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Interview with  
CHARLES W. LEBKOWSKY  
May 15, 1982

Place of Interview: Austin, Texas

Interviewer: R. E. Marcello

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Approved: Charles W. Lebkowsky  
(Signature)

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Oral History Collection

Charles W. Lebkowsky

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Austin, Texas

Date: May 15, 1982

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Charles Lebkowsky for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on May 15, 1982, in Austin, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Lebkowsky in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was aboard the destroyer USS Tucker during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

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

Mr. Lebkowsky: I was born near a little place called Otto, Texas. It's about twenty-five miles southeast of Waco, is the best way to describe it--a little German community.

Dr. Marcello: When were you born?

Mr. Lebkowsky: December 24, 1920. I attended a little grade school there,

which went through the seventh grade back in those days, and then I went to Ben Hur High School for a year-and-a-half. Then the second semester of my sophomore year, we had moved to Riesel, Texas, and there I completed my high school studies.

I graduated in May of 1939, and, of course, Hitler and his war clouds were rolling real well. He was going through Europe, and we were letting him take it; the Englishmen and the Frenchmen were all sitting on their butts, letting him take it. I had been offered a partial scholarship in soil conservation at Texas A&M University, and I wished to do that, the main reason being, I wanted to go in the ROTC and become an aviator, which, of course, my grandparents vetoed rather rapidly.

So I had two uncles in World War I. They told me about being pulled in without adequate training and so forth and so on, and, of course, this cost us a lot of people, because they didn't know how to defend themselves; they didn't know what they were doing. So I thought I didn't want to be in that position, and if there was going to be a war, and certainly there looked like there would be, I wanted to be prepared.

So just by chance, one day I went to the post office in Waco, Texas, to do something about some agricultural thing that we were involved in, since we were farmers--stock farmers

with cattle and farming--and while there, this federal man that I was to see happened to be out of his office. The Navy recruiter was next door, so while I was waiting on this man, this gentleman comes in and...or he gathers me up, you know, and takes me in his recruiting office. Of course, we introduced each other, and he asked me if I was a high school graduate, I told him, yes, I was. Well, he said they had just received some new examination papers, and he wanted to know if I would be kind enough to take one of these exams to see how a high school graduate could cope with the answers that they desired. So I didn't have anything else to do, so I took this examination. I don't remember much about it. But, anyway, he supposedly graded it and told me that I made a high mark,

Then, of course, he asked my age and whatnot, and then he asked me how I would feel about going to the United States Naval Academy. I didn't know anything...I didn't even know it existed, I don't guess, you know. But he went on to tell me what it involved, and it was at that time, I think, about the third or fourth best education in the world, you know; I think Brandenburg and Oxford and...I don't know... I believe they were third or fourth. They were ahead of West Point--I remember that. It seems like the Naval Academy was third, and West Point was fourth--or so rated at that time,

Well, you know, this sort of appealed to me. So the next thing I know, I'm enlisting in the United States Navy, and, of course, he explains to me that there's only two ways to get into Annapolis, and that's by political appointment, or be selected from the fleet. The fleet will produce so-and-so many per year; they had an allocation of so-and-so many.

So here I go, you know, I signed these papers. I didn't even realize that I was,,,.I'm sure he told me that, you know,,.I was a kid, like, eighteen years old. I didn't ask him if it was four years or six, but it turned out that it was a six-year enlistment, you know,

I told my dad about it, and he really threw a fit. He said, "My Lord of mercy!" Of course, I didn't have consent-- I had to have consent from him and Mother, both. He begrudgingly gave it after I told him that I would try to become a diesel engineer--if the Academy appointment fell through, I didn't have enough mechanical aptitude to really pass this thing to get into the diesel engineering part of it; however, they did tell me that if I would extend my six years two more years--in other words, if I'd obligate myself two more years--they would send me to their diesel school. They explained to me that it would cost them \$17,000 at that time to give me this education, and that it would take four years and that they expected four years of my knowledge after

I received it.

Well, you know, by this time, I had realized that six years was a pretty long time, and I was already obligated for that. I lacked a few days of being nineteen years old when I joined; that would throw me to be almost twenty-five when I got out. So I went against that. I said, "No, I don't believe I want to obligate myself for that."

In the Navy, you strike for a position, so I was invited for...well, of course, you're a deck hand, you're in the black gang, one of the two. I decided I didn't want to be down there in that heat, so I was wanting to stay on deck, and then eventually, well, I struck for signalman. That way, I'm right up there with the brains--the captain, the "exec," the navigator--the brains, the whole operation of the ship.

Marcello: Now this would have occurred after you got out of boot camp, correct?

Lebkowsky: Oh, yes, yes,

Marcello: Okay, let's back up a minute, and we'll come back to this point in a minute. Where did you take your boot camp?

Lebkowsky: San Diego.

Marcello: And how long did boot camp last at that time?

Lebkowsky: Oh, goodness, that's a good question. Let's see...we can sort of deduct a little bit. I boarded the USS Tucker on Washington's Birthday in 1940, and I went directly from boot camp right to the Tucker. See, all those ships were

running with skeleton crews, The Tucker, for example, was one of the Mahan class. It was a 1,500-tonner; we had five 5-inch/,38-caliber rifles--they called them--and twelve torpedoes plus twin depth charge racks off the stern. I boarded the thing on, like I said, Washington's Birthday in 1940. But they had, like, 137 men aboard, where a war-time complement called for about : 310 or 315. That's how undermanned that we really were. Most of those were seasoned veterans; they'd been there awhile. The rating system was very slow back in those days. A lot of those ol' boys,,,it wasn't uncommon at all to see an ol' boy being there four or five years and still a seaman first class, drawing \$54 a month.

Marcello: So boot camp must have lasted about twelve weeks, then. Does that sound about right?

Legkowsky: Yes, that would be pretty close.

Marcello: Probably that was before they began to cut back on boot camp. As one gets closer and closer to the coming hostilities, they continued to cut down on boot camp. Evidently, you must have served around the twelve weeks.

Lebkowsky: Twelve weeks, something like that, yes. It was pretty thorough.

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

Lebkowsky: Oh, I think it was, They were mainly trying to instill



discipline in us, And I'll have to say this, they...those ol' boys knew what they were doing; they knew what they were supposed to do; and I think they did an excellent job, really. They prepared us as much as could be expected. We were able to go out and become good sailors.

Marcello: Okay, as you mentioned awhile ago, you go from boot camp directly to the USS Tucker. Was this voluntary duty, or were you simply assigned to a destroyer?

Lebkowsky: Well, they gave us two choices. Of course, we had the buddy system, you know, and I teamed up with an ol' boy named Charles Eidson. He was from Dallas, and we buddied up, and when it came time to chose a ship or a class of ship that we'd like to serve on, he and I both--after discussing it amongst ourselves--decided that we wanted to serve on the USS Houston, a heavy cruiser. We saw pictures of it and everything, and we liked that. They were pushing us pretty good to join the submarines...they took us out there to a couple of new ones--I don't know the names of them now--and they looked mighty inviting. But I just didn't like the idea of being under the water; I wanted to be on top of it.

