

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

NUMBER

613

Interview with  
W. VONCEILLE TAYLOR  
October 22, 1983

Place of Interview: Rusk, Texas

Interviewer: R. E. Marcello

Terms of Use: open

Approved: W. Voncille Taylor  
(Signature)

Date: 10/22/83

COPYRIGHT



1984

THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF NORTH TEXAS STATE  
UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF DENTON

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

Oral History Collection

W. Vonceille Taylor

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Rusk, Texas

Date of Interview: October 22, 1983

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

Mr. Taylor, 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. Taylor: I was born on June 14, 1921, in Cline, Texas. I joined the Navy in 1940 and went to the USS Pennsylvania.

Dr. Marcello: Give me a little bit of your educational background.

Mr. Taylor: I have a high school education.

Dr. Marcello: When did you graduate from high school?

Mr. Taylor: In the spring of 1940.

Dr. Marcello: And did you go directly into the service at that point?

Taylor: Directly into the United States Navy.

Marcello: Why did you decide to enter the service in 1940?

Taylor: Well, if you remember...well, I don't know if you remember or not, but along about that time, things were pretty hard.

Marcello: Yes.

Taylor: And I always wanted to be in the Navy. I thought I wanted to make a career of it and probably would have if I hadn't have got married. I would have. I enjoyed the Navy--loved the Navy.

Marcello: Why did you decide to join the Navy as opposed to one of the other branches of the service?

Taylor: Well, I really never had any desire to be in the Army, just to tell you the truth, or the Marines--either one. I liked the water and the Navy, and I still think it's a great part of the service.

Marcello: You mentioned that you joined the service primarily because times were hard. Am I to assume that in your particular section of Texas that the Depression was still a pretty significant thing yet?

Taylor: Well, not really. I was in East Texas at Gladewater, which is just a little ways north of Rusk. My daddy was in the oilfield business. He was a truck pusher. I worked for them, but the salary wasn't too high. Of course, it didn't cost much to live, either. But you didn't work all that much. Things were still pretty hard. So, like I say, I was young

and wanted to get out, so I joined the Navy.

Marcello: Economic reasons are, I would say, the primary reasons that people give for entering the service at that time, that is, economic reasons as opposed to patriotic reasons or anything like that.

Taylor: Well, most of them, I'd say, was for economic reasons. Most of the boys I met was in there because of that reason. They couldn't find a job, so that was a way of life--if you could get in.

Marcello: How tough was it to get in the Navy in 1940?

Taylor: Well, it was pretty rough. You had a real good physical exam. If I remember right, there was about a four-page test that they gave you, and then you had a real tough physical. We got a little one over in Marshall, and then we went to Dallas, and we had a good physical there in Dallas. Then you went on from there.

Marcello: Where did you take your boot camp?

Taylor: San Diego.

Marcello: How long did boot camp last at that time?

Taylor: Well, I believe it was...let's see. We had three weeks of confinement there where we were restricted, and then we had three more weeks...I think it lasted three months--ninety days. It was somewhere in that vicinity.

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 just the normal Navy boot camp?

Taylor: Just the normal Navy boot camp as far as I was concerned. It was nothing but marching and standing in line (chuckle).

Marcello: Where did you go once you got out of boot camp?

Taylor: I went right straight to the USS Pennsylvania, which was in the harbor at San Pedro, and then we went to the Navy yard at Bremerton, Washington.

Marcello: Describe how this came about, that is, your getting aboard the Pennsylvania. In other words, did you volunteer for a battleship, or were you simply assigned to the Pennsylvania?

Taylor: We was just assigned. They just assigned you to different ships and stations.

Marcello: What was your reaction when you found out that you would be going aboard a battleship?

Taylor: Well, I was sort of thrilled, really. I really wanted a smaller ship because I thought it would be more exciting and you'd travel more, but I wasn't disheartened about being on a battleship. It was all right.

Marcello: You mentioned that you went aboard the Pennsylvania right out of boot camp. What sort of a reception did you get from the "old salts" when you went aboard the Pennsylvania? I mean, after all, you were still a "boot."

Taylor: (Chuckle) It was not too good. They sort of rubbed it into you a little bit, you know, and harassed you, but if you done your thing and was a good sailor, it soon blew over,

and you was just one of them.

Marcello: Where were you assigned when you went aboard?

Taylor: I was assigned to the Sixth Division.

Marcello: And was that a deck division?

Taylor: That was a deck division. Then also in them days, in the division for, oh, I don't know how long--it wasn't too long --until I finally went into the ordnance part of it. The Sixth Division handled antiaircraft guns--machine guns.

Marcello: And where specifically were you assigned? Where was your battle station?

Taylor: I was assigned to a .50-caliber machine gun on the star-board side of the foremast.

Marcello: You mentioned that the Pennsylvania went from San Pedro to Bremerton, Washington. What was the purpose in going to Bremerton? Do you know?

Taylor: Oh, we had a naval overhaul. We just went into the Navy yard and stayed up there for, I'd say, three months or maybe a little longer than that before we came out of the Navy yard. Then we went right straight to Pearl, which would have been the first of 1941.

Marcello: That was a rather routine procedure, was it not, to periodically go to Bremerton for the overhaul?

Taylor: Oh, yes, yes. That was the big naval yard in the West Coast area--there and Mare Island.

Marcello: Describe what your quarters were like aboard the Pennsylvania,

that is, your living quarters.

Taylor: Well, at the first, when we first went aboard, we lived in the casemate, which was right below the boat deck. If I remember right, I was in casemate number eight. At that time we slept in hammocks. You took them down every morning, and you lashed them up, put them in a locker, and that night at eight o'clock or whatever this time was, you had to find your own hammock and string it back up, undo it. As time progressed, and as you got a little more rank, then you got you a cot--just a regular old canvas cot--which was a great improvement over that hammock.

Marcello: I gather you didn't like sleeping in the hammock.

Taylor: Not too much. It was not too comfortable. But after you got used to it, why, it was all right. Especially in rough weather, you couldn't beat it.

Marcello: Why was that?

Taylor: Well, that ol' ship just rocked and rolled, and that cot sort of went with the deck. That hammock just sat up there pretty straight, you know. But we always thought a cot slept a lot better.

Marcello: If you were assigned to a casemate when you originally went aboard there, so far as your living quarters were concerned, I would gather that things were pretty cramped and crowded aboard the Pennsylvania.

Taylor: Well, it was pretty crowded but not that much. We had



ample space for everybody. Of course, whenever you lashed up them hammocks and you put your cots down underneath them, why, then things was pretty crowded. But we had plenty of room. It was all right.

Of course, we'd eat in the same place. Our mess tables were lashed up, you know, and they'd let them down, and we'd eat in the same place. We had mess cooks running back and forth from the galley bringing the chow to you.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about mess cooking because I assume that you had to take your tour of mess cooking when you went aboard the Pennsylvania.

