day. You had to answer all trouble calls that came in. You either had that every four days or had a

watch down on the engine room--two watches a day, four hours then. On a weekend, you'd have it Saturday and Sunday, both. On the Pearl Harbor weekend, I had the duty. You'd have to answer any call that came in after midnight or any time. Some of the calls would be let go in those days, like changing a light over a mast or something like that. One officer one time made me shimmy out over the water.

Marcello: How rapid or how slow was rank and promotions during that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy?

Millman: The minimum was about a year that you would get it. You had to be sixteen months in the Navy to make seaman. You went from apprentice seaman to seaman second class in four months. From seaman second class to first class seaman would take you another year. So sixteen months is about right. The pay went from \$21 to \$36 to \$54.

Marcello: How about in the petty officer ranks? How rapidly or slowly did promotion go there?

Millman: Very slow. It started to break about 1939 or 1940; it started easing up at about that time. When I was in the Navy, it was only up to 80,000 then, so the Navy started expanding. The Navy was up around 200,000 by 1940, which was quite a jump. As they increased the Navy, the chances of getting rated increased, too. It was still a year between rates. A lot of people stayed three or four years in between rates.

Marcello: There had to be an opening, too?

Millman: Right. They had to have a vacancy or a billet, as they called it. That held a lot of fellows up. That held me up aboard the ship. If I were on another ship, I probably would have been chief way before when I made it. It held a lot of people up, especially on one like mine. Some of those people we got rid of that weren't too good ended up with higher ranks than mine because they went to a place where there was a billet, and, boom, they got rated. In other words, in those days before and during the war, if a guy wasn't up to "smashing," they'd get rid of him.

Marcello: Did you find any changes occurring in your routine as one gets closer and closer to December 7, 1941, and as conditions between the United States and Japan continued to deteriorate? Could you detect any changes?

Millman: You could sense things. You could sense things because you could see different things happening that would make you wonder why they were happening. They would tighten up on certain things.

Marcello: Tighten up in what way?

Millman: You could just sense it, I mean, by reading and seeing. It was more or less a sensing feeling. I can't recall a specific thing that happened, but you could feel it.

Marcello: Did your training intensify or change in any way?

Millman: I wouldn't say it intensified, because we had a lot of training. We bitched about it . . . and we went to battle stations probably more. We went and had fire drills. If they increased in number . . . I can't say that they did, because we were well-trained. Myself, I was very upset because I used to read a lot. At the same time that this was all going on . . . and we knew and probably felt, because we were out there that long, that something was going to happen. That was our base and we were reading in the papers how some of our senators were fighting even against giving money for defense in 1940. Senator Borah was one of them, I can remember now, and here we were out there, and it just aggravated us. We knew that we weren't getting the support from our Congress. It was something that I could feel, and I was only twenty years old. You could just sense it. They just had disapproved an appropriation for Guam, the Naval base there, at the time. I remember that because it sort of irritated me that our Congress would be doing that, but they did it. I was quite a Democrat in those days, but after reading history, I've changed my viewpoint.

We had made trips to the Philippines, and if you want to call it an incident, yes. We went to the Philippines in 1941, and we darkened ship all the way out. A British submarine happened to spot us one night. It came out that they

had seen one of our porthole lights. We were escorting the troops that got killed from New Mexico and that area, that got lost in Bataan. We were escorting these ships out there, and cattle. When you take cattle on a ship . . . , we were trying to build up the resources of the Philippines and make them self-sufficient. We had, I guess, about seven or eight ships in a convoy.

We went into Manila and dropped those ships off in 1941, and we headed south. There were reports of a German ship in that area, and we were looking for it. A German ship would have blown us right out of the darn water, but that's beside the point. It was one of those pocket battleships with heavy armor. They claimed it was out in the South Pacific, and we went looking for it. We were down at Zamboanga, Leyte, with darkened ship every night. At that period of time, yes, I could say we knew that there was something. That was much different, because we never darkened the ship before.

Marcello: Suppose war did come between the United States and Japan. Did you or your buddies in your bull sessions ever think that they would hit the Hawaiian Islands?

Millman: No. We were brainwashed to believe we were impregnable. No, I wouldn't say that. I didn't think they'd hit us. I didn't think they'd have the nerve to hit us. Maybe that was false security on my part. We were led to believe that we were

the best Navy in the world.

