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Interview with
ALTON WARNER
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Place of Interview: Rusk, Texas

Interviewer: R. E. Marcello

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(Signature)

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Oral History Collection

Alton Warner

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Rusk, Texas

Date: October 22, 1983

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

Mr. Warner, 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. Warner: Well, I was born on July 17, 1918, at Bronson, Texas. We call it "the capitol" because we're so proud of the little town, and that's what most of my friends think of me when I talk about Bronson.

Dr. Marcello: Tell me a little bit about your education.

Mr. Warner: Well, I went to the ninth grade. I didn't graduate. I worked a few years and then decided to join the Navy.

Marcello: How old were you when you enlisted in the Navy?

Warner: Twenty-two years old.

Marcello: What made you decide to enter the Navy?

Warner: We had the one-year draft. The Army was pulling my friends and neighbors in for one year. I didn't want mud and barbed wire, so I chose the Navy. I had to take six years to get out of one (chuckle).

Marcello: (Chuckle) What you're referring to is the Navy enlistment, which was six years at that time.

Warner: That's right. It sure was.

Marcello: And when was it that you joined the Navy?

Warner: October 8, 1940.

Marcello: Am I to gather, then, that your reason for entering the Navy was primarily to stay out of the Army?

Warner: That's right. I had to register, and before they could call me in, I headed for San Diego, California, where I got my recruit training.

Marcello: How long was boot camp at the time that you went through?

Warner: Nine weeks.

Marcello: Had they cut it down a little bit? Hadn't it been twelve weeks at one time?

Warner: Yes, twelve weeks. Then they reduced it to nine, and I think later maybe a little more.

Marcello: I think that's true.

Warner: They was needing men so desperately that they had to cut it short.

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

Warner: The fellow I roomed or lived with at Damon, Texas, read the paper daily, and he was a lot older than me, and he was predicting war. Every evening he would sit and read the paper and talk about it. That got me to thinking we were heading for trouble, and, really, we did.

Marcello: Is it safe to say, however, that when you thought of the country getting into war, your eyes were turned more toward Europe than toward the Far East?

Warner: Yes. Really, that's where I expected it to come from. It was a great surprise when it came from the other direction.

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

Warner: Not really. Boot camp went well. I got along fine, and I knew how to take orders. The ones that had never had discipline had trouble. I'd had the strap put on me, so I knew how to take orders, so I made it fine.

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

Warner: They loaded us on the USS Reid and headed straight for Pearl Harbor. We arrived at Pearl Harbor the day before Christmas. I got aboard my ship for Christmas dinner, 1940.

Marcello: In other words, you picked up the Worden at Pearl?

Warner: Yes, at Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: Was your assignment to a destroyer voluntary, or were you simply placed upon a destroyer.

Warner: There was no volunteers. They just gave us a set of orders, and that's the ship I was ordered to.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of being assigned to a destroyer?

Warner: I was a little disappointed because they talked about schools in recruiting me, and I was expecting to go to a school before I went aboard ship. But it didn't happen. I went straight to the ship. Times were getting at the point where they didn't really have a lot of time for school. We was heading for the trouble, and most of them knew it.

Marcello: Describe what kind of a ship the Worden was. In other words, was it one of the newer destroyers, or was it an older one?

Warner: It was a sort of an in-between. It was a "stack-and-a-half," the Worden was. It could do just about anything the others could, but they called it the "stack-and-a-half" type.

Marcello: When had it been commissioned?

Warner: You know, I don't know the commission date of that ship. I'm sorry. It's in my records here, but right now I can't repeat it.

Marcello: I know that the Dale was commissioned around 1935. Was it older than the Dale?

Warner: They were about the same age. Now this was the second Worden.

There was one Worden before mine. I have it in my folder if you'd like to look later.

Marcello: What kind of a reception did you get when you went aboard the Worden? After all, you were still basically a "boot," were you not?

Warner: My first day was really a disappointment. The old chief boatswain's mate had been called back in after sixteen years. He had retired, and he was pretty bitter. A garbage scow came alongside, and I really didn't know what he expected, and the first thing I knew, a hand hit me behind the neck and the seat of the pants, and over in the garbage scow I went with the rest of them. From then on, I knew to move when old "Boats" hollered.

