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Interview with
ELMER DUREN
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Oral History Collection

Elmer Duren

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello Date of Interview: October 22, 1983

Place of Interview: Rusk, Texas

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Elmer Duren for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on October 22, 1983, in Rusk, Texas. I am interviewing Mr. Duren in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was aboard the destroyer USS Dale during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Mr. Duren, 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. Duren: I was born on October 28, 1919, in a little town, Robeline, Louisiana, in Natchitoches Parish. My education was the tenth grade of high school. I joined the Navy in Alexander, Louisiana, on July 15, 1940.

Dr. Marcello: Which would have made you how old when you entered the service?

Mr. Duren: I was twenty. I would be twenty-one on my next birthday.

Dr. Marcello: Why did you decide to join the service in 1940?

Duren: I was always...the military really turned me on. They had a lot of maneuvers around my home during that time--the Army did. I was always interested in the Navy, though, because it was, you might say, my first love as far as the military goes. In high school I used to read all I could find about the Navy. It was my desire to be in the Navy. In fact, if I failed to join the Navy--get in the Navy--I was going to try the Marines, but I always felt like I was glad I got in the Navy (chuckle).

Marcello: What was it that fascinated you about the Navy?

Duren: Oh, seeing pictures of ships and reading about it. I don't know...like I say, the military always...I was a person that discipline didn't bother me because I knew it was a "must." My father was a pretty good disciplinarian. I don't know, really; I can't answer that. The Navy fascinated me. When we was in boot camp, I'd see ships coming in and leaving, and you'd wonder where they'd been or where they was going. I used to see movies about the Navy, they just fascinated me and made me want to be a part of it.

Marcello: What part did economic reasons play in your decision to join the service?

Duren: Well, at that time we was right at, I guess you might say, the end of the Depression; but being raised up as a child in the Depression, I never...it was something we grew into, and you didn't really expect nothing much because of the fact that your parents and most of the people around you was poor

or sharecroppers, you might say. Of course, you knew that when you became grown, you must go to something, so maybe this had a bearing in me going into the military service.

Marcello: Where did you take your boot camp?

Duren: San Diego.

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

Duren: From July 15 to...I went aboard ship on September 26.

Marcello: So it must have lasted--what--most of twelve weeks or something like that?

Duren: Something like that. Most guys, when they completed boot camp, they gave them a ten-day furlough, but you had to have a round-trip ticket home and back, which I didn't have. My dad and I was...it was only me and him. We was "baching," you might say. I guess this was one thing that made it easier for me, because I saw guys that got homesick and I never did get homesick. In other words, I guess it was because of the background I was from. Like I say, my grandmother raised me. When she died it was just me and my dad. This probably had a bearing in me being easily adjusted to the Navy.

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

Duren: Well, no. I always liked the marching. We'd march to a band. There was a band always there, usually, and I liked the marching because it showed you what a bunch of people together, when they was all together, how it looked. I

thought we was real good until I went over to the Marine base one day. I decided we didn't know how to march (chuckle).

Marcello: At that time how closely were you keeping abreast of current events and world affairs and things of that nature?

Duren: Well, I remember my high school principal...when I was in high school, the Army was on maneuvers around there, and I was watching them one day out the school window. Of course, he knew that I was right close to the age that, if something happened, I would probably be in the military, and he asked me what I thought about it. We kept up with it pretty good because I remember keeping up with what was going on over in Poland, Germany, and Russia. I remember when the Graf Spee, a German raider in the Atlantic, ended up down in Montevideo. The British run it into port, and they scuttled it. All this ...I was aware of it, and, also, I thought we had the greatest country on earth. I thought the greatest country in the world stood behind us.

Marcello: Where did you go when you left boot camp?

Duren: I went aboard the Dale in San Diego. It was at that time attached to what they called the Hawaiian Detachment. It had come to the States for, I think, a short time, and while it was there, I went aboard, and in just a few days we left for Hawaii.

Marcello: Was your assignment to the Dale voluntary, or were you simply ordered aboard the Dale?

Duren: They asked you...we had to fill out a card and turn it in when we finished our training: "Did we want to go to a school or go home on leave or go to sea." Not having a round-trip ticket home, I knew that...so I asked for sea because to me, in the end, this is what I wanted. I couldn't bear the thought of saying here I was, a sailor and on land. The end was the sea. As I look back, a destroyer was my first choice. I asked for a destroyer by the name of the Blue, and I don't know why, really; but I ended up with the Dale, and I've always been glad I got the Dale.

Marcello: Why did you want to go aboard a destroyer?

Duren: Because there was a saying in the Navy back then: "You've never been a sailor until you've been on a 'tin can.'" It was a little more glamorous, I think, because a destroyer was always everywhere. They screened the big ships; they went on missions. They was small, too, and I'd always thought they would be harder to hit in combat. And they was fast.

Marcello: When had the Dale been commissioned? Was it a new ship or an old ship?

Duren: The Dale was one of the first destroyers built after the old four-pipers, and it was, I believe, commissioned in 1935. If you looked it up in Jane's Fighting Ships or some other book, you would find no destroyers built from right after World War I until 1935 or about then. The Farragut-class

destroyer was then begun, and they was considered, at that time, the first-line destroyers.

Marcello: What sort of reception did you get when you initially went aboard the Dale? After all, you were still a "boot," and I'm sure there were a few "old salts" aboard the Dale.

Duren: It was the ensign that greeted me at the gangway, and I saw him later become captain of that ship during the war. His name was Robinson. He was a nice guy. They say he was what they called a "mustang," I believe, back then. At one time he was an enlisted man, and he went back to Annapolis and got a commission. Like I say, when the war ended, he was captain of the ship.