Taylor: No, luckily I missed that.

Marcello: That's unusual, is it not?

Taylor: Yes. I don't know why. I guess I got assigned to the ordnance part before that. Usually, deck hands take... and, too, a lot of boys was volunteers. They'd liked that. It'd give them a little extra liberty, and we usually kicked in a little kitty for the mess cook. On payday they'd put a little bowl on there, and you'd put in whatever you could afford, you know, a dollar or two dollars or something like that, depending on what your rate was. It was the service they gave you. Them boys worked hard.

Marcello: So the chow was served family-style as opposed to cafeteria-style when you went aboard?

Taylor: At that time, right. At that time it was served family-style.

Marcello: What was your opinion of Navy chow?

Taylor: At that time it was not too good (chuckle), but, you know, that was just like everything else. They was probably feeding us on seventeen cents a day. I don't know. But it wasn't prepared too good.

Marcello: So it was the preparation rather than the actual food itself that you objected to?

Taylor: Well, it was the menus, yes. But, of course, sometimes it was all right, but you had your days. Eating beans for breakfast is not really not my thing. I'll do without.

Marcello: You mentioned that when you first went aboard, you were, of course, a member of the deck division. How long did you remain in the deck division as such?

Taylor: Not very long. I couldn't remember. I'd say, oh, six months maybe--something like that.

Marcello: And what kind of duties were you performing at that time?

Taylor: Well, at that time we was in the Navy yard, and we went through the process of chipping paint down on the third deck. We chipped that ship all the way up, and the paint, believe it or not, on that Pennsylvania at that period of time was an inch-and-a-half thick.

Marcello: It had been painted so many times?

Taylor: That's right. So when we completely chipped that ship, I believe we raised it over a foot; I mean, this is that much weight that we took off of it. If I remember right,

it was over a foot that we raised this ship. There was just that much paint. Then, of course, we repainted it and got it back in shape. Of course, we had Navy yard workers doing different structural work on the ship to get it back in shape. This was hard. That was hard work chipping that paint. You got all them electric lines running in there, and, of course, you just paint over them, you know. There would be places where those electric lines would be, say, one inch around, and they'd be pretty near flat from just painting over them, and you never did see them. That was a great fire hazard.

Marcello: Was that all hand-chipping?

Taylor: A lot of it was. A lot of us used air guns where we could. On the bulkheads we'd use chipping guns which are run by air. It was quite noisy, and, of course, you just had on a little ol' pair of goggles and a T-shirt and a pair of shorts. It was real dirty, but that was the way it was done.

Marcello: Did you go from Bremerton over to Pearl Harbor?

Taylor: No, I believe we came back to San Pedro and probably stayed a little while. We didn't take too long. Then we went right back to Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of being stationed in the Hawaiian Islands on a more or less permanent basis?

Taylor: Oh, that was great. We had a great time over there. It

wasn't nothing to do. We had a curfew, and you had to be back aboard ship, I think, at twelve o'clock or something like that because there really wasn't no place to stay or anything.

Marcello: But I guess what I'm saying is, when you first learned that you were going to the Hawaiian Islands, before you'd ever been there, were you more or less looking forward to going?

Taylor: Oh, yes, yes. I did that all of my career. Anytime I found out I was going somewhere I hadn't been, it'd just thrill me to death. I loved to travel.

Marcello: How fast or slow was advancement and promotion in that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy?

Taylor: Slow. It was slow.

Marcello: Can you give me some examples? Can you elaborate on that?

Taylor: Well, it took me...I think it was right at a year, probably, to make seaman first class, and then after that, why... oh, I'd say it was probably...I don't know...it might have been a year or longer than that before I was made gunner's mate third class.

Marcello: But promotion was a lot faster once the war started, was it not?

Taylor: After the war started, why, then they started going on up. Of course, you had to study. You had to use the work-books that you had to fill out. More or less, then, you

was sort of on your own, really. If you wanted to go up fast, why, once you'd work these handbooks they had, and studied and took a test, and then when the openings came up, why, you was ready. They would transfer people pretty fast then.

Marcello: During that time before the attack at Pearl Harbor, how rapid or slow was promotion in your particular rating as compared to some of the other ratings? You mentioned that you were in the ordnance division.

Taylor: Well, I'd say ours was probably slower than, like, boatswain's mate and coxswain and things like that on account of I don't think we transferred our personnel quite as fast as they did and turned them over to other ships. Of course, you could understand a man trying to get out of the deck force and into something else, you know, and so therefore I think ours was a little slower than theirs.

Marcello: What were you getting paid at that time, that is, when you went aboard the Pennsylvania?

Taylor: Twenty-one dollars a month.

Marcello: And how often were you paid?

Taylor: Twice a month.

Marcello: Twice a month. The first and the fifteenth?

Taylor: The first and the fifteenth or the fifth and the twenty-fifth--something like that. I don't really remember, but it was twice a month. We got paid twice a month. We got \$10 one payday and \$11 the next.

Marcello: Were you paid in cash or by check?

Taylor: Cash. Cash money. Yes, you filled out...it was just like a chit. A little pay chit, we called it. They ran us through there, and your paymaster was there, and you turned that in, and they gave you cash. If you didn't want it all--if you just wanted \$10--you just filled this out for \$10, and they saved the rest of it. They said they "kept it on the books" for you. It was just like putting it in the bank--with no interest (chuckle).

Marcello: What sort of relationship was there between individuals of your rank and, let's say, the petty officers and chief petty officers aboard the Pennsylvania? In other words, was there much fraternizing in that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy between the run-of-the mill seamen and the petty officers or chief petty officers?

Taylor: The chief petty officers had their own quarters. Your first, second, and third class petty officers lived with the seamen, and we got along great. Of course, we didn't have anything to do with, like, a chief boatswain's mate or chief radioman or something like that. All our connection was usually with a chief gunner's mate. We was really close friends. We just had a good time.

Marcello: How about when you went on liberty? Was there fraternization, though, between your rank and the chief petty officers?

Taylor: Oh, no. Oh, shoot, I ran around with third and second class

and one time there with first class. Later on, after I caught another ship, the chief and myself was the greatest friends. We ran around together all the time--just me and him.

Marcello: Okay, once you get to Pearl Harbor, describe what a typical training exercise would be like for the Pennsylvania. In other words, when would the Pennsylvania, first of all, normally go out? What day of the week? Was there a particular day?

Taylor: Well, it'd be the first of the week. I'd say it would be a Monday or maybe a Tuesday that we'd go to sea.

Marcello: And then how long would you stay out?

Taylor: Oh, sometimes four or five days and sometimes two weeks. We'd come back for the weekend or something, but not normally. We'd just go out and patrol, and...I forget the little ol' island out there where we used to fire off of. I forget the name of it now. It was one of them Hawaiian Islands that we used for a firing range--we'd fire off of it--and we'd patrol and just have regular exercises. We'd have battle exercises, and, of course, we had air raid exercises and things like that. The planes would come over.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you were in the ordnance division when you were aboard the Pennsylvania. Since you were on one of the .50-caliber mounts, you would probably get

involved quite heavily in the anti-aircraft practice.