Marcello: To what division were you assigned when you went aboard the Worden?

Warner: Deck force, Second Division.

Marcello: What kind of work did you do while you were in the deck force?

Warner: Swabbed the decks and whatever the boatswains's mate said. They had a number of different jobs. I had to keep the brightwork polished and the ship cleaned, the boats manned. You name it, and we did it.

Marcello: I do know that the battleships at that time had teakwood decks. Did the destroyers have a metal deck or a wooden deck?

Warner: Metal decks. Yes, the destroyers had metal decks.

Marcello: Where were your quarters located, that is, your living quarters?

Warner: Down forward in the bow of the ship. They installed new lockers and bunks when extra men were coming aboard. In fact, we lived in seabags for a few days. The Navy yard was building more room and a place for us. Eventually, we did have a locker.

Marcello: Describe what your quarters were like aboard the Worden.

Warner: It was very crowded. Really, there were many people in one small space, especially after the extra men came aboard. Usually, they had about 250 men, but they increased it to 300. Naturally, that made an overload, and we were really cramped, and with everybody smoking like they do, it would just about stifle you. I believe that was my hardest part to take, was all that cigarette smoke, because I don't smoke.

Marcello: Did it build up to that complement of 300 men even before Pearl Harbor was actually hit?

Warner: Yes. We was up to complement before we got struck.

Marcello: I do know that one of the first things that happened to most "boots" when they went aboard ship is that they got stuck with mess cooking. Did you get your tour of mess cooking duty?

Warner: I missed it on account of the boatswain's mate couldn't find me. He was looking for me and couldn't locate me, and my buddy caught mess cooking, and by the time his tour was

over, I'd made third class shipfitter. So I missed mess cooking on the ship, thankfully.

Marcello: You mentioned that eventually you made third class shipfitter, so somewhere along the line, you must have decided that you wanted to get out of the deck division and perhaps learn some sort of a trade or what-have-you. How did this come about?

Warner: I looked around the ship to locate something I wanted to do, and I got acquainted with a shipfitter first class. I kept talking with him, and eventually they let me out of the deck force and be his striker. You call them a "striker" when you first go in the ship. From then on, I done real fine. I made third class, and, by the way, I made chief in five years, which is a little unusual. My advancement came real good. I was experienced in shop work before I went in the Navy, and that helped some.

Marcello: What kind of work had you done in civilian life before you went in the Navy?

Warner: I was in a big machine shop in Damon, Texas, for Mr. John McLeod. He taught me quite a bit about burning and welding and general shop work, so that gave me an edge on some of the boys.

Marcello: How long was it after you got on the Worden that you went to work in the shipfitter shop?

Warner: About a year. At least a year.

Marcello: So it would have been before the attack at Pearl?

Warner: Right after. It was near a year more or less. I was still in the deck force when the Japs struck, but right after I went in the skipfitter shop.

Marcello: What rank were you at that time, that is, at the time Pearl Harbor was hit?

Warner: Seaman first class.

Marcello: How rapid or slow was advancement in the deck division in that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy?

Warner: It was a little slow because if you didn't make certain scores when you took the examination, you didn't get it, and the top ones got it. I had to go up two or three times before I got seaman first class.

Marcello: And is it not true that there also had to be an opening?

Warner: Yes. There's only a quota, and they'd only allow so many promotions on each ship. You had to be among the top to get it. I got ruled out two or three times, and finally I did get it. It pays not to give up.

Marcello: Where was your general quarters station aboard the Worden?

Warner: Gun four. A 5-inch gun mount was my general quarters station.

Marcello: What was your function there at that gun mount?

Warner: Pass ammunition--powder and ammunition. We'd form a powder line, or bullets; we'd pass them to the gun.

Marcello: So you were down in one of the lower decks then?

Warner: No, gun four was up on the upper deck, above the main deck,

and we had an elevator that would bring the stuff up from way down in the hold. Of course, it was stored below the waterline.

Marcello: So you were actually working in the gun itself.

Warner: Well, that was my gunnery station. In case of emergency and drills, I'd run to gun four.