So we put down the Houston as our number-one choice, and little did we know that even if you even breathed the word "destroyer,"--even in your sleep--and they heard it, that's where you was going. We put down as our second choice

"any modern destroyer." So, oh, Lord, here we go, man. We said the magic words. But I'm happy that we made the decision. We were just different sailors than the rest of the them.

Marcello: Why was it that if you mentioned destroyer, they would more than likely put you on a destroyer?

Lebkowsky: Well, we had a lot of destroyers. And, too, so many of them wanted to serve on those larger ships, you know, the country club effect--carriers, battleships, cruisers. I guess they thought there was something glamorous about it, or they thought they had better protection or something--who knows what? So Edison and I picked the Houston simply because of Houston, Texas, you know, and it was a fine ship. They had one that was fitted--and I think it was the Indianapolis--for Roosevelt himself. He loved the Navy--he and his wife, both. And they leaned way over...in fact, she picked Husband Kimmel to be the commander of the Pacific Fleet. That was her hand-picked choice. And there wasn't anything wrong with him; they got a bum rap that day, him and Short, both. Well, I don't know that much about Short, but I felt Kimmel did. But, anyway, there was so many destroyers. They were rough-riding little rascals, and those guys didn't like that. They didn't know how they could contend with it, your seasickness and all this sort of thing,

Marcello: And you did mention that very few ships in the Navy had their full complement of men at that time.

Lebkowsky: Not any of them. No, they were way understaffed--way understaffed.

Marcello: Okay, so describe the reception that you got when you went aboard the USS Tucker. After all, you were still basically a "boot," too.

Lebkowsky: They had you doing a little more or less menial chores. They were glad to get...of course, they were happy to have us. They needed...they wanted any extra help they could get. But, no, they didn't let you forget that you were a "boot," that you didn't know what was going on, and it was going to take a pretty good learning process before you could even be considered a sailor.

Marcello: Did they put you in the deck force first of all?

Lebkowsky: Yes, yes, that's more or less automatic unless you ask for... unless you wanted to go into the engineering, the fireroom part of it, you know, what they call the "black gang." I went down there because they rated you quicker in the black gang, but I could understand why. If you were putting up with all that heat and all that other stuff, and had all that old bunker fuel over you half the time, and cleaning bilges and all this stuff, hell, I could understand why I didn't want the...I didn't want the rate that bad, you know. I felt that it'd come, anyway. All you had to do was to be proficient in what you were doing, and it would be recognized. And, surely

enough, it was,

Marcello: What particular rate did you plan to strike for?

Lebkowsky: I didn't have an earthly idea until a chief quartermaster named Gallagher,,he was later killed in an explosion. He was on another destroyer; he'd been transferred, and a shell hit the bridge. Of course, that was where we were; that was our duty station. He was up there during General Quarters, and they sustained a direct hit. I think it killed everybody on the bridge except the captain, who was the meanest Simon Legree in the United States Navy,

Marcello: So you wanted to become a quartermaster, then?

Lebkowsky: No, I wanted to be a signalman. In fact, that's what he recruited me to be--the flag-waver, reading visual flagging, you know. So, of course, I did that and struck for signalman and was sent back to San Diego to go to signal school--and did. I went with another ol' boy,,he was from Houston, incidentally, named Bill Hinds, and ol' Bill got killed, too. Eidson did, too, later on. Not on the Tucker, but they were killed after they were transferred to other ships.

Anyway, ol' Hinds and I must have been these ol' boys' star pupils, because we could get away with bloody murder, and we could read the light as fast as they could send it, and we could send it as fast as they could read it. After about eighteen words a minute, it becomes a solid light,

you know, and that's about as fast as you can go. It's a little different than the Morse Code, which is what you're using, the Morse Code. But with radio, you can send it way on up there, forty, fifty words a minute, and still be able to read it. But you can't with light; it just won't work. But then we used semaphore a lot, too. We were fairly close to one another--a mile or two-- and you can read those semaphore flags real well. In types of security situations, that's the way we communicated.

Marcello: How long did that signal school last?

Lebkowsky: I think it was about three months,,,about three months.

Marcello: At that time, how fast or slow was the promotion in that particular rating?

Lebkowsky: I'd say,,well, you went in as an apprentice seaman, and you automatically went to seaman second class in three months, and then from there on, it was competitive. You had to wait six months from seaman second class before you could take an examination for seaman first class. Let's see,,did I make it the first go-around? I think I did. I remember there was,,there was over two thousand of us throughout the fleet that took the examination, and they were going to rate, I think, like, 194 or something like that. It took an almost,,you had to have an almost 4.0 grade to be selected, I think I made a 3,94 or something like that and was one of them to be elevated to seaman first

class. Of course, that was a big thing--jumping from \$36 a month to \$54 a month.

Then you had to stay in that grade nine months before you could go up for third class petty officer. I missed that the first time, simply because I was...and ol' boy was going...we was going to do a little cheating and all, which I wasn't for, but he was going to help me; he was going to give me some answers at a crucial time in the... because you had to know something about seamanship and so forth and so on, and you had to know something about your proficiency and rating and all this sort of stuff. It was a long, drawn-out examination. Anyway, I missed it the first time, but three months later, I believe it was...maybe we had to wait six months...maybe we had to wait another six. I don't recall that for sure. But I took it that second time, and I blazed on through there because I buckled down, and I learned what I had to know. I didn't depend on anybody; I went through there and took it,

Then the second one was given to me. We'd gotten sunk by this time, and they just elevated everybody one rate,

Marcello: This was after the war started.

Lebkowsky: Oh, yes, yes,

Marcello: Okay, again, going back to my original question, how rapid

or slow was promotion in that particular rating? You know, in some ratings you can advance more rapidly than in others if there are openings and they need people in that particular slot and so on.

Lebkowsky: Right, right. Well, the signal part...the visual part of communications wasn't the fastest back in those days. Radio was much faster. Like I said, the black gangs were a lot quicker. Gunner's mate and torpedoman were a lot faster. But it was just a matter of...if you wanted to be proficient in it, you had to...and, you know, bear in mind that you're around some very good minds. Most of them back in those days were Academy officers. They were Naval Academy graduates. In fact, one of the officers on the ship graduated third in his class in 1938, I believe it was. His name was Barrett. He later became a commanding officer. He was one of these fellows that if you wanted to know something, he wouldn't know it off the top of his head, but he could get a book, and he knew where to find it, and he could do it real quickly. This boils down to a friend of mine telling me that all a sheepskin meant, that was hanging on the wall...he said, "Don't ever let one of them shake you because it doesn't mean anything. All it means is that the recipient of that sheepskin has the ability to study. From there on, you've got to use practical horse-sense and knowledge in order to get anywhere in the world.