Taylor: Right.

Marcello: How would this practice take place? What would you be firing at and so on?

Taylor: At that time we used aircraft, and they'd pull what they called a "sleeve" behind them. We'd belt our ammunition, say, three and one or five and one--that'd be one tracer every five shells--and we'd paint them. We'd use printer's ink. I'd be red, and you'd be blue. Then when they'd make this run with this sleeve, when they'd drop it, we picked it up, and we'd go look at the holes and see what the paint color was to see who hit this thing--how good you was.

Marcello: Was that kind of exercise pretty frequent once you were out at sea?

Taylor: Yes, quite frequent. We did this quite a bit.

Marcello: At that time were the .50-calibers the main anti-aircraft armament that the Pennsylvania had?

Taylor: That and the 5.25's.

Marcello: So we're talking about the pre-World War II period, and you did not have either the 20- or the 40-millimeters yet?

Taylor: Oh, no, no. The first gun we got after that was what they called...well, they put on some 3-inch, and then we got what they called a 1.1, which to my estimation



was a waste of money. It wasn't any good. But we didn't keep them very long until we came to the 40-millimeters, which was a great ack-ack gun.

Marcello: When would the Pennsylvania usually come in off one of these exercises, that is, what day of the week?

Taylor: Friday, I believe. I believe we'd come back in on a Friday. Of course, we was a flagship, and we usually tied up at Ten-Ten (1010) Dock--was our dock.

Marcello: What did being the flagship mean to you as a member of the crew?

Taylor: Well, it'd give you a little more prestige, you know. You had the admiral on there, and all his staff. We tied up at the dock; we didn't have to catch a motor launch to come across and go ashore. All we had to do was just walk off, and we was gone, you know. So I'd say it'd just mean something to you.

Marcello: Did that mean that the Pennsylvania was a more spit-and-polish ship than perhaps the other battleships?

Taylor: Well, I'd say it helped a little, you know, being that the admiral and all was aboard, and his staff. We kept it a little...I ain't saying it was any cleaner, but it was a lot more work to it. You had a lot more watches--people did--to stand, and I believe the crew had to be more clean-cut than the rest of them was just on account of that.

Marcello: As one gets closer and closer to December 7, 1941, and as

conditions between the two countries--that is, the United States and Japan--continued to get worse, could you detect any changes in your routine when you were at sea?

Taylor: Well, for about, oh, maybe...before we went to sea--I'd say for six or eight months--we stood machine gun watches twenty-four hours a day. We had these two machine guns manned twenty-four hours a day. But the thing of it was, they kept the ammunition lockers locked. Now what use is standing machine gun watch when you've got the ammunition boxes locked, and you haven't even got the key?

Marcello: Where would those machine gun ammunition boxes be? Would they be right there at the guns?

Taylor: Our ammunition box was right there on our machine gun mount --up on the foremast. We had a machine gun box for each one. We had...oh, I forget how many tins of ammunition in each one. I don't remember how long it was--eight or ten, I'd say. But they had them locked. Well, we said, "Why do you want them locked?" "Well, we don't want to take the chance of y'all putting them in when we're in harbor here, and somebody's going to pull this thing, and here you are--you're going to shoot off 500-600 rounds before you quit." It seemed to me like it was a little worthless. You was just sitting up there, but you had to do it, so we did it.

Marcello: You mentioned that this took place as long as six or eight

months before the actual attack itself. Did any part of your routine ever change as, let's say, you get down to November of 1941? For instance, did you ever have more general quarters drills or anything of that nature as conditions between the two countries got worse? Or was it more or less business as usual right up to the time of the attack?

Taylor: As far as I can recollect, it was just about business as usual. We might have had a little more general quarters, but I wouldn't say that much more.

Marcello: What exactly was your job on the machine gun?

Taylor: I was a loader on the machine gun.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk a little bit about the liberty routine aboard the Pennsylvania. First of all, how was liberty organized aboard the ship?

Taylor: Well, you had a port-and-starboard watch; I mean, that was on an every other day basis. And they had that broke down to two apiece, where you could get...it depended on where you was at or what status everything was in as to whether you'd get one every four days or every other day or whatever. Sometimes you'd get three out of four. If you had duty, why, you'd go ashore three times out of four.

Marcello: So you had basically two sections--a port section and a starboard section.

Taylor: Right.

Marcello: And this meant that half of the ship would be manned at any time, is that correct?

Taylor: Most of the time. A lot of times you had a three out of four liberty. Part of, say, the starboard watch was gone, and maybe part of the port was, which was basically a quarter of the ship. But in them days and time, what was the point in going ashore in Honolulu every night? There was nothing to do. Well, you had your regular bars and other things, but you didn't have any money. So usually didn't everybody go ashore anyway. You might go right at payday or something like that, or two days, and then that was it.

Marcello: Now you did mention earlier in the interview that you had to be back aboard ship at midnight?

Taylor: I believe it was around eleven or twelve o'clock that we had to be...unless you had special permission, you could stay all night. If you had a place to stay, they would give you special permission to stay all night.

Marcello: I guess, given the pay that you were receiving, you really wouldn't have had enough money to stay in a hotel or something like that over night.

Taylor: Oh, not over night, no. Well, at the time I got over there, I was a seaman second class, so I went from \$21 to \$36. We was making \$36. Then, of course, before Pearl Harbor I was seaman first class, and that was \$54. Well,

\$54 a month wasn't too bad. Back in them days, all you had to spend it for was just recreation. It wasn't bad.

Marcello: When you went ashore, what did you normally do? What was your routine?

Taylor: Usually, the first thing we'd do when we'd go ashore was take a taxi, which was the main way to go--best way to go. I think it cost us a quarter to ride to Honolulu, and we'd get off at the YMCA. We'd go in, and, oh, maybe you'd write a letter home. They had stationery, you know... it was a real nice place...or maybe eat.

When we first got there, we'd look the town over, and after we found everything, we'd go in a bar and have a cocktail and maybe go in another one and have a cocktail--just until you found one you liked and where you got treated real good. Well, you'd stand in there and talk and play "San Antonio Rose" (chuckle). There wasn't a whole lot to do. Of course, a lot of boys went swimming, which I cared for very little because I sunburn real easy. So I didn't care anything about staying out on the beach too much.

Marcello: You mentioned that the taxis would usually stop at the YMCA. Is it not true that one of the bars across from the YMCA or very close to it was the Black Cat Cafe?

Taylor: Yes. I can't remember...maybe it was across the street a little bit, or up, but I didn't patronize that place too much. I remember the name of it--the Black Cat. Now on

down the street and around--I forget what the street was --there was another one, and I believe the name of this place was the Green Mill.