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

Warner: Really, I didn't know much about the Hawaiian Islands until I got over there because I hadn't studied about them, and I hadn't thought about them. It was all new. It was just a new venture. It didn't bother me too much because I knew I had six years to do, and I'd just as soon do it there as anywhere. At that time, though, I didn't plan to stay for a career.

Marcello: Generally speaking, what was your reaction to the chow aboard the Worden?

Warner: Some days it was good, and some days you'd just eat a little bit, depending on what they fed. Overall I never lost any weight. I maintained my weight throughout my Navy career.

Marcello: Do you think the fact that many of you had come through the Depression made it seem as though the Navy food wasn't really too bad?

Warner: Well, it didn't bother me because I was raised on a farm

and was trained to eat whatever was put on the table.

The food in boot camp and the ship didn't ever bother me.

Marcello: Let me ask you this question. Generally speaking, aboard that ship before the Japanese hit Pearl Harbor, how would you describe the morale aboard the Worden?

Warner: The morale wasn't too bad. We had a few men that was pretty grouchy on account of it was time for their discharge, and the Navy sent out an order to hold them until their ship reached the U.S. A very good friend of mine, Jeb Beasley, was the most grippy one, and he was held over. Then the war started, and he stayed until the end of the war. He was really wanting to go home. Those that was due to go and couldn't leave were the most grippy ones. Otherwise, morale was all right.

Marcello: In general what sort of a relationship existed between the people of your rank and the petty officers aboard the Worden? In other words, was there fraternization between the two groups either on the ship or off the ship? How did that work?

Warner: I didn't ever see them off the ship. They was handy if you needed assistance in any way, and, of course, they was handy if they wanted you to do something, too. A boatswain's mate is known as a sort of a rough character. They have to be to manage. They more or less try to throw a little scare into the kids to get more out of them, I suppose. We knew

to move when "Boats" spoke.

Marcello: I gather there was not a whole lot of fraternization when you went ashore or anything of that sort?

Warner: No, it wasn't then. In fact, I didn't go ashore a lot. Money was a little scarce. Of course, we went in at \$21 a month. I did get up to \$36. I had problems at home, so, really, I stuck with the ship pretty close at the first.

Marcello: How about the relationship between the officers and the enlisted men? Was there a rigid segregation in that regard, too?

Warner: Yes. You only visited with them when they wanted to tell you something, or if you had something personal, you could talk to them by going through the chain of command. But that's about the only time you got to talk to them.

Marcello: So in other words, the officers were rather remote from the enlisted men?

Warner: Yes, that's right.

Marcello: Okay, now obviously, after the Worden got to Pearl Harbor, it was involved in all sorts of training exercises. Take me through one of those training exercises in which the Worden would engage from the time it started until it was over. Let's start with when you would first go out. Normally, when would the Worden leave?

Warner: Well, we'd go out about eight o'clock in the morning.

Marcello: What day of the week?

Warner: Monday. We'd usually come in for the weekend, and Monday morning we'd head out. They'd send an airplane towing a sleeve on a long cable, and all guns would cut loose on that sleeve and try to shoot it down. Then we'd drop depth charges. We did just different things that they wanted us to get good at. They knew we'd need it. What we done was to help the crew in the ship's survival.

Marcello: Did you say the Worden would normally stay out for a week at a time?

Warner: A week or more.

Marcello: When you say "or more," how much longer?

Warner: Maybe two weeks, maybe three weeks. It depended on the exercise and how far away we'd go for the exercise.

Marcello: Normally, would you be operating with other ships?

Warner: Yes.

Marcello: Was the Worden part of a particular destroyer division?

Warner: Yes. The Phelps was our squadron leader. There was usually about six destroyers and the Phelps and maybe a cruiser. Sometimes we'd have a cruiser with us, and naturally they would take command if a cruiser was there. We operated with our squadron pretty close.

Marcello: As you look back upon the crew during that pre-Pearl Harbor period, would you say that you were about as well-trained as you possibly could be?

Warner: We were. We could have been better if we had more smaller

guns because you can't get a 5-inch in action quick enough. We needed more 20-millimeters, .50-calibers, and smaller things that you can move quick. Sometimes, by the time you train a 5-inch and get it ready to shoot, it was too late.