Marcello: But did the "old salts," that is, the petty officers aboard the Dale, let you know pretty quickly that you were still a "boot?"

Duren: I was in the number one fireroom, was my station. I went into what they called the "black gang" in the number one fireroom when I went aboard. Of course, the first thing I caught was three months of mess cooking because each department furnished their mess cook. Of course, being green, you naturally ended up in the mess hall first. After three months of mess cooking, well, I became acquainted with the fireroom, the number one fireroom. We had some old guys down there that was...the guy in charge of the fireroom was named Bliss, and he was from California, and he'd been in the Navy

a good while then. I thought he was the meanest guy that ever was, but, you know, later on, when I got to be the same rate that he was, I looked back on my experience with him and realized that he was a good guy, and he was trying to get a job done. He kept us young guys afraid or scared. You wanted to walk the straight-and-narrow and not get in trouble; so when they hollered, you jumped.

Marcello: So you were striking for fireman, then?

Duren: Yes, that's right. My rate was apprentice seaman, and it was changed to fireman third class when I went in the fire-room. I took an examination while we was at Pearl Harbor for fireman second class, and I've got my old...they gave you a little deal showing what you made on your examination. You didn't get a rate back then until an opening became available. It was kind of slow. The rates were slow back then. We got \$21 a month to start with. I know that when I got to boot camp on the first payday, they gave you \$10, and you gave \$7.50 back to them for a canteen book that you could use in the canteen for the cobbler's shop or any tooth-paste, shaving material--something like that. But, you know, really, to me, when we was marching and stuff in training, I used to kind of pinch myself to see if it was really true --was I in there (chuckle).

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that promotion was pretty slow in that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy. It picked up considerably once the war started, did it not?

- Duren: It sure did. A lot of them just automatically got rates. They'd already took their examination, and they was waiting. The construction of new ships had really started picking up. The demand...I believe on the Dale we had a peacetime crew of about 250, but our wartime crew was somewhere around 300-325. When the war ended and we decommissioned the ship in Brooklyn, New York, there was thirty-something of us aboard that was on there the day the war started.
- Marcello: So you did stay on the Dale, then, for the entire war?
- Duren: That's right.
- Marcello: You mentioned also that in order to be promoted, there had to be an opening. In other words, if there wasn't an opening aboard your ship, then you would have to transfer to another ship, assuming that it had an opening.
- Duren: That's right. A lot of guys was sometimes transferred to what they called "new construction." For some it was desirable to go to new construction because lots of times they got a thirty-day leave when they went back to the States to get aboard a new ship. Their primary reason, I think, was to get a thirty-day leave. I don't know. I never did have a desire to...and I was glad later because our ship finished the war, and we lost three of our sister ships. Two was in a typhoon, though, and one was in the Aleutian Islands. It run aground.
- Marcello: I assume that what training you received, then, was basically on-the-job training. Is that correct?

Duren: That's right.

Marcello: As you look back on it, how would you describe that on-the-job training that you received? Was it good? Fair? How would you describe it?

Duren: Well, at that time I thought it was fair, but later I think it could have been better. By that, I mean, I have bought books and ordered books from Washington concerning ships that probably only officers had available when I was in there, and I believe I'd have been better prepared to do my job had I known some of the things that was in these books.

Marcello: What sort of a relationship existed aboard the Dale between people of your rank--seaman, seaman first class, and seaman apprentice--and those in the petty officer ranks?

Duren: The petty officers...they was close. When I was a fireman third class and second and first and along there, I used to go ashore with guys that was first class petty officers. In the fireroom we had back then what we called watertenders, but they've since changed it to boilertenders because I think watertender was a little misleading. The first class was usually in charge of the steaming watch. We had a guy that was a first class, and he went on...I saw him during the Korean War, and he was a lieutenant commander. His name was Barnes. He was from Indiana. I went to ball games with him in San Diego.

Marcello: What sort of a relationship existed between the officers and

the enlisted personnel aboard the Dale during that pre-Pearl Harbor period?

Duren: Well, with me--and I think with guys about like me--it wasn't that close. Usually, the go-between with officers might be the chief. I think it was proper to be not too close.

Marcello: Describe what your living quarters were like aboard the Dale.

Duren: Down around the equator, it was hot. Our living quarters was aft. Of course, the number one fireroom was a little on forward, and I think it was suitable. Of course, it wasn't what you might find today, but I don't think nobody griped about it much. Like I say, in the southwest Pacific, it got hot. I know one time a guy got transferred, and he had a little bitty ol' electric fan about so big (gesture), and the bunk was three on a tier on a bulkhead, and I bought this little ol' fan from him to just fasten to the chain on the bunk to just blow in my face--just the face. At night you may come off a watch, and you know it's going to be hot down there. You'd take a shower, and you'd stand on the fantail with just your shorts on to try to cool off as much as possible and then run down and go to sleep before you started sweating (chuckle). I don't recall it being real disagreeable.

Marcello: How were your quarters in terms of space?

Duren: It was pretty crowded because when they brought the new guys aboard--the extra guys--after the war started, they put bunks in the mess hall. This made it a little crowded.

Marcello: How about before the war? Again, most of my questions now are dealing with the Dale before the war.

Duren: Before the war it wasn't that bad on the Dale. Now I understand that on the bigger ships they slept in hammocks, but we didn't sleep in hammocks on the Dale.

Marcello: You always had bunks?

Duren: Yes.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that when you initially went aboard the Dale, you got three months of mess cooking. Describe what mess cooking involved aboard the Dale.