Marcello: At the same time, one has to consider that there is a considerable distance between the Hawaiian Islands and Japan, In other words, even if war came between the United States and Japan, the Hawaiian Islands were relatively remote,

Millman: We thought that probably the supply line would be too long, They wouldn't get that far away from their homeland to take on an attack like Pearl Harbor. I would think they would hit somebody closer to them, like the Philippines or a place like that. Distance probably gave us some false security, too, because of logistic support, because we knew how long a ship could run. Like, my ship at full speed could only run about seventy-two hours if you opened it up. You could use all boilers and go up to thirty-three knots. Our ship was one of the fastest ships in the Navy at the time. They actually had faster ships in World War One than they had in World War Two. People don't realize that.

Marcello: When you thought of a typical Japanese, what sort of a person did you usually conjure up in your own mind in that pre-Pearl Harbor period? Did you have a stereotype?

Millman: Yes. It just grew up on you that they were a little person with a little chip on his shoulder. Personally, you got the feeling you didn't like them. Their attitude about everything was too strict and too stern. We would put them in their place

or something like that.

Marcello: I would assume that you'd run into quite a few Japanese there on the Hawaiian Islands?

Millman: Like I said, we didn't brush into too many of them, because our clientele was with the girls on Hotel Street and then back to ship. We didn't travel around the island too much. The rest camp on Nanakuli, you went out there and spent a week out there at an Army camp called Camp Andrews. From my ship they had details that went to Camp Andrews, a place you went for rest and sleeping and swimming and beer and things like that. You couldn't get any fellows who wanted to volunteer to go out there too often.

Frankly, I don't think I'd seen too many Japs personally, myself, in the Hawaiian Islands before the war. My whole experience varied very little.

Marcello: This brings us up to the days immediately prior to the attack, so let's go into this weekend in a certain amount of detail. When did the Phoenix come in that weekend? Had it been out on maneuvers the week prior to the week of December 7th?

Millman: Yes, we had. We had been out, and we came back in. We usually came in on Fridays (chuckle). I hate to tell you this, but the only people that had families out there were officers and a few enlisted men. We usually came in on Friday. That was the first weekend we tied up to a buoy by ourselves over

toward Aiea Landing. They used to put four of these ships together, and this was just amazing to me. When I look back, that was the weekend we were by ourselves. If we were with a group, we would have been blasted. We would have never gotten out of there. It's just amazing! The "Lucky Phoenix," they used to call us, and maybe that was it.

Like I said, I had the duty that weekend. I had to get somebody to take one of my watches, and I played baseball on Saturday.

Marcello: Did you have duty the whole weekend--both Saturday and Sunday?

Millman: Yes. They had port and starboard watches then. You were on a day and off a day, except for weekends. Then you had the whole weekend. I had duty the whole weekend.

Marcello: What did you do that Saturday?

Millman: I played ball and came back and stood a twelve to four o'clock watch at nighttime. I just lolled around the ship in between and slept. You're pretty tired if you play baseball and then you have to get up at twelve o'clock and then go on a twelve to four o'clock watch. You wake up at about 11:30, and you had to be on watch at a quarter until twelve, midnight.

Marcello: It is true that there was a midnight curfew aboard the Phoenix? Isn't that correct?

Millman: That's correct, or earlier. You had to be back by midnight at that time, yes. That was for everybody that wasn't married

or who had special permission. First class and chiefs could have all night, but anybody below that rank had to be back. That irritates me when I hear about how everybody was ashore and all that, because there wasn't that many. When I read about the attack on Pearl Harbor and people make the comment that most of us were all ashore and drunk, that's not so-- especially aboard my ship. I can speak for my ship.

Marcello: When you were on your twelve to four o'clock watch that night, did you notice anything out of the ordinary, or was it a very routine watch?

Millman: No, just routine. Everything went along like normal. You'd take your readings every hour on the generator. I'd write that 10,014 rpm down every hour. The generator turned 1,200 rpm, and you had to write all that down--the frequency, the voltage, the amperage--and keep a log and things like that. It was just a routine thing.

Marcello: I would assume that after you got off your watch at four o'clock that you probably went back to bed again to get some more sack time.

Millman: Right. I got up early and I was contemplating going to church that weekend.

Marcello: On a Sunday morning, one could stay in the sack longer if one didn't have the duty. Is that correct?

Millman: That's correct.

Marcello: Sunday was holiday routine.

Millman: Holiday routine, that's correct, They call it holiday routine. People getting up in the morning won't always get up for breakfast, but I got up and ate breakfast,

Marcello: About what time did you get up?