Education doesn't automatically buy you anything." This is true, I've observed it; I've watched it, This is absolutely true. He told me the truth,

Marcello: Awhile ago, you were talking about promotion being slow in that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy. How slow was it?

Lebkowsky: There were a lot of those ol' boys that...well, it was rare, very rare, that you saw a man become a chief petty officer with less than twelve years in the service. I'm talking about regular Navy, U.S.N. It was just almost unheard of. Now I did meet one fellow, and I don't recall his name, but he became a chief, like, in ten years or so. But he really had a lot of "moxy," you know; he was sharp, and he studied, and he really worked. I'm sure that he had to turn in a 3.99 grade proficiency, you know, in order to have been selected.

Marcello: Was the Tucker a happy ship? In other words, what was morale like aboard the Tucker?

Lebkowsky: Very good. We had a ship that consisted mostly of Texans, and we all got along well together. Our captain was named Hyler Fulford Gearing. His mother was a Fulford. Her father was an admiral in Dewey's Navy; and Gearing was also an admiral--Gearing's father was. He had a brother--I don't recall his name now--and he was senior to Hyler. His fleet name was "Whiskey Gearing." Oh, he was a cutter deluxe. He dated the movie stars...had a brilliant mind.



Marcello: But again, how was the morale aboard the Tucker?

Lebkowsky: Great. Great. He insisted on it. We won...back in those days, they had competition between ships. We were the last ship to fly the "meatball" before it was discontinued; I mean, in the war they discontinued it. The "meatball" meant that you were the most proficient in gunnery, torpedoing, ship handling--everything. They even had an engineering proficiency award,

Marcello: I never heard it called the "meatball." I've heard of these ships flying the "E" or displaying the "E," but what was the "meatball?"

Lebkowsky: The "meatball" was something that you ran up on a halyard, just like the flag, but it was just a round ball, and they called it the "meatball." Whoever flew that was automatically recognized as the number one boy in their class.

Marcello: How do you account for this high morale aboard the Tucker?

Lebkowsky: I think a lot of it was the captain and his actions. He could be a Simon Legree one minute and a charming prince the next, you know. But he wanted us...he told us, "I'm not interested in that "E" on that stack." All that "E" meant was that they had engineering proficiency; in other words, you didn't have much water to take a bath with, and that's how you gained that "E." He said, "I don't want that "E." I don't want you guys smelling; I want plenty of water for baths and for whatever else we need. So I'm not interested

in that 'E,' But I want that number one in everything else."

Marcello: What was the food like aboard the Tucker?

Lebkowsky: Oh, it was good, you know, for an ol' country boy and whatnot. Again, our steward, an ol' chief cook, he was from Texas, and this guy would sort of cook like we were used to. It was good, no question about it. I don't recall his name. I can see his face right now, but I don't recall his name. But we had a happy bunch. And the old man wanted it that way,

Marcello: Do you think the fact that all of you were volunteers had something to do with the high morale, also? In other words, you were there because you wanted to be there.

Lebkowsky: Oh, probably, yes. Well, we had enough sense to know that something was going to happen--you know, it had to happen. Hitler just kept storming through there; he certainly had to cross the barrier somewhere. Somebody was going to rear up on their hind legs and do something.

Marcello: But I gather, from what you're saying, then, that your eyes were turned more toward Europe than they were toward the Far East?

Lebkowsky: Well, we were having trouble there, too, and we knew that. The Japanese had sunk the Panay, and this was quite an incident, you know, that we didn't like. We were already reading these stories about them, and, of course, they had already

took China or whatever they wanted of China. Those samurai officers and those swords...they'd put them on a horse and line a bunch of Chinamen up, and they'd ride along. That's how they became samurai officers. They'd see how many heads they could slice off, riding on this fast horse. That was their officer corps. They were brutal, like most Orientals. They were brutal; life doesn't mean much to them.

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

Lebkowsky: Oh, we didn't think much of them physically. Our Intelligence back in those days undoubtedly wasn't very good. We didn't think they had very good ships; we didn't think their fire control system was very good; we didn't think their gunnery was very good or the quality of their guns was very good. Their planes I don't recall anything about. But we generally regarded them as some sub-standard country, you know, and it wouldn't be much of a problem, really, if worse came to worse. Little did we know that those guns were German-made, that they had an excellent fire control system. The Germans also had helped them build those ships, and they had fine fighting ships, tough fighting ships. And, by God, they were good sailors. If you come up out of that China Sea and the western Pacific, it gets some rough and

some salty. They were good sailors; they were tough sailors. They were well-trained men, too.

Marcello: When did the Tucker move to Pearl Harbor on a more or less permanent basis?

Lebkowsky: After I joined it. Well, we had fleet maneuvers--Pacific Fleet maneuvers--and after the maneuvers--they were in the Pacific, of course--and after the maneuvers were over with, they put us in what was then called the Hawaiian Detachment. We were just part of the Pacific Fleet, but Pearl Harbor was our home port. That happened, oh...

Marcello: In the summer of 1940, perhaps?

Lebkowsky: Yes, spring of 1940. I'd say it was maybe prior to June or somewhere in there or something like that.

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

Lebkowsky: Oh, we thought it was exotic: "Fine! We're over here in these beautiful islands and all these beautiful beaches and all the pineapples and all this good stuff!" For a youngster out of high school and traveling like that, you know, it was sort of romantic. We liked it--no sweat, no problems.

Marcello: Okay, after you got to the Hawaiian Islands, describe what a typical training exercise was like for the Tucker. In other words, when did the Tucker go out, what would it do while it was out on a training exercise, and how long would it stay out?

Lebkowsky: Well, we did various different things. We might go out for gunnery practice. We might stay out a week, ten days. Maybe we'd go out in the morning and be back that afternoon. We'd go out on the submarine runs, where we'd have our own submarines out there. Of course, we knew vaguely where they were, but we were supposed to pick them up with our detection gear and then make simulated runs on them, dummy runs. They, in turn, would do the same with us. They fired torpedoes at us. Of course, the torpedoes didn't have pistols in them, so they wouldn't go off even if they hit us, which they weren't. They were trying to shoot under us, and we were supposed to be watching that "fish" as it came down. I've seen quite a few of them...you see that long, silver rascal come right underneath you. Then we had to go turn around and pick that \$63,000 baby up. It had, oh, a smoke pot in the nose of it, and I forget what they called that...phosphorous. It was bouyant. In other words, it didn't have a detonation charge in it. The head was bouyant, was a vacuum. So it would come up, and it would stand up right like this (gesture) in the water, and then that smoke pot would...when it came active there, you know, it would start smoking. That way we could find it, and we'd run over there and lower a whaleboat and pick this thing up and retrieve it and take it back to that submarine when we got back to the base. Then we could use it over and over

and over,

But we'd do that, and then we'd just go out for training exercises in formation--how well we could do the various, different formations that needed to be executed in a particular event. In the event that something came up, we were ready to,,we knew what moves to make, and we found out how quickly we could execute these particular moves,

Marcello: Did you work as escorts with the larger capital ships?