Duren: At that time they didn't feed cafeteria-style. Later on, they shifted to...like us and the B Division or in the fireroom, we had, I think, several tables assigned to us, and a guy sat at a certain place everytime he ate. This was his place. I served two tables. We had plates; we didn't have the trays. We set mess up. We put the plates and the forks and spoons and what-have-you, and then we went up to the galley and got the food and brought it to the mess hall--to our particular mess. We made sure that it was set on the table. We had to clean the mess hall. We put all the plates and cooking utensils in the scullery and made sure they was clean. We painted or mopped the decks. At times you would have the duty to peel potatoes and onions and like this. You was always glad to get...you got \$5 extra a month for being on mess cooking, and the guys used to tip you a little bit. Say,

a first class...you may have a couple first classes on your mess table, and they would maybe every payday--we got paid the first and the fifteenth--some of them would give you as much as 50¢. Lots of times you wasn't going nowhere, and you didn't really need it. You might pick up several dollars every payday just on tips from the guys. That was really standing them in good when they slept late, and they'd come down to the mess hall, and you had already started cleaning up. They'd say, "Hey, could you get me a couple eggs or something?" You knew who was going to take an "eating out" when you went up to the galley and asked the cook for a couple eggs. You'd go up there and lie to him and tell him you had a couple guys on the watch or something--that just come off a watch--to try to...you know, you'd go to bat for them to try to get them something to eat. Really, you knew they'd slept over.

Marcello: In general how did you like the food that was served aboard the Dale?

Duren: Well, this again would go back to my background. To me it was good. There was some things I didn't particularly like, but overall I knew it was supposed to be good. I ate things that I used to didn't like, but I never did gripe about it. Later on, during the war, we'd stay out at sea a long time, and it would get a little skimpy because I know one time we stayed out about two months. It got a little skimpy then. It didn't bother me. Like I say, I didn't eat all that good

when I was at home (chuckle).

Marcello: As you look back upon life aboard the Dale in that pre-Pearl Harbor period, how would you describe the morale of the ship? In other words, was the Dale a happy ship or not?

Duren: Oh, yes. We was a happy ship. Everyone thought the Dale was the best. We won the "E" the year before the war started. We had competition with the other ships on efficiency and steaming. They had a way they'd figure how much oil you used for a certain amount of steaming. We won the "E," and we was able to paint a big "E" on our smokestack, telling the world that we was tops in efficiency. The engineers could wear an "E" on their uniform, and they was paid \$10--one time--for being the best in their class.

Marcello: How often would that competition be held?

Duren: Yearly, until the war started.

Marcello: In other words, once a year?

Duren: Yes.

Marcello: And then you would be able to wear that "E" or display that "E" for that entire year.

Duren: That's right. Just before the war started, they painted all the things off the ship that identified them. This was an identifying mark. They painted the "E" off and also...you know, gunnery could paint an "E" on their fire controller if they was best in gunnery. It was a kind of a competition thing among the ships of the same class.

Marcello: When did the Dale go to the Hawaiian Islands on a more or less permanent basis?

Duren: It went about a year before I went aboard it.

Marcello: I see. In other words, it had simply come back from Hawaii for whatever reason, and then you picked it up, and it went back over again.

Duren: Yes.

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

Duren: It was real adventuresome because to me the Hawaiian Islands was just a place you maybe dreamed about going. You heard a lot about the Hawaiian Islands. You maybe seen a movie sometimes about something in the South Pacific. I seen a movie one time that was somewhere south of Pago Pago or something like that. This was fantastic to think that you was going to get to go to where maybe mostly just movie stars went at that time.

Marcello: Let's assume that the Dale is now in the Hawaiian Islands... incidentally, did you get seasick?

Duren: One time. The first time I went to sea out of San Diego, we ran into real heavy seas. That's the sickest I ever got, and I really never did get sick no more to that extent. I was sick nearly all the way over, and I was mess cooking, too, so that made it worse because you was standing there with this food, and you had to go down and set up your mess and

smell this food cooking. Just because you was sick didn't eliminate you from your duties. of course, I knew that. But, anyway, I never was sick again after that. We'd even got into typhoons, and I wouldn't get sick. I don't know. But I was glad to see land when I did see land. You would get to feeling...say, if you would stay in port for several days--later on--and went out to sea and got into pretty rough seas, you may not feel good for about a day, but you didn't really get sick. You just become acclimatized, and eventually it didn't bother you.

Marcello: Okay, let us assume that you are now in the Hawaiian Islands. Describe what a typical training exercise would be like for the Dale. In other words, when would you go out, what would you do when you went out, how long would you stay out, and when would you come back?

Duren: Well, I think that back in peacetime a week out was considered a typical training deal. Usually, you got in several different phases of training. There was all kinds of training. You might have gunnery, or you might have...or maybe you didn't even...after I went aboard, my first GQ--you know, battle station--was in a magazine because I didn't know enough about the fireroom to be worth anything to them down there. But I could pass ammunition and put ammunition on a hoist going up to a 5-inch gun. I stayed in the magazine for a while, and eventually I worked up to the gun itself. The last time

that I was on the gun before the war started, and before I learned enough about the fireroom, I was a shell loader on the number five mount, which was the one on the fantail.

Getting back to your question, I think all phases of training would maybe come in during this time. You would have abandon ship drills, fire drills, collision drills, and fire and rescue drills besides General Quarters. During that week, of course, everybody looked forward to going back into Pearl. Eventually, like I say, I was in the fireroom on my GQ station. You learned a lot about your own particular station because eventually this was your primary concern even though you may learn a little about the guns. I always liked guns, and I used to wonder...I used to think that's what I wanted, but I heard a guy say one time, "Nobody wanted an ex-gunner's mate on the outside." So that made sense. That's why I changed my mind to the engineering station.