Millman: I guess I got up at about seven o'clock or 7:15 and then had breakfast. I was contemplating going to church, which I hadn't been too good of a church-goer. I was contemplating going, and the guys were telling me, "Come on and go to church." We were thrown in with a crew that didn't have too many church-goers among the high-ranking petty officers. As I told you, most of them came from the China Station and put the Phoenix in commission, and they were some rough characters. I said, "Ahh, I'm not going to go!" Boy I was up topside when it happened, and I couldn't believe it,

Marcello: Describe what happened.

Millman: I was leaning on the lifeline, which you should never do, and I seen these planes coming over Pearl City. All of a sudden, I seen some bombs exploding up to the left of me, and I didn't know what the hell was happening.

A little while later, I seen one of them destroyers . . . I think the first shot I seen fired came from a destroyer. It was way over by Pearl City. I think they reacted faster than anybody, the destroyers. I don't know who it was or why,

because I never did investigate. It looked to me, from my viewpoint and where I was at, that a destroyer over at Pearl City got the first shots off.

We had awnings up, you see. We strung awnings. Awnings were around the 5-inch guns. You couldn't fire our guns right away because the awnings went over the area on the decks to keep the sun off. We lashed what they called a topline on the stanchion. All of a sudden, I can remember Lieutenant Commander Erwin coming along, and he pulled out a knife and started cutting those lines.

Next thing we knew, we went to general quarters. I didn't have far to go because that's where I was standing--right next to the 5-inch guns, leaning on the lifeline.

Marcello: Where would you go when you went to general quarters?

Millman: That was my general quarters station. I was in the "E" Division, so I went to the ammunition hoists and the 5-inch guns. So I started running around, and I guess I helped for a few seconds to cut the lifelines down and trying to get the guns prepared to fight.

Marcello: Cutting the lifelines down or cutting the awnings down?

Millman: Pardon me, you're right--the lines that held the awnings. Most of us didn't carry a knife at the time, and that was a problem. Later on in the war, we all carried knives. That was one of our main things--to have a knife. We cut the

awnings down and got the 5-inch guns going and started firing a little while later.

Marcello: Approximately how long did it take you to get your 5-inch guns in operation after general quarters sounded? You'd probably have to estimate this.

Millman: As a matter of fact, I don't think I even owned a watch in those days. I'd say it took three to five minutes. It didn't take long, because as we cut those lines down, people jumped on the guns, We were trained in the Navy in those days.

I jumped on the gun for a while, because I'd had previous gun training. In those days, they taught you to always try to learn the other guy's job, because if something happened to him, you could take over. You were more versatile in those days. You weren't strictly something. They didn't specialize as much as they do today. You knew a little bit about everything, even when you learned your rates. Then I got off and the regular crew got on and they started firing.

One of our guns really powdered Honolulu. I'll never forget that--the number three gun. They didn't set one of their fuses. They just poured that shot right into the city. Later on, I think they hit Honolulu. But the gun swelled to twice its size, and I was afraid it was going to explode because they fired so fast and fired so many shells.

Marcello: What were some of the activities that you saw around you? I

assume that you were out in the open most of this time.

Millman: Right.

Marcello: Describe some of the action that you saw.

Millman: We were in there four hours before we were out. We didn't get out until close to noontime, I don't think.

Marcello: Well, describe some of the action that you saw in the meantime.

Millman: One thing, a ship came by us and was hit. I think it was the Vestal, I couldn't see many people on it, and the goddamn thing was just drifting into Aiea Landing.

Later on, I looked back there and saw those battleships getting hit, because we had a good view of Battleship Row from where I was. Like I said, we were getting underway now, and things were going on. They were trying to get people to different stations. The captain was ashore, and if the captain had been aboard, we'd been out of there in no time.

Marcello: Did the Phoenix itself come under any direct attack?

Millman: I seen the planes pretty close. I don't know if they actually were attacking us, but I would say that within 200 or 300 yards of us I saw planes peel off after they came down the line. I don't know if they dropped torpedoes or not. They peeled off and went up away from us. They were close enough that we could almost hit them. Some of the planes were that damn close.

Marcello: Could you distinguish the pilots?

Millman: No. I thought it was an air raid drill. We had air raid drills, and before I saw the first shot go, I thought, "Boy, this is a realistic air attack!" Then, "BOOM!" I saw the battleships get hit.

I seen the Nevada get underway--that was the last ship in Battleship Row--and I didn't see any more of that. I saw the Arizona . . . , the Nevada was getting underway . . . , and then the Arizona . . . I didn't know it was the Arizona at the time. We didn't know where the ships were actually positioned in Pearl Harbor. I saw it go up and, "BOOM!" I saw it go ten feet up out of the water and then settle down quick.