Marcello: The Green Mill?

Taylor: The Green Mill. My group sort of patronized that place. We'd go in there, and we'd just sit in there and have our own table and eat sour pickles and have highballs, you know. You'd stay there all evening or whatever time you got over.

Marcello: Describe what Hotel Street was like.

Taylor: Oh, shoot (chuckle), I couldn't...it was narrow, very busy, crowded. Boy, you just couldn't hardly walk up it. It was civilians and sailors and the soldiers--servicemen. It was very crowded.

Marcello: What kind of business establishments were there on Hotel Street?

Taylor: Oh, all kinds. As far as I remember, it was just like today. You'd have tattoo places and hock shops and places of business. You could buy stuff on credit and go right next door and hock it--anything to make a dollar. Photograph shops--you could have your picture made on every corner, I guess, with those Hawaiian girls and things like that.

Marcello: This is where most of the houses of prostitution were, too, isn't that correct?

Taylor: Well, yes, there was quite a few of them there.

Marcello: Did you get any tattoos?

Taylor: Yes, I got tattoos.

Marcello: On Hotel Street?

Taylor: No, I got mine in San Diego.

Marcello: Was that right after you got out of boot camp?

Taylor: Yes, I had one...well, this one here (gesture)...and I had this one on this shoulder...I take that back. I had that one done at...I don't know whether I had that put on at Los Angeles or at Pearl Harbor. I just don't remember. But I had this one on this shoulder put on (gesture)...I don't remember about that one, though.

Marcello: Why was it that sailors had to get tattoos during that period?

Taylor: I guess it was just tradition. I couldn't tell you. It was just a mark of distinction, I guess (chuckle), because everybody had them.

Marcello: Were they against regulations?

Taylor: If you turned it into sickbay, they didn't like it. If you let them get infected and you turned into sickbay, it was a mark against you. But if you took care of them and everything...I never had a bit of trouble. I've had two of them, and I'd keep them oiled--put a little Vaseline hair oil on them to keep them soft. I guess I was lucky--I don't know--but nobody said anything to me about mine.

Marcello: Did you have very many of the old Asiatic sailors aboard

the Pennsylvania?

Taylor: We had a few. I had a gunner's mate first class, named Hennessey, that was on the USS Panay that the Japanese sunk in 1937. He was on it.

Marcello: They were quite an interesting bunch, weren't they?

Taylor: They was a fine bunch of boys. I enjoyed talking to him.

Marcello: Describe what they were like.

Taylor: Well, he was what we call "Asiatic." They was a different group (chuckle). But, yes, I enjoyed talking to him, and they'd tell us some pretty good experiences they had.

Marcello: I'll bet they had all kinds of sea stories to tell.

Taylor: Oh, yes, they had some good ones.

Marcello: I understand most of them were tattooed. Is that correct?

Taylor: Yes. This feller, Hennessey, that I'm telling you about, had one of the prettiest tattoos I've ever seen in my life. It was an eagle--on his chest. You could take...like, my shirt right here (gesture), the head of that eagle is right there (gesture), and it went from here to here (gestures).

Marcello: In other words, it went approximately from his waist all the way up to his chin and spread all the way across both his shoulders?

Taylor: Up to his chin. All the way across. He had that done in China, and he told me one time how long it took this man to do it. But it was a long time, and it was pretty. Of course, he had a lot of them. He had snakes around his



arms and things like that, and they was all done over in China. That's where he had them done. He was pretty well tattooed, but he was a good fellow.

Marcello: How were those guys so far as sailors and so on?

Taylor: Oh, they was good. He was a gunner's mate, and he was a good gunner's mate--he was.

Marcello: And I guess those guys had been in the service for years and years--most of them.

Taylor: Well, yes, most of them had because they'd been in...then they got in the Asiatic Fleet and went over there and liked it and stayed over there. They lived pretty good over there. You could take...say, he made sixty-some dollars or seventy-some dollars, depending on what his rate was, and he could have him an apartment uptown, you know. They lived pretty good.

Marcello: I have a couple of other questions I want to ask you, too, before we actually get to the attack itself. What role did the band play in the life of the Pennsylvania during that period of time?

Taylor: Well, they played a good role--an important role. At noon hour...either they'd eat early or late; I can't recall that. But, say, at twelve o'clock they'd be up on the forecastle and play for an hour. The boys would go up and listen to them play. And a lot of times at night, they'd be back on the fantail before the movie started and

play. It was just a great boost to keep your morale up. The Pennsylvania had a great band. They had one of the best, and this was in the big band era. They'd play that beautifully.

Marcello: So most of the music that they did play was so called "big-band" music?

Taylor: Oh, yes, yes. Of course, they could play military. They had a military unit, too. But they had this other down pat; I mean, they could play it.

Marcello: How about sports and that sort of thing? How important was it aboard the Pennsylvania?

Taylor: Oh, it was a great thing in the service. Boxing and wrestling was your two main things at this time. Prior to them times, we had football, baseball teams. I played football one year, I believe, when we was up in the Navy yard. I enjoyed it. Of course, the main thing is that if you got in sports, you had a better mess, and we'd eat like royalty. If you was on the sports team, why, man, you really had it made.

Marcello: Did being on one of the teams help in terms of promotion and things of that nature?

Taylor: Not really. I don't think it had anything to do with it. I think you just had to be at the right place at the right time and fill these books in and study these books.

Marcello: You mentioned boxing a while ago as being one of the main attractions aboard the Pennsylvania. I understand those

so-called boxing smokers were very well attended.

Taylor: You bet. Oh, everybody had their own thing. You had your own boxer, and, well, we'd join challenging another ship for a smoker. You had them there on Ten-Ten Dock--right there--and we was tied up right there, so, see, it wasn't much trouble for us. We'd just get there and watch them box. We enjoyed it. Man, that was a great sport.

Marcello: Was there very much gambling aboard the Pennsylvania?

Taylor: Oh, I wouldn't say in excess. We gambled. We'd bet. Shoot, I'd bet. I mean, if I had a boxer out there, I'm going to bet on him. We didn't bet much because we didn't have it. But, yes, we bet. We played cards and...but not in excess of anything.

Marcello: I guess gambling was prohibited, was it not?

Taylor: Oh, yes. Yes, it was against the rules. I don't know that I've ever been...I don't ever remember being caught gambling. We'd play poker, but it wasn't for much because we didn't have much for it. We was just passing time. We played bridge. We played what we called acey-deucey. I probably couldn't play acey-deucey right now at all (chuckle). But we used to play that to pass the time away.

Marcello: That was probably the most popular game aboard ship, wasn't it?

Taylor: Yes, it probably was. Yes, we spent many hours playing that...or knock. I forget now what else. But that was

the most popular. You're right there.

Marcello: As you look back upon life in the Navy during that period before Pearl Harbor, how would you describe the morale aboard the Pennsylvania?