Marcello: You mentioned that at the time of the attack, you were on the number five mount.

Duren: That wasn't at the time of the attack. My battle station before the war started was on the number five mount. But when the war started, my battle station was the number one fireroom.

Marcello: I see. By that time you did have enough experience that you were assigned to the fireroom as your battle station.

Duren: That's right.

Marcello: When you were out at sea on these exercises, how much attention was given to antiaircraft training and practice?

Duren: They fired at sleeves every now and then. I remember it was mostly at sleeves. One time I remember a drone. They had this little drone--I think it's controlled from another airplane--that they would fly. I know we shot one down one day. They put a guard on it to make sure nobody got a piece of it and all of this. But we used to have quite a bit of training.

I remember we would steam under what they would call "wartime conditions." They would try to simulate wartime conditions, which at all times at least some of the guns was manned. Maybe you may stand a watch in the fireroom and then go stand a watch on the gun. Usually, not knowing too much much about the guns...and this was back before the days of radar, so we had a lot of lookouts. In fact, we had a crow's nest then on the mast, which was later taken off.

I know one time they had a fleet exercise, and they would split the fleet up into two different groups. We would steam all night one night to make a torpedo attack on the cruiser New Orleans, which was our cruiser but was supposed to be the enemy. We'd have an aircraft carrier, and the other outfit would have a carrier.

I remember one time early in the morning, just about daylight when you could see pretty good. Everyone was sleepy, and they was sitting around and wasn't really keeping a good

lookout. I saw these airplanes way up high, circling, and didn't say a word, thinking they was ours or supposed to be ours. They was ours, but they was the other side's, and then they started diving on our carrier. I thought about it lots of times. It would have been too late. By the time our fire control got the word, they was already in their dive.

Marcello: What other ships did you operate with you when you went out on these exercises?

Duren: The ships in our squadron and some of the other ships in the ...as I said before, there was eight ships in our squadron.

Marcello: And what was your squadron designated as? How was it identified?

Duren: I believe it was the First Division. There was four to a group, and two groups made up the squadron. Most of the time we operated together, or some part of us. Sometimes all of us may not be there. In fact, the whole squadron was in Pearl Harbor on December 7. I thought that was unique because lots of times maybe a couple or three of them were off somewhere else.

Marcello: Normally, what day of the week would you come in off one of these training exercises?

Duren: Usually, on the weekends--Friday or Saturday.

Marcello: Then how long would you stay in?

Duren: It all depends. Sometimes we may get underway Monday morning, or sometimes we may stay longer than that.

Marcello: But it was a pretty sure thing that you would be in on the weekend?

Duren: Lots of times, like I say, our spells at sea wasn't all that long. If we stayed out two weeks, man, we'd been out a long time. Usually, we was just operating around some of the other islands out there. Once in awhile we'd go in and anchor at a place they called Lahaina Roads and just anchor maybe a mile or two off the beach. They'd have a swimming party or something like that. Nobody could go ashore or nothing, but it kind of broke the monotony. One time we went in dry dock there in Pearl and went on a power run after a short overhaul. We went to one of the other islands and stayed the weekend. I believe it was Kauai. There wasn't much of a harbor there; it was just kind of a breakwater.

Marcello: On a weekend would most of the ships be in Pearl, or in some cases would ships be out of Pearl?

Duren: I think a lot of times...when you say "most," it was a kind of fluctuating thing. They was going and coming nearly all the time.

Marcello: Let me put it this way. On December 7, of course, the battleships were all in. Was this the normal procedure on weekends, that is, to have the battleships in?

Duren: Yes, it was primarily...I'd say the trend was that way.

Marcello: When the Dale came in, where did it usually dock? Where was it tied up?

Duren: We tied to a buoy over on the what we called the Pearl City side. Usually, there was a destroyer tender that stayed over

there. If you had to go alongside a destroyer tender for some minor repairs, you may go alongside the Dixie or the Whitney, and I believe there was one named the Dobbin. Or we may tie up in a nest. Now on the morning of December 7, we had four destroyers tied in together to a buoy on what I call the Pearl City side. It's between the island and Pearl City.

Marcello: What were the other destroyers tied up in that nest that day? Do you recall?

Duren: (Chuckle) They was our sister ships. I don't recall. I couldn't name them. I could name you all the eight ships like the Dale, or the other seven.

Marcello: You can't remember the ones that were tied up that day?

Duren: No. I could look at the picture, but as far as off the top of my head, I couldn't because we was so used to each other. I did not know anybody on one of these other ships. I knew that this was the Dale's sister ship, and we operated quite a bit together. We always claimed to be the first ship out of the harbor, but if you read history, Walter Lord's The Day of Infamy, he gives us second. I've read there was the ready duty destroyer already underway when the attack started, so naturally they would be the first one out because they had got the word from the four-pipe destroyer that was on patrol outside the harbor that they needed somebody. It was already getting underway.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about the liberty routine as it operated for the Dale. First of all, how were the liberty parties organized?

Duren: You had three sections aboard ship. Usually, two could go ashore, and one section stayed aboard. In our particular... now that's generally in our department, in the fireroom. That's the way it was. Two days you could go ashore; one day you had to stay aboard. There was quite a bit of swapping. Some guys would get somebody to stand by for them when they wanted to go ashore. Did you know that the first year I was in there that I went ashore one time?

Marcello: Why was that?