Lebkowsky: Carriers, yes, Of course, destroyers were called the "greyhounds of the sea," We were the work dogs. Sure, we escorted them, and we also,,the aircraft carriers, we worked with them, Planes would take off; when they'd come on to land, they had problems, too. These ol' boys would miss the deck, or they'd hit a stack, or they'd hit low. They'd fall in the water, and we'd fish them out.

We were the work horses, really, but we liked it. That was our role. We were a potent thing. You take a little ol' 350-foot ship with twelve torpedoes and five 5-inch guns and ten or twelve of those 700-pound depth charges, you can do a lot of damage, You can do a lot of damage. And with all the speed we had, we could run forty knots.

Marcello: What year had the Tucker been put into commission?

Labkowsky: In 1937, I believe.

Marcello: So it was a fairly new destroyer.

Lebkowsky: Oh, yes, It was a good one, It was a good ship,

Marcello: How much emphasis was given to antiaircraft practice?

Lebkowsky: A good bit, We fired at the towed targets, you know, planes towing a target. Yes, we did a lot of that. We did virtually everything that you could think of in the training line, and we did it all of 1940.

Marcello: Now 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, even in your position, taking place in your training routine?

Lebkowsky: Oh, definitely. Well, of course, I had the advantage of being up there with the captain and the executive officer and hearing communications between ships. They had what they called a "T.B.S." back then, It was like a two-way radio--like a C.B. (citizen's band), sort of. But it was limited in range, oh, to, say, seven, ten, fifteen miles normally. Then one day we picked up a squadron of destroyers operating off the Philippine Island, 2,500 or 3,000 miles away! But it was a rare thing--a very rare thing--for that to happen,

Marcello: What changes did you detect in your training routine?

Lebkowsky: Well, we steadily received more men. They were building the ship's complement up for wartime strength, although we hadn't reached that point by Pearl Harbor time.

But I'd say that as far as three to five months prior to Pearl Harbor, we were out--a lot of times--scouting and hunting these people. In the latter stages, just before Pearl Harbor...in fact, we had been out some... I can't remember for sure. It seems to me like it was some five or six weeks that we'd been out actively hunting the Japanese, and we had forty rounds of live ammunition at each 5-inch gun. The torpedoes were activated and ready to be fired; and so were the depth charges. We were on a wartime alert then. I read a thing once where Admiral Yamamoto, the commanding Japanese admiral, somewhere or other in his memoirs wrote that we missed each other one night by one degree of navigation, which was sixty miles, that close to the equator. It's a good thing we didn't meet. I fear that we wouldn't have survived that battle because we did not know that they had the good stuff that they had. They had some good stuff,

Marcello: Where was your battle station aboard the Tucker?

Lebkowsky: Well, my battle station was in secondary control. In the event that the bridge was disabled, the executive officer and myself were at the secondary control station, which was just another little bridge, only it was out in the open. We could steer from there; we could communicate; we could direct from there--in the event that the bridge was hit, the captain was killed, and the other officers up there



were killed. Of course, the executive officer was at the secondary position with me. I was the captain's battle telephone talker. I relayed the word back and forth. That was my station, and ironically I had just then transferred from being captain of the machine gun squad, which was on the same little circle, just the week before, and I became the communications man for the executive officer, in the event that the bridge was hit, where he could direct the ship from there.

Marcello: When would the Tucker normally come back into port after completing one of these training exercises?

Lebkowsky: Well, it depended. We stayed out different lengths of time. It depended on the operation. Sometimes we'd be out, like I said, three to five weeks.

Marcello: This was a lot different from the general training exercises of the battleships, wasn't it? Usually, they weren't out for any more than a week at a time, I think, and then came back in.

Lebkowsky: Well, sometimes they stayed with us a good while, too, and the carriers, also. Sometimes they'd stay the full bitter length. But the problem with those fellows was trying to refuel them at sea. When they needed to fuel, it took an awful lot of fuel. Our little ol' "tin can",..of course, they had us scurrying around and running around at high speeds, and, my goodness alive, you know, if you had one of

those "tin cans" on full boilers and your running thirty, thirty-five knots, it doesn't take very long to empty those fuel tanks. Of course, fueling at sea is a tough situation, and I don't care how calm the ocean is. It's a precarious thing. A lot of times those ol' boys would get banged up pretty bad. Hoses would snap, you know. It was a mess. But we could do it fairly proficiently, and, of course, it was what we had to do.

Marcello: Where did you normally tie up when you came back into port?

Lebkowsky: Well, I wish I had a map of the thing or a chart of Pearl Harbor, and I could show you exactly. But we tied up normally to one of our mother ships--our supply ships. They rotated. One time it'd maybe be the Dobbin, and then it would be the Whitney. It just depended. One of them would be there, and the other one would be in the United States getting more supplies because they in turn...they really did supply us with, you know, the food and clothes and various things that we needed. Now on December 7, we were tied up next to the Whitney--us and four other destroyers. There was five of us tied up alongside. We made a pretty good target, and they sent three planes after us, but we shot all three of those down. We were fortunate. They didn't get close to us...oh, a hundred yards, something like that... 150 yards.

Marcello: When you came back into port, what was your liberty routine

like?

Lebkowsky: Well, normally, you rated two liberties out of three days, if you wanted them. Liberty usually started at one o'clock in the afternoon, and you had to be back aboard ship by one o'clock that night, unless you could find a legitimate place to stay there in Honolulu, which was almost an impossibility. Our captain, ol' Gearing, chanced to know an old fellow over there who was an author. He was quite a wealthy man, and I don't recall his name right now, but he owned a quite a bit of beach property. Through their carousing and whatnot, this gentleman offered us a private beach for, like, a dollar a year, you know. It had an ol' Army barracks on it, and it was a good place...and we bought an old school bus, and that way we could stay out overnight or for a day or two. They didn't really mind that, except they wanted us to have accommodations. They didn't want us sleeping on the streets and such stuff as that. You know, there wasn't anything wrong with it. You know, Honolulu, after all, didn't have but about 75,000 people back in those days. There were 70,000 or more servicemen there. You can imagine what sort of havoc could have been created if it hadn't been handled pretty diplomatically.

Marcello: Well, there were only two major hotels, and given the pay that you guys were getting, you probably couldn't have afforded to stay in those too often, anyhow.