Taylor: Most of the morale was pretty good. Some of it was a little low. You'd have some boys that would come over, you know, and they'd just get homesick. Of course, you had to grow out of it. It takes a while. Of course for some boys it just don't mean much to them, you know, and for some of them it does. You'd get "down," just like people nowadays. They get "down," and they got to get up. But the morale was pretty good for the times.

Marcello: Was the Pennsylvania, generally speaking, a happy ship?

Taylor: I'd say it was. I'd say, yes, we had a happy ship. Things was pretty happy except for the food once in awhile. But we went through all that. We didn't have much to do with that.

Marcello: Okay, this takes us into that weekend of December 7, 1941, and we want to go into as much detail as we can here. I know there was a time around this period when the Pennsylvania went into dry dock. When did that take place?

Taylor: Oh, I'd say two weeks, maybe, before Pearl Harbor. I just couldn't pinpoint it exactly. Maybe it was a little before then.

Marcello: Where did it go into dry dock? Do you recall?

Taylor: Ten-Ten dry dock. Right straight ahead of Ten-Ten Dock.

Marcello: Were there any other ships near or around the Pennsylvania there when it was in dry dock?

Taylor: The destroyers Cassin and Downes was in front of us on each side--one on port side and one on starboard side of the bow. Then we was just right in there with them.

Marcello: What was the purpose in going into the dry dock at that time?

Taylor: We were going to re-screw our shafts--screw shafts--and they was going to weld them up and re-bore them, bushing them, for our screws...and then clean the bottom. Too, they cleaned the bottom. They sandblasted it and repainted it.

Marcello: That's another sorry job, is it not?

Taylor: That is. That is one heck of a job (chuckle).

Marcello: Does everybody get involved in that?

Taylor: Everybody. That's an all-hands, practically, job there, where you string these ropes and these boards from the deck up above. You have them hanging up there, and then you get down on it, and everybody...say, you're on the starboard side. Everybody lets down at the same time from one end to the other, and then as you come down to where the ship's hull swings in, they pull you...you've got lines down there that pull you in, and you clean and scrape. It was one heck of a job.

Marcello: It's a dirty job, too, is it not?

Taylor: A dirty job.

Marcello: Now what kind of fighting condition would the Pennsylvania be in at that time?

Taylor: Well, as far as I can recollect, they were the only ship that ever fired 5-inch guns in dry dock--that I know of--which limited it...not for aircraft. I mean, it was all right for aircraft, but any other kind of firing we could not have done sitting in dry dock. But as far as aircraft, I don't think it hindered us a bit being in dry dock, except you couldn't maneuver.

Marcello: Now when you're in dry dock like that, were you completely out of the water?

Taylor: Yes, you're completely out of the water. Yes, it isn't nothing but a big hole in the ground, and then, of course, you had this gate locked behind us, you know, that kept the water out. Then they pumped the water out, and you're just sitting on these boards they got in there. They've got them designed to fit certain ships. They had them set where we just sat right down on them. It was just solid there, and, of course, yard workers and everybody else was walking around down in the bottom of it--just like walking in a cellar.

Marcello: So you're really not in fighting trim, so to speak.

Taylor: Oh, no.

Marcello: I mean, your guns can fire and so on, but that's about it.

Taylor: They could fire, but that's it. The broadsides couldn't fire because they angled them out. Your main batteries couldn't fire. For sure, the main batteries couldn't fire. But, like I say, aircraft firing was...it really didn't hinder us that much.

Marcello: Okay, this takes us into that weekend of December 7, 1941, and let's go into as much detail as we can concerning that event. Let's first of all talk about that Saturday, which would be December 6, 1941. What did you do that Saturday?

Taylor: I stayed aboard ship. I don't recall whether I had the duty or not, but I just didn't care about going ashore. Like I say, there wasn't a whole lot to do. You could go over there and walk around. If you'd been over there a year like we had been, you know, we just didn't care about going ashore all that much. Of course, Saturday is sort of a holiday. You worked a little bit in the morning and have an inspection. Of course, you always have Captain's Inspection every Saturday morning, and then after that, why, pretty much the day was your own, and you could do what you wanted to. You could mess around and play cards, like you say, or listen to the radio. But that was just like a holiday.

Marcello: What did you do that Saturday evening?

Taylor: Watched the movie on quarter-deck, I imagine. That's usually

whatever we did every night. We'd go back on the quarter-deck, and they'd have a movie set up. They had a movie screen, projector and everything, and we watched a movie.

Marcello: Now on a Saturday evening, let's say around midnight, would there be very many drunks coming back aboard the Pennsylvania, or was that sort of person the exception rather than the rule?

Taylor: Well, yes, you'd be "wined up" a little bit. You know, a lot of them would, I wouldn't say it'd be all that many, but there would be quite a few that would be drunk.

Marcello: Was there anything out of the ordinary that happened that Saturday night, or was it pretty routine?

Taylor: Not that I know of. I don't recall that anything happened that Saturday night.

Marcello: Whenever you and your buddies had any bull sessions, did the subject of a Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor ever come up? Did you ever talk about it?

Taylor: Yes, yes. I'll never forget an ol' boy by the name of Rose from Hamtramck, Michigan. He ate on the same mess with me, We'd let those tables down there, and that morning at breakfast--that's December 7, 1941--we were sitting there talking. Things didn't look too good, and he said, "You know, it wouldn't surprise me that the Japanese didn't strike today in an hour," or something like this. We said, "Aw, you're crazy! Not today!" That's been through my



mind for forty-two years, that this ol' boy would say that. You know, we was just talking, but I recall very well what he said. And it happened.

Marcello: Okay, this is probably a good transition, then, to bring us into that Sunday of December 7, 1941. I gather, then, that you did get up for breakfast.

Taylor: Oh, yes.

Marcello: You didn't have to, though, if you didn't want to, did you?

Taylor: Oh, yes. Oh, yes you had to get your bunk...

Marcello: Oh, that's right. In your case, you had to get those hammocks and cots out of the way.

Taylor: That's right. That's right. We had to get them out of the way where we could set down the mess tables so we could eat, yes. Now after breakfast, of course, you had a little cleaning detail. If you had the duty, you'd keep things pretty clean; I mean, you just tidied up. Then you was on your own. You could go to church, buy yourself a newspaper. That's what I did. I bought myself a Honolulu Times, I believe was the name of it, and I went over to the number nine casemate, and underneath that 5-inch gun there, I just lay down...or spread out. You know, I sat on the deck, and I had this paper when the first bomb hit.

Marcello: Okay, describe what happens now. Here you are--you're under this casemate, and you're reading the newspaper. Describe

what happened.

Taylor: Well, you'd just hear this...the first thing you do, you hear this whining noise, and you think that them Navy pilots...you don't never hear them practice on Sunday, and Ford Island is right there, and we said, "Oh, well, those Navy pilots are just in a dive."