Marcello: How much emphasis was given to antiaircraft practice aboard the Worden during that pre-Pearl Harbor period?

Warner: Not a lot. It was mostly sleeves. They would tow a sleeve, and there would be a ship pulling a target on a long cable, and we'd shoot that thing. Then we'd bombard an island; we'd shoot at an island. We'd just anything to get you to where you could shoot that gun.

Marcello: I guess it's really not until after the war starts that you begin getting the 20-millimeters and the 40-millimeters and things like that.

Warner: Yes. They installed them after the war started--20-millimeters on my ship. By the way, they put me at first gunner, and I was buckled in the harness a lot of times. I got to shoot at the sleeve (chuckle).

Marcello: Did this type of activity become a rather routine thing? In other words, could you as a member of the crew fully expect to go out on a Monday and come back on a Friday almost everytime one of these training exercises took place?

Warner: They would try to let us know if it would be a week or two weeks in order for us to write a letter or let our

folks know. They was pretty good at that--let us know ahead of time about how long we might expect to be away from port.

Marcello: Once you came in, how long would you stay in then?

Warner: Maybe over the weekend or maybe for the week. If they had some repairs to do on the ship, and upkeep, why, it would be longer. But normally, we'd come in maybe on Friday and go back on Monday morning.

Marcello: Suppose somebody ashore was observing the comings and goings of the ships. Could they be able to tell or discern patterns developing, that is, could they more or less expect the ship to go out at a certain time, come in at a certain time, and all this sort of thing?

Warner: If they would watch them regular, they could because they had an area of the channel where they went out, and a person could stand on the shore and read the numbers on the ships and know his ships. You'd have to be familiar with the Navy, and I'm sure there were people who were familiar. You could get a good idea of the maneuvers we went through.

Marcello: As one gets closer and closer to December 7, 1941, and as conditions between the two countries continued to get worse, could you, even in your position, detect any differences in your training routine?

Warner: No, but the gunnery officer got more severe with his lectures. Mr. Wyler was our gunnery officer, and he would caution us

to be the best we could. He said, "We're going to get a bomb down the stack." He implied it would come from Europe-- Germany. That's who we expected, because England was sending ships through, and we'd seen some of their ships that had been hit. The commander knew it was close.

Marcello: Did you ever seem to be having any more general quarters drills than normal as one gets closer and closer to December 7? Did they increase?

Warner: Yes. We would pick up unidentified subs outside of Pearl Harbor. Just a few days before Pearl Harbor, we had one at midnight, and we went to general quarters. We thought sure we'd found...we assumed it would be a Japanese submarine. We wasn't real sure. Then we lost contact, and they ordered all ships back in port. It wasn't but a day or two then until we got hit.

Marcello: You mentioned that you had the submarine alerts before December 7. Can you be a little bit more specific as to how long before the seventh you may have had these?

Warner: The biggest scare I can remember was about three or four days before December 7.

Marcello: This is the one you were just describing?

Warner: Yes. We had a lot of the big ships out for maneuvers and exercises, and they made us feel like we'd run into bad trouble. We expected to start dropping depth charges and having severe things happen that night, but it passed on.

They lost contact. But they ordered every ship back in port and put all the ammunition below deck, below the waterline. Everything was put below the waterline when you entered port, and that's what hurt us.

Marcello: Was this normal procedure when you did come back into port?

Warner: Yes. Anytime you go into port, the order was to carry your ammunition powder below the waterline and store it in the magazines.

Marcello: And I'm sure this was being done as a safety precaution?

Warner: Yes. You want it below the water. That made it real difficult to get it up when we needed it.

Marcello: When you and your buddies sat around in bull sessions and had conversations, did the subject of a possible Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor ever come up in your conversation?

Warner: I can't remember it because none of us believed that the Japanese was bold enough to attack the U.S. It didn't enter my mind. I thought they had more sense.

Marcello: Suppose war did come between the United States and Japan. Did you and your buddies have any doubts as to what the outcome would be?

Warner: Well, we felt like we would do them in pretty quick. We thought we was plenty strong, and, in fact, the Japanese, I think, fooled a lot of people. They were more prepared than we thought they were.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about the liberty routine of the

Worden. How were the liberty sections organized aboard the Worden?