- Lebkowsky: No, the Alexander Young downtown, and, of course, the Moana and the Royal Hawaiian on Waikiki and whatnot... they were certainly...well, the officers had them all booked up, anyway.
- Marcello: What did you normally do when you went on liberty?
- Lebkowsky: Oh, there wasn't much to do--make the bars, you know, and, of course, make Hotel Street. That was about it, really.
- Marcello: What was Hotel Street like? Describe it.
- Lebkowsky: Oh, Lord, (Chuckle) That was a fish fry, I guarantee you for sure. You know, that was a government-sponsored operation, too. Those girls came over, and they were from the United States, of course, recruited here and sent over there for six months. They couldn't show their faces in public. They couldn't dine out. They couldn't do anything. They were virtually prisoners of those brothels. But we'd get around there and visit with them, and, hell, we wouldn't have money a lot of the times.
- Marcello: How much did a trick cost?
- Lebkowsky: Two dollars.
- Marcello: What's this business I hear about "rain checks" sometimes, that you could get a rain check? How'd that work?
- Lebkowsky: Oh, yes. Well, you know, you got all boozed up and you didn't reach...I think you had five minutes...three or five minutes, I don't recall. If you didn't get the job done by then, why, they'd give you a rain check. I think the

rain check was good for a dollar, and the next time you came back, you had your rain check and one dollar, and you'd give that to her. You'd go again. Oh, yes, it was a fish fry. But it was the only alternative we had.

Marcello: Other than that, there was really not a social life with the opposite sex there, was there?

Lebkowsky: No! No way! There just really wasn't any. It was a rare thing, you know. There wasn't much need in even trying; it just wasn't available.

Marcello: You have a long-sleeved shirt on, so I can't tell whether you've got any tattoos or not on Hotel Street.

Lebkowsky: No, no. That I was smart enough not to do. I never did get that drunk. I got drunk many a time, but I never did get drunk enough to go for that.

Marcello: What was your favorite drinking establishment on Hotel Street or anyplace in downtown Honolulu?

Lebkowsky: Well, in Honolulu...us and another ship...I don't know... by golly, I believe it was a submarine. See, submarine sailors and "tin can" sailors got along real well because we respected each other. They knew that we were their worst enemy...or could be their worst enemy; and by the same token, we knew that they could deal an awful lot of misery in the event of a war. So we had this common respect; we got along together. They didn't like cruiser sailors. They hated battleship sailors; they hated aircraft sailors. We

Were just sort of like the two outsiders--the submarine force and the "tin can" force. So we got along together, and we hung out at a bar called the Green Mill. That was our bar. That was our staked-out territory, and it pretty well was that way, too. Somebody may drift in off one of those other ships, but they saw it was taken over, you know, and like...you know, Marines or soldiers, you know, hell, it was off-limits to them. The best thing to do was just not stop in the Green Mill. In the meantime, we sat there and caroused around and drank and discussed various tactics and what one could do against the other one and so forth and so on. A lot of camaraderie.

Marcello: In general, what would be the condition of sailors aboard the Tucker when they came back after a Saturday night in Honolulu?

Lebkowsky: Oh, about the same as you'd expect anywhere else. You'd get out and get tanked up, you know, and...like, if it was on a Saturday night. Pearl Harbor happened on Sunday morning. On Sunday morning, destroyers were a lot more lenient, you know. We didn't have to run around in a uniform-of-the-day--dungarees were fine--where battleships and carriers and all those people had to go around spit-and-polish. We didn't have any Marines aboard. We didn't have none of that high-powered foolishness to put up with. We were just down-to-earth ol' sailors, you know, that got

out and the nitty-gritty work for the rest of them. Consequently, we sort of lived like we wanted to, and our captains were more or less turned in that direction. But on Sunday mornings, if you didn't want to eat breakfast, you didn't have to get up, and, of course, this is what happened on December 7. I was in bed when they hit, but the first thing I saw, well, one of the guys came down, and we were in our bunks, and he said, "Damn it, get out of here! The damn Japs are attacking us!"

Marcello: Let's back up a minute. I think we are about to the point where we need to talk about the Pearl Harbor attack itself. Let's talk about that weekend of December 7. For instance, do you recall what your routine was on Saturday, December 6, 1941?

Lebkowsky: Oh, yes, very definitely. We had been out, like I said, on one of those forays in search of them. We knew that they were in the area. We stood off of Barbers Point, if memory serves me correctly, around one or two o'clock in the morning, on Saturday morning. But they would not open the submarine gates to let us in. Now this was the whole task force, I mean, a big task force. We had two carriers with us and the battleships, some of them, and cruisers and whatnot; I mean, we were a formidable force. So we milled around out there until daylight, until they opened the submarine gates to let us in. In the meantime, they fired "fish" at us

on Friday night. We went to general quarters and stayed up from, oh, one-thirty or two o'clock until sunlight. They fired torpedoes at our carriers that night, and we dropped depth charges.

Marcello: This was on Friday night, December 5?

Lebkowsky: Right, sure. But then the next morning, we went in. This wasn't nothing new to us; we were continually having to run these sampans out of our operating areas. Hell, we knew good and well some of those sampans had Japanese admirals in them, observing us. We knew that. They were out there supposedly as fishing boats.

Marcello: What happened to those aircraft carriers? You mentioned that on Friday you were with aircraft carriers, but, of course, they were not there on Sunday morning.

Lebkowsky: Thank the Lord! That's one of the things...we would really have been devastated had they got those carriers.

Marcello: What happened to those aircraft carriers?

Lebkowsky: The carriers left for the West Coast. This had been something that we'd been doing regularly. Two carriers would operate out there--I don't remember the time now--three months or whatever, and those two would go to the United States; but in the meantime, two from the United States would be on the way out to Pearl.

Marcello: Which two carriers were with you on that Friday night?

Lebkowsky: Oh, Lordy! I wish I could remember that. I think the



Saratoga was one of them, and I sort of think the other one was the Enterprise, but I'm not sure. Normally, the Saratoga and her sister ship operated together. What was her name? The Yorktown and the Enterprise operated together, and the Saratoga and...what in the world was the other one? Anyhow, they were sister ships. They normally worked in...you know, they went back and forth like this. Thank the Lord, they were on their way to the United States, but there were two on their way out. They supposedly would meet, theoretically, somewhere about midway between Pearl and the United States. So we weren't without that protection very long,

But they did lambast the positions that they normally tied up in. Those were prime targets. Why they didn't know that those carriers wouldn't be there, I'll never know.

Marcello: Okay, so sometime on Saturday, you come back into Pearl.

Lebkowsky: Saturday morning, bright and early.

Marcello: Okay, pick up the story at that point. What do you do when you berth?

Lebkowsky: Well, of course, we tied up next to the Whitney, and the first thing we did...we'd been out, like I said, about four, five, six weeks--whatever the time was, I don't recall. Every so often, there has to be maintenance work done on a ship, just like anything else. I don't know if this was general or the other four destroyers that were with us or not; I don't know.

But, for example, our sister ship, the Shaw, 373, they put her in dry dock to do some repair work on her that required being in dry dock. With us, I remember we had the sights off of our guns and the fire brick out of our fire boxes under the boilers.