I couldn't understand . . . like I said, it took us four hours to get underway. All hell was breaking loose; everybody was firing. The ammunition hoist jammed.

Marcello: If it took you four hours to get underway then, you wouldn't have gotten out of Pearl until sometime around noon.

Millman: I'd say three to four hours. I didn't have a clock. Like I said, we got out pretty late because we started out one way and then had to turn around. I think we were the only ship to ever do that any time. We started out back of Ford Island. We started out the back way, and the Curtiss was over there. I think it was the Curtiss. Some other ships got hit . . . the Utah got hit over there. Our captain must have thought that

channel was blocked. He turned that goddamn cruiser around, and we were going back and forth. You couldn't believe it. He turned that cruiser around like it was a destroyer. We went back out around Battleship Row. Going out, all the sailors on them battleships--and it really gave you a good feeling--were cheering us!

Marcello: Were you out on deck when you were leaving the harbor?

Millman: Yes,

Marcello: What did the surface of the water look like?

Millman: All turmoil--oil, scummy. There was debris in it. We threw everything over the side. Everyone was throwing everything over the sides that was burnable. There was a lot of junk and debris in it and things like that.

Marcello: Awhile ago you mentioned that the ammunition hoist had jammed.

Millman: Yes, It didn't stop working, but it wasn't working right. It wouldn't bring them up. Up at the top of the ammunition hoist was a switch. As long as there was a projectile in there, the hoist won't work because of what they call a limit switch. Until that one is pulled out, when one is pulled out of the top, it automatically should feed another one. That's what wouldn't move. I went down there, and one fellow who worked for me--I'll never forget--was taking it nonchalantly. He should have been down below. He was sitting on the couch, and he was just nonchalant as anything. His name was Moore,

and he was another "Rebel." He was in the officer's state-room; that's where some of the hoists went. He was looking for a half-dollar he lost out of his pocket. It just amazed me, and I gave him holy hell (chuckle). I was probably a little excited, too, so I gave him hell because of the ammunition hoist, and I was trying to get in touch with him on the phone system, and he hadn't responded. I was headed down to short out all the safety devices. These are things we learned, see. We put clips across it, and I'd just short them out with a piece of wire to let the ammunition hoist throw the ammunition up on deck as fast as it could, and they were firing it as fast as it was coming up, anyway. We really fired a heck of a lot of ammunition.

Marcello: During the attack, then, you were alternating between the outside of the ship and the inside of the ship?

Millman: I'd say after the attack, I was down below more because near the end of it, probably the second wave, I was only down there about five or ten minutes. I went back up topside to see if it was working. He wasn't responding because he could do the same thing. He was just looking for some money he had lost. I don't think he really knew what was going on. Anyway, I went back up topside, and all hell was breaking loose.

Marcello: Were you able to see the Oklahoma turn over, or were you not in the position to see it?

Millman: No, I didn't see the Oklahoma turn over, It might have been the one I saw go in the air, because you didn't stop and just stand there and watch everything as it happened. You had other things to do.

That day really proved what training did, because if we hadn't had the training, we would have never responded like we did. We did everything subconsciously, just did it automatically. Nothing I ever did was done because I wanted to do it; it was done because of previous training. Previous training made me do it. I know that if we hadn't had the training we would have been in a lot more confusion and a lot more things that would have never been done. All that training paid off there, because I've always been a firm believer that that's what saved us.

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

Millman: It was a typical Hawaiian day. There was a break in the clouds over the mountains. Hawaii weather changes so periodically. Like I said, on a typical Hawaiian day, the sun is out some places and the clouds other places. Hawaii is like that. I found out later on while I was out there that you can go twenty miles and have it rain in one place and not rain and be a beautiful day in another place. It was pretty warm in Pearl Harbor . . . pretty warm there. It was in the high eighties, I guess. Pearl Harbor was in between the hills and didn't

get too much of the prevailing winds or anything, so you didn't get much of a breeze in Pearl Harbor, and it was pretty warm in that area,

Marcello: What did you do after you cleared the harbor?

Millman: I had to go on watch. My watch was down in the engine room on the generators. You could hear the depth charges going off someplace. People were dropping depth charges. I kept looking at them steamlines, because we feared steam more than we did the guns. I think, myself, I feared steam and that one of those steamlines would burst. We got up to speed and I think we usually used more or less as a decoy for one of the carriers, because we went off to join one of them or something like that. Later on, somebody said to me that we were a decoy for one of those carriers. They wanted to use the carriers or something. We've had to try to stop any attack on the carriers.

Marcello: What sort of rumors were you hearing on the ship as you were thrashing around out there that night?