Warner: At first, I believe we was getting "one-out-of-four" duty. You'd go ashore three days, and then the fourth day you'd stay aboard for your duty.

Marcello: Did you have port-and-starboard sections?

Warner: Not at that time, no, not before the war started. But later it did.

Marcello: And when you had liberty, could you stay overnight, or did you have to come back at a certain time?

Warner: You had to have special permission. Some who had their families over there, they could. Us fellows new in the Navy, we had to come back.

Marcello: Why was it that you had to come back every night? What was the Navy's reasoning for this?

Warner: They just didn't want so many of us on the shore, I don't suppose. I don't really know. But you had to be a privileged person to stay overnight. The married men and the senior people in the Navy managed to get time off. I don't know any of the young fellows like myself that could stay overnight.

Marcello: I've heard it said that people had to be back aboard ship because the Navy didn't want them sleeping on the beach or in parks or things like that. Hotel space was limited in Honolulu, I've heard, and you guys didn't have very much money, anyhow,

Warner: That's right. You'd have been bumming around all night on the streets, so it was a good thing that they brought them back aboard, I think.

Marcello: Now you mentioned awhile ago that you didn't take advantage of liberty that often, that is, you didn't go ashore too often.

Warner: I didn't, myself.

Marcello: Why was that?

Warner: For one thing I didn't have the money, and I didn't really find a lot there that I was interested in at that time.

Marcello: When you did go ashore, what would you normally do?

Warner: I think my best trip was climbing a mountain. Me and a friend of mine took sandwiches and a lunch and walked a half a day up a mountain and ate and walked back. It was something different for me because I'd never been in the mountains, so I had a real good day that day. And we'd see movies. We'd take in a movie now and then.

Marcello: I gather from what you said that the temptations and pleasures of Hotel Street and Canal Street really had no interest for you.

Warner: It didn't interest me because at that time I didn't drink and carouse around like a lot of the older boys. I just shied away from it.

Marcello: And I notice that you didn't get any tattoos, either.

Warner: Never. I've seen enough in boot camp. They'd come back

...the kids was sick, arms swelled. I didn't want none of it.

Marcello: Okay, I think this brings us into that weekend of December 7, 1941. Of course, we want to go into quite a bit of detail on this. When did the Worden come in that weekend?

Warner: I'm not real sure, but we was in there...I'd say we'd been there several days, tied up to the Dobbin. We was in for repairs, and they had stripped the engine room, so we had been there almost a week.

Marcello: Now the Dobbin was a repair ship--a destroyer tender?

Warner: Yes, a destroyer tender, they called it. They done all of our major overhauls. We were right next to the Dobbin.

Marcello: What kind of work were you getting done? Do you know?

Warner: In the machinery room, valves and things that had worn were pulled and carried to the Dobbin. They'd reface them. It was just a lot of odd jobs that we couldn't do ourselves at sea, and they would accomplish those things on the Dobbin and then bring it back, and our men would install the parts that they had took off. We were stripped down pretty far, and it hit us at a bad time.

Marcello: In other words, you were not in any kind of fighting trim come December 7?

Warner: No, we were not. We had the ship out of commission, and we couldn't get underway for about three hours.

Marcello: How did that kind of work affect you in the deck force?

What would you be doing during this period?

Warner: Them boatswain's mates would find stuff for us to do (chuckle). We'd scrap and paint and polish brightwork everyday. They had their routine that we went through regardless of what the ship done. The boatswain's mates had their different things they wanted us to do. We had to keep that ship looking pretty good. The paint wouldn't hold long, and we'd have to scrape it off and repaint it regular. So it was a continuous goal of keeping our end of the ship looking good. They wanted the topside to look good because a lot of people see you going in and out. They tried to keep the Navy looking good.

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

Warner: Nothing special. On Saturday evening we'd usually have holiday routine. We'd get most of the work done, and they would just sort of let us lay around--Ropeyarn Sunday, they called it--and do what we wanted to do. We'd rest a little bit from the week's work.

Marcello: What did you do that Saturday evening? Do you recall?

Warner: Lounge around, visit, talk, gossip around with the other sailors (chuckle). We'd maybe take a nap. If you felt like sleeping on Saturday evening, you could lay down and take a nap. That's something you didn't do through the week in the daytime.