Then about that time, we heard this explosion, and I said, "Well, that sucker didn't pull out! He just hit the ground!" Well, I raised up, and I looked, and I could see over there.

Then about that time, why, you just looked up, and the air was full of them. Well, you knew right then that's not Navy planes. You could see these red dots on the wings good. We was late right then. Like I say, our ammunition was locked up, and, of course, we got right up to our battle stations.

Marcello: Okay, you're under the casemate, and you hear this first explosion. Where was this explosion? Do you know?

Taylor: On Ford Island. That's my recollection. It was on Ford Island. They hit Ford Island first.

Marcello: Now does General Quarters sound aboard the Pennsylvania?

Taylor: Yes, but it didn't have to. We was already gone.

Marcello: How was General Quarters sounded aboard the Pennsylvania?  
By what means?

Taylor: Well, you had a bell ringing.

Marcello: And I assume that you took off for your battle station?

Taylor: Oh, just as soon as I seen what it was, I took off for mine. You bet!

Marcello: What happened to the newspaper?

Taylor: It got blowed up.

Marcello: It was right there at that casemate? You just left it there?

Taylor: That's right. The number nine casemate.

Marcello: Okay, how far were you from your battle station?

Taylor: Oh, let's see. I was lying under the boat deck. I had to go up on the boat deck, up on forecastle, up on the foremast, which was, oh, I'd say, seventy-five feet up there. So I was, oh, say, 150 feet or 200 feet from my battle station. I just had to get up on the boat deck and run up and go up them platforms until I got up...

Marcello: Your battle station was pretty high up on that ship then?

Taylor: Oh, yes, yes. I was up on the foremast, up right underneath your range-finder. The range-finder was up on the top, I believe. We had this house up there, and then it had a machine gun platform right under it. It had one machine gun on each side, and I was on the starboard side. That was above the bridge and everything else, where the captain and all them controlled the ship from. It was above the bridge.

Marcello: About how long would it take you to get up there?

Taylor: Oh, shoot, not very long. Well, as many times as I'd made that trip, I'd say about two minutes. Maybe not that. It'd depend on, you know, how everything went as I got up there.

Marcello: What happens when you get up there to your battle station?

Taylor: Well, the ammunition was locked up. Like I say, we was standing watches up there. We had two men up there. I believe we had two men. The ammunition was locked up. The officer-of-the-deck had the keys down there. We broke the locks off. How we broke them locks off, I don't recall, but we did break the locks.

Marcello: Okay, what happens at that point then?

Taylor: We loaded them guns up, and we started shooting.

Marcello: How many of the .50-caliber mounts were there up there? How many guns were there up there?

Taylor: There was two up on the foremast.

Marcello: And how many men are we talking about up there?

Taylor: Well, that's four and a phone talker--that's five. You had a gunner, a loader, and then we had a man on phones. Then there was the gun captain of the thing, which would have made five of us up there.

Marcello: That is, five per gun?

Taylor: No.

Marcello: Five for both guns?

Taylor: Two per gun, yes--the loader and the gunner; the one that

shot it and the one who loaded it. We had the ammunition belted in links, and we'd have 150 to a belt. They was in a big can, and we'd have to set the thing on this mount, and then we'd open this thing up and lay in that first bunch and close it in there. Then that gunner could take off again. Of course, them things fell apart as they went out. When we'd empty that container, well, then the loader would jerk that one off and get a full one out of the magazine and stick it back up in there, and you didn't have to load that thing again.

Marcello: I assume there were a lot of targets.

Taylor: There was quite a few. Yes, quite a few.

Marcello: Do you feel like you hit anything?

Taylor: Yes. I couldn't swear to it. I'd see some of them tracers that looked like it was going...and just go out of sight, you know, as them planes would come by. But there was so dadgummed many that you couldn't stand and look that way and see what was happening to it because another ship had done picked it up, or maybe you couldn't fire that far back, anyway. You'd have hit something else, you know. Of course, like I say, we was up on the foremast, so all our targets was sort of from right straight forward to ninety degrees or better on the starboard side. That was our sector that we fired in, and that was coming right down that channel right by Ford Island.

- Taylor: Was there ever any hesitation about cracking open those ammunition boxes?
- Taylor: As far as I know, there wasn't. Of course, I wasn't on watch at the time, as I said before. But as far as I know, as soon as we got up there...I don't know what we used, really, to break that lock with. It might have been a fire nozzle. We found something. But we broke them locks.
- Marcello: Initially, the Pennsylvania was not a target, isn't that correct? In other words, it wasn't one of the very first targets that the Japanese hit that day?
- Taylor: No. We was an initial target because we was the flagship. But we was hid in this dry dock, and we wasn't where we was supposed to be, so when they come over, they lost us. They didn't see us. And being that the Arizona was our sister ship...we was two identical ships, and there it sat--right there--just wide-open, and so they homed in on it. It was just right across and down from us, over on Fox...I forget now the number of it where it was at, but it was tied up over there next to Ford Island with all the other battle-wagons. It was what you called Battleship Row. Of course, they didn't find us there, but I'm sure they picked us out after awhile. They seen us up there.
- Marcello: About how long was it before the Pennsylvania did become a target?
- Taylor: Oh, it wasn't long until they started coming over because

I think on the first pass they straddled us, and that's where they got the Cassin and Downes, I guess--when they first seen us. All that stuff blew up there. Maybe on the next pass is where they hit the number nine casemate, and that bomb went down through there.

Marcello: According to the record, that was about 9:06 a.m. when a 500-pound bomb shattered that starboard casemate. Do you remember that?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: Describe what you remember of that.

Taylor: Well, all I remember was...of course, we could hear this whistling bomb falling. It seems to me like that one was a little louder, and all at once the ship just shuttered. You know, it just shook. Well, you knew you'd been hit. But as I stated, we were looking forward and over on the starboard side, which that was on the starboard but it was aft of us. There was no debris much that come up where we was; I mean, it didn't bother us any. Of course, I was up high, and, of course, as an explosion goes higher, the wider it gets, but it really didn't bother us that much up there. Then after that, why, everything was just...somebody was saying that we'd been hit. And that was it.

Marcello: Are we talking about an ear-shattering noise when one of those large bombs hits like that?

Taylor: Well, to me it wasn't very bad at that point; I mean, it

just didn't deafen you. You could tell it. But it's just about like one of them big 5-inch guns going off or something like that. That's what it sounded like.

Marcello: That's probably a pretty good comparison to make. Then just a few minutes later, the Pennsylvania was hit by another, isn't that correct? Maybe it was about nine-fifteen --nine or ten minutes later. Do you recall being hit the second time?

Taylor: No.

Marcello: What do you recall about the Cassin and the Downes and the explosions that ripped them. Did you have a very good view of them from where you were?

Taylor: I had an excellent view because I was right up above them looking right straight down on them.