Marcello: All this was done on Saturday when you came in?

Lebkowsky: On Saturday, right. That was the prime thing; they got right on that. This was certainly of no help the next morning because those fire bricks and whatnot...they, of course, got them out and put in others or re-cemented them or whatever they did...I don't recall. I wasn't that familiar with that facet of engineering.

But we did get up steam after the attack, and not everybody was able to do that. We were the second ship out. I don't recall who the first one was, but it was another destroyer. I think it was the Monaghan, but I'm not sure.

Marcello: What were you personally doing that Saturday when the Tucker came in?

Lebkowsky: Well, I had liberty, so I went ashore at one o'clock and, of course, stayed until the bitter end and then came back.

Marcello: Do you recall where you went that night?

Lebkowsky: Oh, the Green Mill and probably visited Hotel Street. I'm sure we did, yes. Then, of course, we'd always go eat somewhere, too, and I remember that quite a few of us off the Tucker--or a small band of us, anyway--ate at a place called

the Manhattan Cafe. It was sort of a general food thing; you could get Chinese or Portuguese or American or whatever food, you know. So we always normally made that. Sometimes if there was a movie in town, we'd go to that, but it had to be something really new because we had movies on the ship; and they were fairly new movies, so we didn't bother with that too much. But it was just about the same thing--just went over and get all "tanked up" and went back aboard at one o'clock in the morning.

Marcello: Okay, this takes us into that Sunday morning of December 7, 1941. Once more, I want for you to go into as much detail as you can remember about that period from the time you got up until all hell broke loose.

Lebkowsky: Well, I was still asleep, as were many of us. This gunner's mate came running down to our compartment and told us, "Hell, get out of those bunks! Get your clothes on! The Japs are attacking us!" See, when we were in Pearl Harbor, we'd put up awnings, too, over the ships for shade, you know, to keep some of that sun and heat off of us. Of course, these things were up.

So, hell, I jumped up, I fell right out of my bunk and put on my clothes, you know, and was going to head for my battle station. They already had the ship battened down in the event of a hit. The water-tight compartments and everything were sealed, and, of course, just the manhole covers were open.

So I came up the ladder, and I came out facing the Arizona, and that's the first thing I saw. Before I even cleared that manhole, I saw the Arizona go up.

Marcello: Describe that scene.

Lebkowsky: Oh, Lord of mercy! Now she wasn't over...on water distance is deceiving, but we'll say she was three city blocks from us...three or four city blocks at the most. That sheet of flames had to be in excess of, oh, five hundred feet, I'd say. You could see objects in it--I'm sure metal, I'm sure human, no telling what. There was just a huge, fiery explosion, and the wind just went right...arowed up the air.

We knew for damn sure that it was serious then. Of course, planes were buzzing everywhere and...in this recent Pearl Harbor Gram, one of my fellow shipmates, named Oscar Roloff,,I understand he's a journalist now, somewhere in the Washington, D.C., area. He had this article in the last Gram that said a guy named Bowe, who was a gunner's mate second class at that time, fired the first shot in the harbor that day, and I wouldn't be surprised if he did because he had been aboard the night before; and he was an early riser, and I'm sure that he had gone to breakfast and whatnot and then was out on deck...I'm sure...and he was a tiger, too, so I'm sure that he probably was.

Marcello: Awhile ago you mentioned that all of the doors had already been

dogged before General Quarters sounded.

Lebkowsky: No, no. No, you couldn't very well,..for ventilation sake,

Marcello: You couldn't get from compartment to compartment very conveniently, either.

Lebkowsky: No, no. That was normally...like, the boiler deck boys, that was their job to dog those doors and whatnot as they were getting to their battle stations. Us, in the meantime, who went topside, all we did was dog the hatches after we got out. Anyway, then the ship was supposedly watertight until something happened to it.

Marcello: Okay, so you come out on deck, and you witness the Arizona blowing. Some people have said that it looked as though the Arizona was actually lifted out of the water a little bit and settled down. Did you notice that?

Lebkowsky: The fire caught my eye,

Marcello: How about the smoke?

Lebkowsky: Oh, yes, immediately afterwards, well, then there was an awful lot of smoke that drifted, and it just kept going--you know, with all that oil on the water and whatnot, and then the ship itself burning, and then the other battleships, too, that were hit. Let's see...the Oklahoma, I think, was sunk...yes, it was sunk, but they raised her and brought her back.

Marcello: But was the Arizona the only one that you basically saw at this time?

- Lebkowsky: Well, that was the first thing that caught my eye.
- Marcello: Okay, so what happens at that point?
- Lebkowsky: Well, of course, I'm getting up there to that battle station, you know, and put my headphones on, and then ol' Bowe was the number four gun captain. Of course, the sights were off of his guns, and I recall that he was lying down on the barrel of that gun, with his feet normally where the pointer and trainer are--the bars go--his feet there--and his pointer was on one side, and the trainer was on the other side, He was directing them on how to sight this gun. There was a Japanese plane in the outer perimeter there, and he was on this plane with that 5-inch gun, and he'd fire it, see. He fired and he shot the left wing, the port wing, off of that plane. Of course, the plane was immediately engulfed in flames and came down. Lo and behold, the darn thing hit the Curtiss, the USS Curtiss, which was a seaplane tender, It killed seventeen of our own men. He did get a commendation out of this, but he probably would have got something else if he hadn't had the misfortune of that thing falling right on the deck of the Curtiss.
- Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that the sights were off the guns. Was this because of the fact that the Tucker was undergoing maintenance and so on when it came in?
- Lebkowsky: Yes, You know, when you went out like that, particularly if you were to run into rough seas and whatnot, you'd gum things

up; things need cleaning up, and the best place to do it was in port, you know, where you didn't have some more of it coming on to you.

Marcello: Okay, so what are you doing personally when you get to your battle station?

Lebkowsky: Well, I get my headset on, you know, and establish communications with the bridge. I don't recall who was up there. The captain was ashore, and I don't recall now who was left in charge on the bridge.

Marcello: What kind of messages are flowing back and forth at your station?

Lebkowsky: Well, they're telling...you know, we're going back and forth as to what we're seeing, what's going on, and what they want done on the ship: "Let's get so-and-so manned," or "Let's do this," or "Let's do that," or whatever they're passing down from up above. Of course, they're passing the word to the fire rooms to get steam up, you know, which takes time, you know, for a cold fire box, to heat up two boilers to super-heated steam.

Marcello: How long does it normally take to get up steam to...

Lebkowsky: As I recall, it takes something like a couple of hours.

Marcello: And how long did it take the Tucker that day?