Marcello: What time did you hit the sack that night?

Warner: Oh, I'd usually turn in about ten o'clock.

Marcello: Do you recall anything out of the ordinary happening that Saturday evening?

Warner: No, not a thing in the world out of the ordinary. It was just the usual routine as we had always had it.

Marcello: Where was the Worden tied up relative to Battleship Row?

Warner: It was next to the island, and the battleships was up toward Ford Island. There was a pretty good little space between us and the battleships.

Marcello: Could you see the battleships from where you were tied up?

Warner: Oh, yes.

Marcello: I understand that was a rather pretty sight at night when all the battleships were there and the running lights were on and so on.

Warner: Yes, and we had a good view of them because we was next to the island, and we could see all the other ships in the bay. We had a real good view from where we were tied up.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us in to that Sunday morning of December 7, and I want you to pick up the story as well as you remember it from the time you woke up until the attack actually occurred.

Warner: Well, me being an ol' farm boy, I was always up at six o'clock. When they hollered chow call, and I went down and ate. We was trained to clean our part of the ship. After we ate breakfast, well, the boatswain's mate was up looking and had a few things he wanted done. Gregory, my boss, was

from Ardmore, Okalahoma. He was looking for jobs, and I happened along. He had me to start sweeping and swabbing and picking up trash. Then he walked back to the fantail to look around to see what was going on at the rear of the ship, which was pointed toward Ford Island, where the first bombs went to falling.

I'll never forget the look on his face. He came running back to the quarter-deck where Chief Griswald had the watch, and he was hollering, "Japanese attack on the port quarter! Japanese attack on the port quarter!" Of course, we all began to look, and we could see the smoke and the fire and the bombs falling. Chief Griswald was so shocked he couldn't even push the alarm buzzer. He was just looking at those bombs falling and ships getting hit. Somebody hollered, "Chief, push the buzzer! Push the alarm!" Then he reached over and mashed the buzzer, and that alerted the whole ship.

Marcello: How did General Quarters sound aboard the Worden?

Warner: Oh, you could hear that thing. It would bounce you out of your bed. Whenever that went off throughout the ship, it was a terrible noise.

Marcello: Was it a gong or a...

Warner: "WHAA! WHAA! WHAA! WHAA!" Oh, it made a terrible noise. And naturally, why, I run to gun four, and my first class, Vories, "Buzz" Vories, was over the gun, and he was there.

He beat me there. He sent me and two colored fellows down to the magazine to get him some ammunition and powder started up. He was trying to get everything ready to fire. As quick as we could get some ammunition and powder up, then they went to blasting. I think we was given credit for one plane with a 5-inch gun. Of course, I don't know who hit it because there was several 5-inch guns firing.

Marcello: About how shortly after General Quarters sounded did the Worden's guns begin opening up?

Warner: I'd say ten minutes. We got going pretty quick because we had stuff up there. In ten or fifteen minutes, we was beginning to fire.

Marcello: Basically, there's no way that you can get underway? Is that correct?

Warner: We couldn't. We was out. Our engine room was down. They had to get all these parts back from over on the Dobbin before we could get underway. The other ships began to leave as soon as they could get away from us.

Marcello: Now from your position, that is, from your battle station, were you able to see very much of the activity that was taking place outside?

Warner: After we came up, we could. We was down in the magazine for about an hour. They finally got enough ammunition powder that we could come up. They called down and told us to come topside and help on the guns. Then we could

see pretty well all around. Ships were turning over and burning, and there was fire and smoke. It was a pretty big mess.

Marcello: While you were down there in the magazine, do you have time to think about what's going on, that is, while you're loading ammunition and so on?

Warner: Not a lot. I remember one of the colored boys. Every time a bomb would hit the water, the ship would shake. He would say, "Reckon that one got us?" I said, "I don't know! Give me another bullet!" We'd send it up and then follow it with a case of powder. Directly, the ship would shake again. A bomb missed us by about five feet. It killed four boys on the Dobbin because they was leaning out watching us fire. I believe it was four that got killed. Them colored boys was afraid we was getting hit, and I didn't know myself. I imagine my eyes was about as wide as theirs. But when we came up, we were still all right, and we got underway in about, I'd say, three hours. Within three hours, we was ready to leave out.