Marcello: Describe what was happening over there.

Taylor: Those sailors was firing them machine guns at whatever they could, and these bombers were coming in from the port side and going to the right, making these dives. When they'd come down through there...well, when they straddled us, one hit the Cassin. It missed our bow and hit them. On the Downes, why, it wasn't nothing but big explosions and fire. It was just havoc up there. That's all it was. It was just like everything else, you know, when you have a big explosion. Them boys were doing whatever they could to get out.



Marcello: When you're up there on that gun there where you were, and you're firing, is there very much talking and so on--yelling and shouting among the members of the gun crew?

Taylor: Not that much. We tried to help one another. This boy I told you about earlier, the one saying they was going to attack that morning--named Rose--he happened to be a gunner on the gun that I was the loader on. If you tracked this one on around this way (gesture), you know, well, we'd swing back to the bow of the ship, and say, "Well, there you are, Rose--right there! There's another one!" And he'd pick it up.

Marcello: So usually what talking there is, then, has to do with pointing out airplanes and things of that nature.

Taylor: Oh, yes, yes. I said, "There he is! There's the closest one--right there! Pick it up!" I'd be watching them tracers just the same as he, you know, and I'd say, "Take it up a little! Take it up!" or I'd say, "You're too far ahead," or something like that.

Marcello: I know that in some cases, the Pennsylvania had a lot of trouble with old ammunition and a lot of misfires. How about there on your machine gun?

Taylor: As far as I'm concerned, our machine gun worked perfect. I don't remember hardly any misfires on the machine gun I was on.

Marcello: Do you remember the civilian yard worker who was operating that...

Taylor: ...that crane?

Marcello: ...that crane. Do you remember that?

Taylor: No, not really (chuckle). I remember that sucker going up and down, but he was on the other side of the ship from me. I remember it going up and down, and I could hear people talking about it; but in my concentration, I was looking on the starboard side and the bow, you know, and we just wasn't watching over there that much.

Marcello: And I guess he was doing that in order to spoil the dives and the runs of the Japanese planes.

Taylor: Well, they was coming so close that that rascal could have hit one (chuckle). Yes, he was running that thing up and down that dock trying to keep them off. They were coming so low that they was coming right down on top of him.

Marcello: I gather that at first the Pennsylvania gunners were not too happy about him doing that, but then later on they learned how to use that moving crane when they were firing, also.

Taylor: Yes, yes, they picked it up. I'd have hated to have been him because he was up pretty high (chuckle), and these boys were shooting up there.

Marcello: You mentioned that these planes were coming in low. Were some of them actually coming in lower than your gun mount?

Taylor: I had one that came in particularly that was as low or lower than where I was. He came in right over the Cassin

and Downes and swung right over our bow. He dropped that bomb, swung right over our bow, and made a right-hand turn; and this ol' boy--co-pilot, radioman or whatever it was-- in the back seat of that thing, I can see him to this day raise up with a machine gun and fire--strafe--just strafing just like that.

Of course, I didn't know it at the time, but later on that day, we was cleaning up our brass, which was knee-deep up there in that bathtub, and I messed around, and I found this bullet--a piece of lead. I said, "Well, that's funny. How did that get here?" So I looked up, and on this house above us, I could see--what's the name of that thing--the range-finder. There was a dent right above... it wasn't two feet above our heads or my head or whoever it was. That thing had hit solid right there and fell right down on the deck. I have that piece today. I've carried that with me.

Marcello: Do you remember when the Shaw exploded about nine-thirty?

Taylor: Yes.

Marcello: Describe that, because I think that's one of the most spectacular pictures of the whole attack.

Taylor: The Shaw was over on the starboard side, over at a dry dock. When that thing went off, it was one heck of an explosion. I remember a torpedo tube--I think it was a torpedo tube-- and just here it comes, just right toward us over there,

and right for a second you was just thinking it was going to come up where we was. But it didn't. It fell before it got to us. But I remember seeing it just...it just blew up all at once--just disintegrated.

Marcello: There was a huge fireball, I guess, over there when it exploded, was there not?

Taylor: Yes. Like I say, it just disintegrated when it blew up--it looked like. We had a bird's-eye view of that.

Marcello: Could you detect a lull between the two attacks? We know that there were two separate attacks that occurred. Could you detect a lull between the two?

Taylor: Yes, for a little bit there. I wouldn't venture to say how long the lull was, but it wasn't very long. But, yes, there was a lull in there for a while.

Marcello: I know that in the second attack, they came over with the high-altitude bombers. How much effectiveness did your machine guns have against the high-altitude bombers?

Taylor: We didn't bother them things. They was too high for us with the .50-calibers. I don't recall that we fired at them, really. The 5-inch guns fired at them, I think, but I don't recollect that we fired at all at them.

Marcello: I assume that you were at the battle station all day or all during the attack.

Taylor: Yes, yes, all during the attack. The first calculation of time I had was about two o'clock. Everything went so

fast, and you was scared. You know, everybody was scared. You're nervous. I believe that galley sent up some sandwiches. Of course, you know, it'd been over with awhile. Everything had quieted down. You'd cleaned up and everything, and somebody says, "Well, it's two o'clock," and the galley had made some ham sandwiches and coffee and sent them up. That's the first recollection of the time of day that I remember.

Marcello: Even though it's two o'clock and the attack has been over for several hours, can you still hear somebody occasionally getting off a couple of rounds and that sort of thing?

Taylor: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, you'd hear somebody shoot over here, and you'd jump, you know. You'd think, "They're coming back," or something like that, you know. But, of course, it was all over with. They were gone.

Marcello: I've often wondered about this. Obviously, during the attack itself, there's got to be all kinds of noise and what-have-you. Is there kind of a distinct quiet or something after everything is over, or is there still quite a bit of noise and shouting?

Taylor: No. No, you're right. I'm pretty sure. After an air raid like this, it's just...I don't know what it is. All the noise that had taken place makes it seem like that, but it seemed like it gets awful quiet, you know, just for a little bit there after you're out of the raid.

Marcello: During the attack itself, while you're up there on that machine gun and firing, what kind of emotions do you experience at that point? In other words, are you scared? Are you angry? Are you simply excited? How would you describe your emotions while the attack itself is going on and while you're busy?

Taylor: While you're busy, during the fighting, I recollect that I wasn't scared or nervous or anything. You're just fighting. Your concentration is to shoot it down. Now after you got a little lull, then you get nervous. You have time to think about this. Then, of course, right after it starts again, why, it don't last but just a minute or two. You cool right down, and you...I mean, I did. I settled right down, and you go right on and do your thing. But after it was over with, like I say, you get a little nervous, and then you get scared. You have time to get scared. You don't have time there at first to get scared. It's just too late.

Marcello: When did you finally get relieved up there on that mount?