Lebkowsky: Well, I'm sure it was not much longer than that. Of course, you have to bear in mind that they were still putting those fire boxes back together. But we had up steam that afternoon--

I don't recall the time--but they wouldn't let us out of the harbor. They'd closed the submarine gates; they didn't want anything in. As best I recall, it was five of those little two-man subs either captured or sunk there in Pearl Harbor that day. Incidentally, they had the Sunday morning Honolulu Star-Bulletin in them, too, which meant they were ashore with us the night before, or at least ashore somewhere in Honolulu the night before.

Marcello: I've never seen that information before. Where did you learn that?

Lebkowsky: Oh, one of those little ol' "cans",...somebody picked one up and put it over on the submarine dock, and I overheard one of those guys talking about it. In fact, I believe he produced it and showed us the newspaper that they got out of the thing, and it was dated December 7, 1941. It was the Sunday morning edition.

Marcello: So what kind of resistance or what kind of fire is the Tucker putting up during the attack?

Lebkowsky: Well, really, we got the two machine guns going, and we got the 5-inchers going. But, hell, you know, the fire control system itself wasn't activated; in other words, we weren't doing it in unison. It was just each gun being manually operated rather than hydraulically operated, which they could be and were, normally, and operated from a central station, a fire control station.



Marcello: But, again, are they not being operated hydraulically because you're in port and things are torn down?

Lebkowsky: Yes. You know, that morning we were just totally unprepared. This thing was real deceptive because that morning there was a squadron of B-17's due in from the Philippine Islands.

Marcello: From the West Coast.

Lebkowsky: No, from the Philippine Islands. That was the first time-- somebody said this last night, but I don't know if this is true or not--that that was the first time that bombers had flown such a great distance, because this...you're talking about 2,500 miles or so. But they flew from Manila, or Clark Field, I imagine, to Hickam Field. They were in transit and were to arrive that morning. Now this is what confused the Army and the Navy whenever that Army radar man picked those planes up out there. They shrugged it off; they said, "Hell, that's those B-17's coming in from the Philippines."

Another deceptive thing,,we were supposed to have had an operation that morning where our own aircraft was going to drop little twenty-four-pound flour sacks on the ship, you know, simulated dive-bombing and level-bombing. That exercise was scheduled for that morning, too. So until you actually saw that huge, red ball on those wings, what the hell. You didn't know anything!

Marcello: How low were those Japanese planes flying when they came over the Tucker or came in the vicinity?

Lebkowsky: Oh, they weren't very high. I'd say,,oh, hell, off the water, maybe two hundred feet.

Marcello: Were you able to distinguish the pilots and what they were wearing and so on?

Lebkowsky: Oh, yes, yes, you could see them.

Marcello: Describe what you saw.

Lebkowsky: Well, the only three I saw were the three that came toward us, and, of course...well, you figure that the Tucker had two .50-caliber machine guns, and the Cummings, the Case, the Phelps,..and the Phelps had pom-poms, too, and they could really rake you. And, of course, the Whitney had machine guns, and she had a 3-incher back there. All of that was being leveled down on them. Of course, every third round, I think, was a tracer, and we just had those planes in a virtual circle of tracers. You could see those pilots. They was dead when they came by us. They were dead. Each one of those planes...hell, they fell in the bay less than, oh, I'd say, a half-mile away, all within an area of 150 yards of each other.

Marcello: What did that do for your morale when you saw those planes go down?

Lebkowsky: Well, you didn't have time to think about that, really. We knew they weren't invincible; they were people just like we were. It was just a matter that it was a lot of confusion. We never had been put to the test, They hadn't been put to

the test, either, but they were in control; they were up there, and it was our job to get them down. I think it seems like we shot down some forty-three of their planes that day or something in that neighborhood. I don't know what the actual attack force was. But, you know, with the confusion and with the great amount of damage that they did, we defended ourselves rather well, I think.

Marcello: What were you doing in the aftermath of the attack?

Lebkowsky: Well, we stayed at general quarters all day; we just kept watching the sky. We felt they'd come back, that there'd be another wave or two come in. But they didn't follow up, of course, for obvious reasons, I'm sure. They were a pretty good distance out there, you know, and coming in and just being able to remain over the harbor for a few minutes and then getting back to their carriers was a pretty good chore. I'm sure their admiral decided that a second trip would be disastrous. But we waited, anyway. We were there all afternoon.

Strange things happened. After the main attack was over with and it was lunchtime, a mess cook team went to our battle station. We had turkey, and, of course, other things, too. We had bread, I remember, rolls. I remember that I took a drumstick, the entire thing, and grabbed a roll and was eating that, the bread and the turkey, and that fool kid-- he was really green, you know; he was fresh out of boot camp--

didn't know anything about those machine guns. They were just swinging in the breeze, and hot. Oh, Lord, they were water-cooled, and they'd been boiling, you know. The deck was about, oh, eight inches deep, and it was just full of spent rounds, and those things were hot as hell. Lordy, we were doing the Saint Vitus Dance just getting up and around them hot casings. But, anyway, that kid went over there, and before anybody could stop him...these machine guns had handles on them like a motorcycle, and the gas lever on a motorcycle was like the firing mechanism for that machine gun. So the clown just took his thumb over the top of it and his forefinger over the trigger, and before anybody could stop him, he said, "Well, watch this!" Before anybody could say, "Get away from it!" he had done pulled it, and that machine gun started popping. So everybody in the harbor just started firing, and there wasn't anything to fire at.

Marcello: Was it still daylight when this took place?

Lebkowsky: Oh, lunchtime, twelve o'clock--broad open, no clouds to speak of or anything. There wasn't anything to shoot at; that's how shook up they were. They were uptight, I guarantee you. I imagine it took ten minutes to get them shut down. No telling what that cost, you know--all that wasted ammunition.

Marcello: I understand that under stress conditions like that, one gets a powerful thirst after a while. Your mouth becomes dry. Did

you experience it that day? Even later on, in other battles, when you...

Lebkowsky: I don't recall it. I really don't. You know, you had to resign yourself to the fact that you either had to kill or be killed, one of the two. Until you did that, I'm sure that you were a lot more edgy. A lot of guys, it took them a long time to get that through their heads. But, my Lord, it was that simple--you're here this minute, and you may be gone the next, I mean, totally. No, I don't recall anything of that nature happening; I don't recall any thirst periods or anything of that nature. In the first place, you're at a battle station, so if you got thirsty, there wasn't no place you could get something to drink, anyhow. You damn sure couldn't leave that battle station! You had better stay there until it was all over with.

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

Lebkowsky: Well, that afternoon we moved over to the ammunition dock and tied up there overnight, and this other destroyer--I'm thinking it could have been the Monaghan--was up ahead of us. That's the reason I know we were second out that morning, because the other one was ahead of us. When they opened the gates, we got out. We tied up there slightly, oh, about dusk, I guess,

After nightfall we were still at general quarters, and we received this communique from one of the carriers that told

us they were in close enough and that they were going to send us some fighters in there for cover, a squadron, as best I recall. If memory serves me correctly, there was, like, twelve planes in a squadron. I could be wrong about that, but whatever it was, they sent in a squadron or were sending in some fighter planes for cover. They told us what course they would be on, that they would have their running lights on, and, for God's sake, not to shoot. Well, we promptly shot down either seven out of twelve or five out of twelve, whatever it was.