Duren: I really don't know. I was in San Diego when I went aboard ship. I went over there, and I couldn't find none of the guys off the ship. Really, I guess, again you go back to background. I used to do a lot of standing by. Guys wanting to go would always come to me because they knew I wasn't going ashore usually. Like I say, the first time I went ashore, I didn't go to Honolulu. I went to Pearl City. Pearl City had nothing there but a little ol' beer joint. I went with a couple of these "old salts." They got a little beered up, and they said, "Let's go to Honolulu." I said I was going back to the ship, so I went back to the ship. They went to Honolulu.

Marcello: Generally speaking, when people came back off liberty, what

sort of condition were they in, especially if they came back on a Saturday night, let's say?

Duren: Well, as you probably already know, there was not too much for a guy...I say this now. Back then there was probably more to do than I really realized, if you just wanted to pursue it. But for the average guy, I'd say that it was to go to a movie, maybe eat a meal. A lot of them, I know, got started hitting the beer joints. Maybe where he came from home, he didn't do that. I think it was just lack of maybe something to do that it would get started like that.

Marcello: When you had liberty, was there a particular time that you had to be back aboard ship?

Duren: Even in peacetime you had to have special permission if you stayed past midnight. At twelve o'clock you had to be back aboard ship unless you had special permission. When I was mess cooking, I knew a guy in our department that used to... they call it "making a fantail liberty." He knew the bread boat or the...the ship sent a boat with a mess cook to the dock early every morning to pick up bread and milk, and he knew that. It didn't make the gangway where the OD was at; it made the fantail. That's the way he was beating this thing. He'd catch the bread boat and climb aboard on the fantail. That comes to my mind that this guy used to do that.

Marcello: This brings us into those days immediately prior to the

attack. Let me ask you this. As conditions between the United States and Japan continued to get worse, did you and your buddies in your bull sessions ever talk about the possibility of an attack at Pearl Harbor?

Duren: Not an attack at Pearl Harbor, but we did know that the relationship between Japan and the United States had got bad. I know one time before Pearl Harbor, they sent us and two or three other destroyers...we went out about four hundred miles to meet a Japanese passenger ship that was bringing this guy to Washington. He was coming to the United States. I don't even remember who he was, but he was coming to Washington. We escorted this ship to Honolulu, and everybody was saying then, "We ought to torpedo it now." I don't think...I know I didn't ever dream of...I used to think about what a barrage we could put up. I'd look at all the ships...I used to like it when we would be in port, and I'd go up on the after deckhouse to write a letter home. It would be a beautiful day, and you'd look out over the harbor and see all these warships and their guns. You'd just think about what a barrage we could put up. I never dreamed that I would see it.

Marcello: As one gets closer and closer to December 7, and as conditions between the two countries were getting worse, could you, even in your station, detect any changes in your training routine at all?

Duren: No. I think it was pretty well the same. To the best I can remember. I do know that the trainers in the...I remember them taking every department around to the different places on the ship and showing us how to...showing me how to operate a .50-caliber machine gun if you ever had to and how to fire the depth charges or torpedoes. It was to learn each guy, although this wasn't his line of work, a little something about the other guy's job.

I know that on the morning of December 7, an ensign told me and another guy to man a .50-caliber machine gun. It was amidships. Of course, this was not my station, but since he ordered us to man this gun, we took the cover off of it, and the ready box next to the gun had nothing in it--no ammunition in it. All the ammunition was in the magazine, so I told the other guy I was going to my station. I always wondered what it would have been like had we had ammunition because neither one of us was a gunner's mate. Could we have got it loaded and started firing it? It didn't turn out that way.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about that weekend of December 7, 1941. When did the Dale come in that weekend?

Duren: I don't remember. Just prior to the attack, I don't remember how long it had been since we'd been there. Everything was kind of a humdrum routine that you...like I say, I couldn't even tell you what was the other three ships in our division

there. I don't think we'd been there very long because back in them days, you didn't come in and stay. You was going and coming quite a bit. Usually, it wouldn't be far. You'd go out maybe in the...we used to go out and be on patrol off the entrance to the harbor every now and then. We'd patrol that maybe...I guess there was someone on patrol out there all the time.

Marcello: What did you do that Saturday of December 6, 1941? Do you recall?

Duren: No, I don't. I believe I'd wrote a letter to my dad. I've still got an old letter that I was going to show you, that I wrote to my dad in 1940. I can't recall too much that happened just before. Like I say, it was just generally routine. Back in those days, it was just kind of a...on Sunday morning, naturally, the routine was to be in uniform-of-the-day--what we called uniform-of-the-day. The uniform-of-the-day then was whites cut off just above the knees and a skivvy shirt. That's what most of the guys had on that morning when it started. Later on, you'd see them pass the rule that you had to have long sleeves and shirt because they learned a lot as they went along.

Marcello: I guess the short sleeves and the short trousers exposed one to all sorts of burns and that sort of thing.

Duren: That's right.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us into that morning of December 7, 1941.

Let me ask you this before we get to that point, however.

I just thought of this. When the Dale was in port tied up, how many boilers would be operating?

Duren: One.

Marcello: You would just have one?

Duren: One for auxiliary purposes. Usually, it was one in number two fireroom. We could make twenty-eight knots on the number one fireroom, but we couldn't make but eighteen knots on the number two fireroom. The number two fireroom had smaller boilers and was therefore probably more efficient. A steaming watch in port, which we called the auxiliary watch, would only be two men per watch in the fireroom itself. It usually took you...well, it used to take us four hours from the time we lit a boiler until we put it on the line. So that morning it was either the number three or four boiler that was on the line--not enough for very much speed.