Marcello: It is kind of disconcerting to be below decks doing what you were doing and hearing these bombs and feeling these bombs and knowing that you were down below decks?

Warner: It sure was. I tried not to think about it too much. We was trained to do what the gun boss said, and when he said

for us to hit the magazine, we hit it. And we got him some bullets and ammunition up as quick as we could. You just do things automatically. You don't really stop to think. When they give you an order to do something, why, you're trained to do it.

Marcello: You mentioned that there were a couple of black guys aboard the ship, and they were down in the hold with you. Normally, what function did blacks perform aboard ship? Were they usually working in the commissary?

Warner: Around the mess hall, the officer's mess. We used all of them in emergencies. They would distribute a few of them to each gun. He assigned two to go with me down and send up ammunition.

Marcello: By the time you had finished with that job down there, that is, by the time you'd gotten enough ammunition passed up, you mentioned about an hour had gone by?

Warner: At least an hour.

Marcello: Okay, so what happens, then, when you come up out of there?

Warner: Well, pretty soon then they began to get our ship lit off-- get up steam. The last attack had done passed over us. Pretty soon they had backed out of there, and we headed out to sea. It was between two and three hours. I don't remember exactly.

Marcello: So when you did get up on the gun after having been down in the magazine, did you actually participate in some of

the firing at the Japanese planes?

Warner: No. They had done quit shooting. They'd got out of reach of us. One of our quartermasters by name of Brubaker manned a .30-caliber machine gun on the bridge. Automatically, he ran up--that was his gun station--and he was given credit for one plane, and we got credit for one with a 5-inch off of the ship.

Marcello: So actually, from the time that the attack took place, you were working down in the magazine, and then by the time you got up to topside, the attack was actually over.

Warner: Yes. It was mostly done passed over. When I got up on the gun, the worst of it had done...the first wave had done come and gone, and, really, I didn't get to see a lot of the second wave. I know that two waves came over. They was concentrating on something else. They left us alone after that first hour.

Marcello: Okay, when you came up, you mentioned several minutes ago that you saw a great deal of destruction and that sort of thing. Describe in as much detail as you can remember what you saw.

Warner: One of the ships was just laying over, and the smoke was billowing out, and oil was all over the water. They'd ruptured the tanks, and the boys was trying to get off of them ships. They had boats in the water trying to pick them up, but it was one big mess of a confusion in trying

to save each other. Of course, the ships was turning over. They'd go the wrong way. They'd head out to sea instead of around the pier because they was in fire and water and oil. The kids that did get out didn't know which way to go. It was a real mess.

Marcello: What emotions did you have? What thoughts did you have when you saw all this destruction out there?

Warner: Well, it just happened so fast and so sudden that we really didn't have a lot of time to think. We was trying to save ourselves and do what little we could to get out of there. We felt so helpless sitting still. It is a terrible feeling to be on a ship and can't move. Once we turned that screw and got headed out, we all felt better.

Marcello: And you said it took about three hours from the time the attack started until you got out of there?

Warner: Within three hours, we were out.

Marcello: That was pretty fast time, wasn't it?

Warner: Well, ordinarily, it would be a week getting that engine room back together because they'd take time and they wouldn't rush it. But, I guarantee you, those boys was running and installing, and everybody was going as fast as they could go.

Marcello: And then it takes a while usually to fire up those boilers, too, doesn't it?

Warner: Yes. You've got to fire them up and get up steam. It takes

a little while to get up steam, but we set a record that day of getting the thing lit off. Those engineers deserve a lot of credit.

Marcello: What were you doing at that point then, that is, as the ship went out the channel and cleared the harbor?

Warner: Just sit on the gun and be ready. We stayed with our gun until we got out at sea, and when they found out they weren't coming back anymore, then they let some of us go ahead with our work. They kept a gun crew on the gun, but not all of us. It was just partially manned.

Marcello: What kind of rumors did you hear while you were out there?

Warner: Well, just among ourselves, we were afraid they was going to land. When they bomb you and do as much damage as they did, we assumed they was going to take the island. What ships could leave there went looking for them. We searched everyplace, and my ship got brave and tried to attack our own cruiser (chuckle).