Now they were that touchy! You couldn't shut them down; you couldn't do anything...it was hard to get discipline. You had to be right on them. They were just frightened, you know. They didn't want to die that quick--nobody did. All it took was just one shot, and then all the rest of them were gone. It was like that (snaps fingers).

Marcello: Did you witness that fireworks?

Lebkowsky: Oh, Lord, yes!

Marcello: What did it look like?

Lebkowsky: Oh, God, you know, those tracers and everything went up in the sky, and those antiaircraft shells exploded at their set time. It was just a horrible mess. We passed the word all over ship, and all the rest of the ships passed it, too, over the loud speakers, "For God's sake, don't fire! These are our fighter planes coming in to help us!" Hell, you

you couldn't stop them. They just fired. Then getting them shut down was something else, and there were the poor planes, trying to get landed, you know. Hell, there was a lot of confusion, really--lots of confusion.

Marcello: I'm sure that you probably heard sporadic gunfire all night,

Lebkowsky: No, I don't recall that. Of course, we may have gone to bed. I don't recall,,,I don't recall. I'm sure we went then to probably a half-and-half situation--half to go to bed and half to stay on watch. I don't really recall what happened on that. We were all nervous and upset and whatnot.

Marcello: How well did you sleep that night?

Lebkowsky: I don't recall that. I do recall that we did have to sleep in our clothes, and we kept that practice up from then on. We were ready at all times. You could fall right out of that bunk, and you had your clothes on. You didn't have to stop and dress; you was ready to get to your battle station,

Marcello: So when did the Tucker finally get out of Pearl?

Lebkowsky: We got out the next morning, just as soon as they opened the submarine gates. Then they put us on patrol duty, patrolling Waikiki Beach. The reason they did that, of course, was to protect the city of Honolulu against submarine bombardment and also to protect the Royal Hawaiian and the Moana Hotels. So we patrolled back and forth there, it seemed

like, for three or four or five days, something to that effect. We did drop some charges, but, of course, you know, with those detection devices, that sonar equipment, you could pick up kelp or you could pick up whales, you know, things of this nature. I don't recall...we didn't... if we sank anything, we didn't have any evidence of it. But I'm sure we probably destroyed a lot of kelp and killed a lot of fish.

Marcello: A lot of submarine scares?

Lebkowsky: Oh, yes. They're so treacherous--those darn things. Our devices weren't really that great that you could pick these things up accurately. All you could tell was that there was something out there. Like I said, it could be a whale, it could be kelp, it could be the hull of some sunken vessel from years and years ago. It could be anything.

Marcello: Now was this an organized anti-submarine patrol, or were most of the destroyers simply out there thrashing around and doing their own thing?

Lebkowsky: Oh, no, it was just the two of us out there until the rest of them got out. Different ones were assigned different duty stations. But, no, that was old hat. We were well prepared, you know. All we needed to know was where to go and what to do. Well, we knew what to do.

Marcello: Describe what the harbor looked like the first time you had a chance to see it with a certain amount of reflection and



introspection and so on.

Lebkowsky: Oh, well, that was several days after we'd been out on patrol, and we re-entered the harbor. Of course, everybody was calm then, you know. But it was hard to comprehend the amount of damage that had been done. There was a lot of amazement.

We naturally wondered what our strength would be to get out and get at these people. Our work was cut out for us. We knew what we had to do, but did we have enough to do it with? That was our concern, or my concern, and I'm sure it was in the minds of everybody. Of course, the officers were talking about it and so forth and so on.

But we mostly stayed on routine patrol duties in and around the islands until they got five of those old battleships ready to come back to the United States. The Tucker and another destroyer...let's see...that would have been the...must have been the Cummings, 365. We brought those old crippled battleships back to the United States, and we dropped...it seems like we dropped three of them at Bremerton, and we took the other two down to Mare Island at San Francisco. This was at night, and we were going underneath the Golden Gate Bridge, and it was New Year's Eve. I recall they met us... we tied up at a dock this time, and, of course, they refueled us and re-ammunitioned us. I remember they had big five-gallon cans of milk and ice cream--all we wanted of it. At

that time we made modifications; they put Oerlikons on the ship, 20-millimeter Oerlikons. They also put on side depth charge throwers, and they made other modifications on the ship, you know. We were there a very short time-- three or four or five days. Then we were out and gone again.

Then they had us bringing the Navy wives back to the United States. We were escorting the Lurline, Matsonia, the Monterrey, and the old British ship Aquitania. We were transporting Navy wives and personnel from the Hawaiian Islands back to the United States. We made, I think, two or three of those trips.

Of course, each time we'd go back, we'd have to take a convoy out. This was a fish fry. By this time we had every ol' kind of sailing vessel you could think of, the sorriest little ol' buckets. Some of them couldn't make four, five, or six knots, you know, and, of course, your convoy can only be as fast as the slowest ship in the convoy. It was like herding a bunch of goats. Every morning at sunup, we'd have to go run back and gather up all these clowns and get them back in the pack because that's what those submarines will pick on, is stragglers. If one of them fell off out there, hell-fire, he was leaving himself wide-open. But Good Lord willing, we'd make it, you know, and I don't recall us losing any of those little rascals.

Of course, those ships that they were bringing those Navy wives on, hell, those were the pleasure trips, because we were zipping across there. Those pleasure ships could run at twenty-five knots. When you're moving at twenty-five knots twenty-four hours a day, you're covering a lot of area.

Marcello: When did the Tucker finally head for the South Pacific?

Lebkowsky: Well, after we got the wives back and whatnot, then they sent us and an old ship, the old Langley...they sent us off just with her, and we were to establish seaplane bases all throughout the South Pacific. We'd stop at some island and set off a couple of seaplanes and some aviation gasoline and whatever equipment...the bare necessities...and turn them loose, where they could do reconnaissance work with those planes. We just island-hopped and did that, and we finally wound up at Perth, Australia. We just kept going, all through those islands,

When we go to Perth, I remember the Japanese were invading the Dutch East Indies then. In fact, the Houston and the Marblehead had just gone down, and the Boise ran off and left them. Of course, we were calling her the "Black Dragon" because she was painted black. You know, if they had stayed and fought that battle with the Houston and the Marblehead, there's a bare chance that they could have gotten out of there without losing those ships and all

those people,

Marcello: Well, that's another story, and I think this is probably a good place to end the interview. I want to thank you very much for having participated in our project. You've said a lot of interesting and very important things, and I'm sure that scholars are going to find your comments quite valuable when they use them to study Pearl Harbor.

Lebkowsky: Well, you're more than welcome, Doctor. I was happy to do it.