Marcello: This brings us to that Sunday morning, so I want you to go into as much detail concerning that Sunday morning as you can remember from the time you got up until all hell broke loose. I'll let you pick up the story at this point.

Duren: Well, as I said before, on Sunday morning guys could sleep in if they wanted to. There was nothing going on. It was a routine holiday, you might say.

Marcello: Holiday routine, I believe they call it.

Duren: Yes. Lots of guys wouldn't even get up to eat breakfast

because they'd rather sleep in. But I had gotten up and went to the mess hall. Usually, you'll have fruit of some kind, and I remember that morning we had oranges. A guy... lots of times he'll pick his orange up, and he'll go back up on deck to eat it.

I walked back on the fantail. Our fantail was pointed towards the Utah. The Utah was tied up just over next to the island in the middle of the harbor. Guys was standing around--just a few guys, not many, because, like I say, not many of them got up that morning. A lot of our guys was on the beach. I didn't know that many of them was on the beach until later. Even the skipper and the "exec" was not aboard.

I was standing back there peeling this orange, and this first airplane that I saw came in from over these cane patches over toward Pearl City. It was real low, and I thought he was going to land on this island because this was an airbase. But I hardly ever saw them land from that direction. Usually, they came in from the other way. I guess the prevailing winds there was from the other way. About the time he got even with us, there was a couple more behind him. He was, like I say, real low down, about mast-high.

Well, the first one dropped something in the water between us and the Utah. I didn't know it then, but it was a torpedo. Just a few seconds later, there was a big explosion at the side of the Utah, and the water and stuff just flew

high. The next one was...he was a...well, they was all torpedo planes. That's what they was doing--they was making a run on the Utah. It was a cruiser...I forget the name. It seems like it was Detroit or one of these ol' cruisers that was there near the Utah. When the third one was about even with us, somebody said, "Jap planes!" I heard someone say, "Japanese planes!" I looked at the plane--looked closer --and, sure enough, there was a red ball painted on the side of it.

Marcello: In the meantime what were you speculating when you saw these planes coming over, and you saw the first torpedo drop, and you saw this explosion over at the Utah?

Duren: Well, the Utah back then had been converted to what they called a target ship. We had known that they had practiced as a target ship, and I thought they was...well, I says, "They're practicing right here in the harbor." That's what I thought at first until someone said, "Jap planes!"

Then I remember a guy having a newspaper. Then, someone went over to Honolulu, and you could get a newspaper. It was just a mock newspaper. It had whatever headlines put on it that they wanted. I remember seeing a guy with a newspaper that says, "U.S. Navy Sinks Jap Fleet" or something like that. Of course, guys was aware of the fact of our relationship with Japan, but we didn't think they would dare to try anything like that. Most of us thought a war with Japan wouldn't

last a year because we'd really wipe them out in a hurry. We had confidence. We thought we was the best.

Marcello: What was your reaction when you hear this person identify these planes as Japanese, and then when you yourself saw the red ball?

Duren: Well, you automatically start to your...your training sends you to your battlestation.

Marcello: But you had not heard any General Quarters--a gong or anything?

Duren: I never did hear the alarm on our ship. Even up until the time we started shooting at them, I don't recall ever hearing the general alarm. When I started to my station, I started up the starboard side of the ship going toward the number one fireroom. I met this officer between the torpedo tubes. Our torpedo tubes was midship, and there was two mounts of .50-caliber machine guns there. He told me and another guy to man one of these machine guns. As I said before, we discovered there was no ammunition available, so I went to my station. I knew this station belonged to somebody else.

Marcello: In the meantime the Dale is not under any direct attack? The Japanese had bigger game.

Duren: No, that's right. Most of the explosions that I saw was over around what we called Battleship Row--in that area and the airfield. When I reached the floor plates in the fireroom, the same guy I was telling you about, named Bliss, was in

charge of the fireroom. One of the first things you do when you get ready to get underway or light off a boiler...in port we always put an asbestos cover over the smokestack when the boiler was down to keep the rain--you know, there was a lot of rain out there--from raining down the smokestack. So he handed me his knife and told me to go up and take the stack covers off. We had kind of an odd situation on boilers and smokestacks. The number one boiler was for the number one smokestack, and the number two boiler was the forward half of the number two smokestack, and the after half of the number two smokestack was quartered for the number three and four boilers. As I said before, one of those boilers was already lit off, so all I had to do was take the cover off the number one stack and the forward half of the number two stack.

Marcello: In the meantime is the action still going on while you're doing this?

Duren: Well, normally this is a two-man job, but I was the only person that done it that morning. I took both covers off of both stacks. I saw this guy during the Korean War, and he asked me if I...the first thing he asked me, "Do you remember taking the smokestack covers off?" because he thought it was a big deal. I went up on the number one stack, and while I was up there, our ship still had not fired a shot. I cut the cord that had it tied and looked down below to make sure there was nobody underneath it when I

threw it off.

Marcello: Is this asbestos cover fairly heavy?

Duren: Yes, it's like any asbestos cover. It's fairly heavy. That's the reason I wanted to make sure there wasn't anyone below when I threw it off.

Marcello: Am I to assume that you took this cover off as fast as you could?

Duren: Oh, yes. Normally, we would untie it, but I cut the cords. I just went around the...the top of the stack had a place to hold by hand and one that you stood on that went around the stack, and you could walk around the stack, and the top of it would be about even with your shoulder. The line went through eyelets on the cover and around the handrail. That's the way it was tied on. I just cut these off as I went around the stack.