Taylor: Oh, I think they sort of secured that afternoon sometime. I don't recall. I'd say it was along about the time we ate them sandwiches or something like that. About two o'clock or two-thirty, they let us go down. Of course, we cleaned up the place and got rid of that brass and got it all out of our way. We straightened up and got our

ammunition...well, we had plenty of ammunition up there by that time because everybody would bring up these belts of ammunition. They carried them on their shoulders up there to us.

Marcello: In the meantime, are they trying to get the Pennsylvania out of dry dock and ready to go?

Taylor: No.

Marcello: No?

Taylor: No, we didn't even have no screws on it. We couldn't get out. See, our screws was off, and we had no...we was hoping that one of those torpedoes didn't hit that gate back there and let that water in on us. That's what we was hoping that wouldn't happen.

Marcello: What would have happened if that had taken place?

Taylor: Well, that would have just washed us right on up to the Cassin and the Downes. Of course, there wasn't nobody on them yet then, anyway. I presume there wasn't nobody on there. They had the fires out, but there might have been somebody on them. But it would just probably have ruined us if all that water had rushed in there and we'd just hit that dry dock. I don't know whether it would have done all that much damage or not. Probably it would have.

Marcello: But it would have pushed you into those two destroyers.

Taylor: Oh, sure, yes, because we had no way of...with just all that amount of water coming in there all at once, it'd just throw you right up against the front of that dry dock.

Marcello: Describe the scene that you saw out in the harbor as best as you can remember.

Taylor: Well, all I can remember is that you just looked across, and there was nothing but smoke and fire and explosions. Sailors were swimming. You'd see whaleboats in the water trying to pick these boys up. It's just one heck of a sight when you see a whole fleet pretty near totally destroyed--laying on its side or sinking.

Marcello: At your age, that is, at the age you were at that time, did you ever think that it was even possible to sink one of those battleships?

Taylor: Oh, yes. Yes, I knew you could sink them, but I didn't know it was that easy (chuckle).

Marcello: I guess it must have been something to see the Oklahoma, for example, simply turned over.

Taylor: Yes. Well, we knew this was a possibility if you hit it right. You know, everything is open. You're in the harbor. Your hatch is not sealed. Of course, I'm sure they got a bunch of them sealed pretty quick, but a lot of them they didn't. Of course, if you get a hole and that water gets to rushing in there, why, it don't take much, and you start listing. But to see them get direct hits was sort of disheartening.

Marcello: Was there a lot of smoke?

Taylor: Oh, yes. Shoot, yes, we had a lot of smoke from the



Arizona and the other ships that was on fire. Mostly, it was from the Arizona.

Marcello: What did the surface of the water look like? Describe that.

Taylor: It was oily. Some of it was on fire around the ships where all this was going on. But other than that, as far as the surface of the water around us, it wasn't that bad. But over there close to them other ships--Battleship Row--over there, why, they had some fires on the water, and the sailors was jumping in it and swimming out and swimming under it. Of course, most of us had had that training--how to swim in fire. You had to come up and wave and get a breath of air and get back down. A lot of them probably hadn't had that, but a lot of us had had that training--how to do it.

Marcello: What did you do that afternoon and that evening--the rest of that afternoon and that evening?

Taylor: Well, that I couldn't tell you. I guess we just went down in the gun shack and just talked it over, you know, with your friends. Of course, you was scared, and, of course, like you say, you was nervous. We didn't know whether they was coming back that night or whether they was going to make an invasion. We didn't know. You had rumors.

Marcello: What were some of the rumors you heard?

Taylor: Well, you know, that they were coming. You know, they made an invasion down the coast somewhere or something like that. Of course, you'd then hear, "Well, there's nothing to that."

Of course, we didn't know. We just didn't know. There was very little sleeping that night. We didn't sleep any that night--hardly any. Everybody was nervous.

Marcello: Could you hear sporadic gunfire?

Taylor: Oh, yes. We had a little raid that night. I believe they called battle stations that night when you had some planes come in. In fact, I know I was going up a ladder, and one of them 5-inch guns went off and knocked me off of it (chuckle). I was going to my battle station. Of course, it wasn't no Japanese planes. It was friendly planes. It was just that communications broke down. It didn't last but just a minute until it was all over. We was scared again and went on back. Everybody was nervous--on nerves.

Marcello: Now was this when those planes off the Enterprise were coming in?

Taylor: Well, I don't remember, but I guess it was. I don't know whether they came in that night or real late that afternoon. Or maybe it was the next morning or something. I just don't remember.

Marcello: Well, when General Quarters sounded that evening, that is, when you were going up to your battle station again, were there a bunch of ships in the harbor firing?

Taylor: Not that much. Yes, there was quite a bit of firing going on but not like it'd been, you know. We couldn't see nothing. It was dark. What it was was nerves. That's

all it was. You were just scared, and you said, "Well they're making another run!" Or you said, "They're making their invasion!" We didn't know. It didn't last that long to me. It was just a few minutes, and that was it.

Marcello: What did you do in the days following the attack?

Taylor: Well, the day following, we cleaned them guns up, and we redid that ammunition. Of course, we had people belting ammunition that had never belted ammunition before. They was down below the third deck in the ordnance room down there, and we had machinist's mates...we had anybody that volunteered to go down there, and they'd have maybe three tracers and one that wasn't. Well, we had to do all this over. Some of them would have 200 rounds to a belt or maybe 250 rounds to a belt. Well, we like to keep it at about 150 rounds to fit good in these containers, you know, where you could fire. So we did all that. We had to tear all this out and do it over and get it belted up right.

Marcello: In the meantime, I assume that other people are trying to get the Pennsylvania in shipshape to get it out of that dry dock.

Taylor: Oh, yes. They worked twenty-four hours a day. They rigged tarps from the side of the ship to the level of the dry dock--drape them down on each side where they'd have light down there at night where they could work and get us out of there. They worked twenty-four hours a

day--the yard workmen did--trying to get us out.

Marcello: When did they finally get the Pennsylvania out of there?

Taylor: Well, it was sometime before Christmas. I'd say it was about the eighteenth or nineteenth. I don't remember. But we was at sea on Christmas Day. We were going to San Francisco on Christmas Day. I don't remember what day it was we left, but they did get us out of there where we could get back to the Navy yard there at San Francisco.

Marcello: How long did you remain on the Pennsylvania?

Taylor: I stayed on the Pennsylvania until after the Attu attack in 1943, and we had the ammunition gauge blow up up there or whatever, and we went back into Bremerton Navy Yard in Washington, and I left it. That was, I'd say, the last of May or the first of June, 1943. Then I caught a destroyer out of Seattle--new construction.

Marcello: Okay, well, that's probably a pretty good place to end this interview. I want to thank you very much for having participated, Mr. Taylor. You've said a lot of very interesting and important things, and I'm sure that students and scholars are going to find your comments most valuable when this material is ready for use.

Taylor: Well, I hope I contributed something to it, and I hope they use it and learn by it.