Marcello: You want to describe this?

Warner: Well, yes. It was real exciting. They had a little signal gun that they used to signal another ship, and they wouldn't answer back. The captain said, "Signal them once more and open fire!" During the message, the gun crew got the wrong information, and they let one 5-inch round go off. Gun two let a round go off toward a cruiser. About the same time, the cruiser recognized us, and they didn't return the

fire, which we was glad of because they could have blown us out of the water.

Marcello: You said they did not return fire?

Warner: No, they didn't return the fire. They knew who we were apparently, but we didn't know who they were. Then they began to answer our signals. We got that over with. That gave us quite a excitement because we thought we'd found a Jap ship.

Marcello: Did you have any submarine scares while you were out there thrashing around?

Warner: No, not at that time. Before that, we had picked up sounds, but right there that night, I don't remember us picking up any subs.

Marcello: In the aftermath of the attack, what kind of feelings or emotions did you have?

Warner: Well, it was one of unsure of what will happen next. We would come in after night. We'd work all night getting ammunition and food and supplies and leave before daylight. Just like a horse in a trap, we didn't want to get caught in there in daylight, so we would do what we had to do and leave before daylight and operate a few days and come back and do it again. We done all of our loading at night, after dark, without hardly any light. Most of our work was done in the dark.

Marcello: On the seventh, when you cleared the harbor and were outside

that on patrol, how long did you stay out there?

Warner: We came in the next night and got food and whatever. We needed some more supplies.

Marcello: This would have been on the eighth?

Warner: Yes. We needed supplies, so the next night we came back in. Then we'd stay two or three days, and then we'd come in again. Apparently, they decided not to land. For some reason, they didn't bring troops. They didn't know how much damage they could do, I don't think. They could have landed with no resistance. That's how they left the place.

Marcello: Now on that night of December 7 and the nights thereafter, I assume that you were sailing with darkened ship and so on?

Warner: Yes, we was out looking, and we was afraid they was coming in. We was searching desperately to try to find them and contact them if they were. But apparently they gave it up and went back to Japan. A few days--I'd say within a week--we began to ease off and go in and load in the daylight. But the first week, it was horrible because we didn't know what minute they may come back.

Marcello: When you got off duty, that is, when you got off the gun mount, what kind of activities were you doing?

Warner: Regular deck force work in my line. We had to clean the ship and paint. The ones that wasn't on the guns would be doing routine work.

Marcello: When did the Worden get the rest of its repairs made and so on?

Warner: Oh, it was a long time (chuckle). We didn't come back for anything for a while. I don't remember for just how long, but we operated a long time before we got anything else. We finally decided to put on 20-millimeters and change a few things. Oh, it was a couple of months before we got into that. They took down the crow's nest, and they changed a lot of things. They modernized the ships the best they could.

Marcello: When did the Worden get out of Pearl Harbor on a more or less permanent basis? When did you leave there for other destinations, I guess I should say?

Warner: It wasn't too long. They hooked us up with the Lexington, and they would go on patrols, and we would flank the Lexington, a carrier. We went to different areas. We'd go way out, I guess, more or less looking. We'd stay out maybe a week or two or three and then come back.

Marcello: And then when did you finally leave the Hawaiian Island more or less on a permanent basis?

Warner: I'd say two or three months. We went way down the Pacific and crossed the equator. The "pollywogs" became "shellbacks." The next thing we know, we was getting down in the Solomon Islands farther and farther. Then in June they suddenly changed our orders to go to Midway, so we met the Japs at

Midway and had that out with them.

Marcello: And you got a little revenge for Pearl Harbor.

Warner: Yes. We had trouble, though, I guarantee you. They was stronger than we thought they were, but we ended up...that's where the turning point of the war was. We did come out the winner. That ended my destroyer duty. I got transferred shortly after that.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Warner, that's probably a good place to end the interview. I want to thank you very much for having taken time to talk with me. You've said a lot of very interesting and, I think, important things about Pearl Harbor, and I'm sure that students and researchers are going to find your comments most valuable when they use them to study this subject.

Warner: Well, I hope they will, and maybe they'll help somebody to know what really happened then.