Of course, at the same time, you'd steal a glance at what was going on around you. I never saw so many planes, and there was none of them ours that I could tell (chuckle). I had thought, "Well, man, we ought to tear those up with those 5-inch guns," because some of them would...the high ones was what you'd consider in good range for a burst from the 5-inch. The 5-inch was our primary antiaircraft guns.

Marcello: How long did it take you to do that?

Duren: Not long, because we started to fire when I was on the number two stack. The number three turret was...the smokestacks was

on what we called the boat deck, and number three 5-inch gun was just aft of the number two stack on the boatdeck. That gun started firing while I was on this stack. When we used to practice, I thought these things really was bad on your ears. The wind from the concussion would whip your britches leg, your pants leg, when they fired.

But I didn't even notice it that morning. It seemed like it was some kind of a...I guess its training or something. You build up a protective thing around you so that with all the stuff that's going on around, you can act and not really be affected by what's going on around you. As I look back, you know, we used to gripe about the training. Somebody would say, "Well, I could do this with my eyes shut." Well, that's what they want. You can act without being affected by what's going on around you. They say there was 300-and-something of those planes that morning, I believe. I had one little ol' airplane scare me later in the war more than those did because I come to realize what they could do. I was ignorant that morning. War was just something you'd read about. You didn't realize--or I didn't--what they could do until you saw the results of what they could do. The more you come in contact with it...I used to read in the papers about where maybe some soldiers were from a seasoned outfit, and I'd say, "Them guys were scared because they know what can happen." To me the guy to have is one that

don't know what can happen. He's not as scared because he's ignorant of the fact that...or that's the way I felt then, and I still do.

I even got to where I even hated to hear that old GQ sound. That thing just hit on your nerves late in the war. The Dale had thirteen stars. It was in thirteen operations from Pearl Harbor, the Aleutian Islands, Guadalcanal, Saipan, Guam, Iwo Jima, Okinawa. The more you heard it, the more it got to where it...well, I don't know. I think it would get to you eventually. I understood later what really was probably combat fatigue. A guy wouldn't have a mark on him, but he'd just been exposed to it so much that it would...like I say, one airplane would scare me more than all those on December 7.

Marcello: How long did it take you to get those asbestos covers off?
How long would you say about?

Duren: Well, I think I had them off in just about as quick as you could climb up there and cut them off and throw them off. You know, I'd say fifteen minutes.

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

Duren: I went back into the fireroom. While I was up there, I saw the battleships...a couple of them...their smokestack and their mast was laying like this (gesture), and I knew they was sinking. I knew they was turning over.

Marcello: In other words, you saw the mast actually leaning at an angle?

Duren: Yes. We broke all rules and regulations on lighting off. I told you it took four hours to put a boiler on the line. We'd light one burner, and in the number one fireroom...the two boilers up there had fourteen burners in each boiler, and that morning we lit twelve burners in each boiler. We was on the line before we passed the buoy going out--the inlet buoy. In other words, we had twenty-eight knots available pretty quick.

Marcello: When you talk about a boiler being "on the line," what do you mean?

Duren: It's contributing to the propulsion.

Marcello: And normally how long does it take to get a boiler on the line? Did you say four hours?

Duren: Four hours. We had four hundred pounds of pressure, and it used to take an hour per hundred pounds.

Marcello: How long did it take you to get the boilers on the line that day?

Duren: We had all four boilers on the line before we got out of the harbor, and we got out of the harbor. Like I say, we claimed we was the first ship out, but we was a little behind. Our sister ship--I believe it was the Monaghan--was attacking a little two-man Jap sub out in the harbor, and we went out by them while they was trying to run over that submarine. We was outside the harbor by the time the...I think the Japanese was supposed to have sent two attacks in a series. They said

they dropped a torpedo at us, trying to sink us at the entrance of the harbor, but they was set for big ships, and a destroyer don't sit that deep in the water. They say the torpedo hit the beach on the other side.

Marcello: What is the danger of not waiting until those boilers are on the line?

Duren: Oh, you mean not properly warming them up?

Marcello: Why do you have to wait four hours?

Duren: It gives the metal time to expand and heat up evenly. If you rush it you...just like us, we burned out a bearing on one of our main engines going out, and this caused us to not have the use of one engine.

Marcello: And this is the sort of thing that can happen if you don't gradually build up that steam?

Duren: That's right. You try to heat up this equipment evenly. If you rush it, it don't heat up properly.

Marcello: Your immediate goal, then, is to get out of the harbor as quickly as possible.

Duren: That's right. You're a sitting duck in there. You can't maneuver. They got a stationary target. If you're underway at least you can maneuver and make it a little tougher for them.

Marcello: In the meantime, while you're down there in the engine room, is it rather disconcerting to be down there and know that all this activity is taking place topside?

Duren: Yes. You were aware of that. I think it has its advantages, and it has its disadvantages. The disadvantage is that you know you're next to something here that, if you're hit there, could blow up--that boiler. You're also down there where a torpedo is just the thickness of the skin of the ship away from you, and you're below the waterline. But then the advantage is that you don't see, and what you don't see lots of times helps. Another thing, if you're on topside, you're subject to maybe getting hit by a stray bullet or shrapnel or something. So I think it has its advantages and its disadvantages.

I know later in the war, my chief asked me one time... we was in a battle in the Aleutian Islands and the Komandorskiye Islands with a Jap outfit that was bigger than what we was, and they was chasing us. He asked me if I wanted to go topside and watch awhile. I told him I didn't want to go up there and watch. I didn't care nothing about seeing gun flashes that was meant for us. So that's just an example of why I say it has its advantages.

Marcello: Meanwhile, while you're down there in the boiler room and getting prepared to get underway, is there chaos, or is everything being done in a professional manner down there?