Millman: Oh, that the Japs were landing. Going out of Pearl Harbor, though, as I was saying, I can't believe the guys that got the hell beat out of them on the battleships were cheering us! They were waving their hats because we were going out. To me, I started thinking, "What the hell is going to meet us on the way out there?" Geez, when you think of this here, we thought the Japs were right there.

We went by the Nevada up on the sugar cane field. Somebody ran it up on the sugar cane field because it was going to sink. We went by her, and she was beached on the sugar cane field there.

We feared--I did anyway; I don't know if the rest of them did--"What the hell are we going to run into?" We didn't actually have a fear of being afraid; we were stunned. It took me about three days. I kept asking myself, "Why did I do these things? What made me do these things?" Then thinking of what had happened, it was a sickening feeling knowing that we had been attacked and had lost our Navy, practically. People can't realize how bad we felt. This was awful to us. We thought we were wiped out.

Marcello: When did you finally come back in?

Millman: About three or four days later. Then we seen the bodies stacked up. They had them stacked up in wooden boxes and things like that.

One day we were in there . . . and we'd come back in, and we looked . . . I don't know if that was the time. I think it was around dinnertime. I happened to look over toward Pearl City at one of the hospital ships, and I saw something under it. You could see something by the way the sun was hitting it. Other people might have saw it at the same time, because I think a lot of people saw it. Holy God, it was a Japanese

submarine that had gotten in there!

Marcello: This was several days after the attack there?

Millman: Yes. At least from our position, it looked like it was laying under the hospital ship. Maybe it wasn't.

Marcello: What action was taken against this submarine?

Millman: I don't know. We went to submarine defense. I was caught in the mess hall, and once you're caught anyplace, you don't open them doors in a submarine defense, So I was caught down below. I think that was one of the ones later on that they hoisted out of there.

Marcello: If you were down below the decks in the mess hall, then you did not actually see what looked like a submarine out there at the hospital ship.

Millman: I wasn't actually way down below. Those ships . . . , all the portholes . . . , wait a minute now. We had a program before the attack of Pearl Harbor of welding our portholes up. That was another indication, as you had asked earlier, that would give us the idea of what was happening. We had portholes all the way down pretty low. The shipfitter crew had been in the process of taking steel plates and taking the portholes off and welding all our portholes over. That is why the ships you see today aren't like you saw in Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: Again, did you actually see what looked like a submarine out there?

Millman: Yes.

Marcello: Then, therefore, you were up on deck?

Millman: No, I must have been down in the mess hall on the second deck. A lot of people seen it. It wasn't just me looking around. There were many, many people that seen it. Anybody that takes credit for seeing it first would probably be a liar, because it was about 500 of us. They hoisted it out, and it was . . . later on I was told because I didn't ever see it or any action done on it or what. But they got the hospital ship underway. I don't know which one it was, but it might have been the Solace. I don't know what happened, but they cleared out.

It was a sickening feeling to come in that harbor and see them ships. Some of them were still smoldering. They asked for divers from my ship . . . they had taken divers from my ship to assist in the rescue work and things like that. A ship in those days was normally . . . see, we went at full speed. That was the thing that was critical when we came in. We only carried 600,000 gallons of fuel. If you went at 33 knots for three days, operating high speed, you would use up your fuel supply. The most economical cruiser range is between 15 and 20 knots. We came into port, and it made you really feel sick seeing what had happening.

Marcello: What sort of an attitude did you have toward the Japanese now?

Millman: Oh, God! When I look back, it was probably one of the greatest days in United States history. It was one of the best things that ever happened to us. I made a speech at the University of Maryland in one of my speech courses I took, and I got an "A"-plus on it because I said, "That was one of the greatest things that ever happened to the United States." We would have lost the war if we had have went to sea with the ships we had. We would have lost, been wiped out. I am firmly convinced that though Pearl Harbor was what it was, it was one of the greatest days for the United States, because it made us aware that we were lacking in these ships and the types of ships. My ship should have been one of the cream of the Navy. The Marines were running around trying to put .30-caliber machine guns on the stanchions and things like that during the attack. We were totally unprepared for this type of war. This is, I think, why I say that this was one of the greatest days for the United States, because if we had gone out and attacked Japan with the fleet we had or went to war with Japan, I firmly believe, myself, that we would have lost.

Marcello: Mr. Millman, this is probably a pretty good place to end this interview. I want to thank you very much for having taken time to talk with me. You've said a lot of very interesting and important things, and I'm sure that scholars will find

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your comments very valuable when they use them to write about
Pearl Harbor.

Millman: Thank you very much.