Duren: It's pretty well...your training makes you act...you know, everybody's got a job to do. Some fireman is putting the burners in the boilers, making them up with a sprayer plate.

A large sprayer plate gives you more oil, and therefore you've got more steam available for high speed. The guy that's checking water in the boilers, that's his job. He's taking care...like I say, every man is assigned to a...therefore, his training makes him pretty well...now I could understand that maybe if you got hit, then maybe, as you say, there'd be a lot of chaos, and I'm pretty sure there is. Until that time, most everybody's got a duty to perform, and that's the reason I say you kind of shut out all this other in a sense. You got this certain little thing that makes you kind of shut out the outside to a great extent and makes you do your job.

Marcello: So when did you finally get out of the harbor that day?

Duren: Well, I'm not exactly sure of the time. Now I know this attack was supposed to have started just before eight o'clock. I think we was outside the harbor by ten o'clock at least, maybe before that. We set up a patrol out there--an anti-submarine patrol. A little later on, we joined some other ships that came out. I believe it was a couple of cruisers and several destroyers. Once I went back down in that fire-room, I didn't come out all day long.

Marcello: What did you guys talk about while you were down there?

Duren: Oh, we talked about...we even wrote in our log book how long we thought the war...we knew we was in a war. We talked about how long we thought it would last. We even wrote in the book

and signed our names--how long we thought the war would last. We all missed it by way yonder.

We stayed out that night, and, as I told you, we burned out one of our bearings on our main engine, so we didn't have our speed available that we could take off and go anywhere. Some of the ships supposedly went out to try to look for the Jap ships, but we stayed around the entrance of the harbor. We stayed out that night, the next day, and the next night we started creeping back into the harbor.

Everybody was trigger-happy. Everybody was blacked out then, and we wasn't used to that. They put a boat in the water to run ahead of us in the channel so they could have something to guide on, and someone opened up with a machine gun right out over us as we was entering the channel. There was a lot of new experiences about that time.

I told you before our captain wasn't aboard. If you was the captain of the ship, and here was the greatest happening that's ever occurred, and you wasn't on your ship, I believe that would always bother me a little bit. I know it would bother me. Of course, I know that he couldn't help it because it just happened that way. The "exec" wasn't aboard either. So an ensign...no, I believe it was a lieutenant who took us out, but they tell me that he turned it over to an old chief quartermaster because the old chief had been in and out lots of times, and he was always on the bridge. I heard that, that

the chief really took it out.

Marcello: While you were out at sea thrashing around, which, I guess, is perhaps one of the best ways to put it, were you dropping any depth charges or anything like that? In other words, did you have any submarine scares?

Duren: No. We stopped a fishing boat that had Japanese in it, supposedly. They was Orientals. I don't know. You know, I never could tell a Japanese from a Chinese or a lot of those other Orientals because to me they all looked alike. But we stopped this fishing boat that had entered the area that was restricted for any non-military vessels, and they turned him over to the Coast Guard. I never did know what he was doing in that area, but it was a civilian fishing boat, I guess.

Marcello: When you came back into the harbor, after you'd been out there those few days, describe the scene that you saw the first time you saw it.

Duren: Well, it was all smokey, and the water was oily, and I believe there was some fire still burning on Battleship Row.

Marcello: And this was how many days later?

Duren: It was just two days. We stayed out the seventh, the eighth, and came back in the night of the eighth. Of course, really, I didn't see nothing until the ninth, you might say, because it was night when we came in.

We immediately started to bring in more ammunition aboard

ship. Everybody was lending a hand to do everything he could. Even guys out of the fireroom would go out on the fantail and help the gunner's mate make up belts of .50-caliber ammunition. That wasn't even their duties, but everybody was really...they was mad. We was ready for revenge (chuckle).

Marcello: Awhile ago, before I interrupted you, you were talking about what the harbor and so on looked like when you came back in, that is, the first time you saw it. Describe that some more. You mentioned that there was a lot of smoke and fires.

Duren: Like I say, everything looked like it was in a turmoil. In trying to describe it, it was hard to describe. I think a guy by the name of Samuel Eliot Morison wrote the history of... I believe Roosevelt commissioned him to write the history, and I have that history. In one of his books right after that, he quoted a scripture out of Isaiah that says something about crying to the mountains. I forget exactly how the scripture went, but it was really in a sense telling that we had really been trampled on. The biggest part of our big ships was put out of commission there. Of course, the battleship wasn't "it" later on. It had become the aircraft carrier, really, and none of our aircraft carriers was there, thank goodness.

Marcello: When did the Dale finally get out of Pearl on a permanent basis?

Duren: After we came back in...in fact, some of our 5-inch guns had

the sights off them. They was firing them that morning with some part of the sights on the tender being repaired. We got everything we needed, and we started forming up task forces a little while after that. We'd operate with maybe one aircraft carrier and a couple of cruisers and about forty-six destroyers and started making little runs out of Pearl down to the Southwest Pacific. But for a while, we was just trying to collect ourselves.

All of us sort of believe the Japs made a mistake by not coming on in and landing and taking out the base. I believe that if they had rearmed those planes and launched them again, they would have got all those that escaped the first time. If you look back, you're always glad that the Japanese got cold feet or what-have-you and decided to not pursue it any further.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Duren, that's probably a good place to end this interview. You've said a lot of very interesting and important things, I think, about the Pearl Harbor story, and I'm sure that students and researchers are going to find your comments most valuable when they get to use them.

Duren: Well, I hope so. It's like I said. At that time I thought the greatest nation on earth stood behind us, and I still do believe that it was then. But I couldn't say that for the Korean and the Vietnam deal.