

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
NUMBER
616

Interview with
WILLIAM E. HUGHES
October 28, 1983

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewer: R. E. Marcello

Terms of Use: Open

Approved: W. E. Hughes
(Signature)

Date: 10-28-83

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Oral History Collection

William Hughes

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald Marcello

Date of Interview: October 28, 1983

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing William Hughes for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on October 28, 1983, in Denton, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Hughes in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was aboard the target battleship USS Utah during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

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

Mr. Hughes: I was born in Vernon Parish, Louisiana, on November 8, 1921. After graduation from high school, I enlisted in the Navy in June of 1940.

Dr. Marcello: So you were how old, then, when you entered the Navy?

Mr. Hughes: I was eighteen years old.

Dr. Marcello: Why did you decide to join the service at that time?

Mr. Hughes: Like many other people, I think, I was caught in the Depression.

However, unlike a lot of people, I had some romantic feelings toward going to sea. Seeing the world really appealed to a country boy. I had always wanted to be either a sailor or a cowboy, and they weren't taking cowboys.

Marcello: How closely were you keeping abreast of current events and world affairs at that time?

Hughes: Probably more closely than the average Navy man because of my job.

Marcello: I'm speaking, now, primarily of that period around the time that you entered the service as opposed to after you got into the service.

Hughes: I wasn't tracking real close with world events. I knew briefly what was happening in Europe. I felt that, yes, there was a possibility that we would eventually end up in war. I had seen the Army on maneuvers in Louisiana that spring, and after watching them pitch their bivouac and their tents or whatever they do, I was convinced that should I see military action, I certainly wouldn't want to be in the Army. So the Navy looked real good.

Marcello: You more or less anticipated my next question because I was going to ask you why you selected the Navy over one of the other branches of service, and I think you've answered that question. There's something else that you said a while ago that I want to carry through on just a little bit further. You mentioned that economics played somewhat of a role in

your decision to enter the service. Can you explain that?

Hughes: Well, with a rural, agrarian background, and with the Depression and all these factors, I felt that the service was the best opportunity I had to achieve my goal of learning some skills, and I really wanted to get out and see the world. I had read a lot in school. My eyes to the world were through library books, and I traveled with Gulliver and all the others. I think it was something inherent in me that the Navy just offered the opportunity to accomplish these goals, so that was a factor.

Marcello: At that time what was the extent of your education, that is, at the time that you decided to enter the service?

Hughes: High school.

Marcello: What opportunities were there in terms of jobs for a high school graduate in that area where you were raised?

Hughes: At that time it was poor to none. Some people in my age bracket were in the Civilian Conservation Corps setting out trees and had a very limited chance to acquire any useful skills. I felt that the military, and the Navy particular, offered these things.

Marcello: You know, economics is the reason a great many people of your generation give for having entered the service at that time. The Navy didn't pay very well, but there was a certain amount of security there.

Hughes: There was security, and, also, we had a lot of pride in the

uniform. Serving your country meant an awful lot in those days. I think that was probably a factor, also.

Marcello: How difficult or easy was it to get into the Navy at the time that you enlisted?

Hughes: Very difficult. They had waiting lists. I had a little problem with my weight. Only after about two attempts and eating a lot of bananas did I pass the weight part of the examination. I was probably one of the happiest people in the world when the recruiter put me on that train heading for New Orleans to enlist.

Marcello: So that business about eating the bananas is not a myth?

Hughes: Definitely not.

Marcello: That was a recommendation that was given to a great many people who seemed to have trouble making the weight.

Hughes: (Chuckle) Absolutely.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you actually joined the Navy in New Orleans. Where did you take your boot camp?

Hughes: San Diego, California. I had never seen a ship or an ocean, and yet I had signed for a six-year enlistment. It was quite an experience to look out on that harbor at a real man-of-war, realizing that for the next six years of my life, I would be serving on one.

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

Hughes: Eight weeks.

Marcello: So they had cut it down a little bit by the time that you

went through. I think that normally it was twelve weeks.

Hughes: It had been twelve weeks though, I think, 1939.

Marcello: That seems to be some indication that they were wanting to get people through boot camp and out into the fleet, I think.

Hughes: I think that it indicates there was an awakening in this country, in the military and higher levels at least, that we would face a potential crisis in the reasonable near future.

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

Hughes: Nothing of historical value except that the chief in charge of my company was also named Hughes, and I was under undue duress because of that (chuckle).

Marcello: He knew who you were. He didn't forget your name.

Hughes: He advised me that his name was not to be tarnished by any of my actions, and he mentioned something about breaking legs.

Marcello: Where did you go from boot camp?

Hughes: I had the opportunity, for which I was very grateful, to go to radio school at the destroyer base in San Diego.

Marcello: How did this come about? You might explain the process by which you were selected for radio school.

Hughes: Yes, sir. On my first liberty at boot camp, following the detention unit, I went aboard a destroyer tied up on Broadway in San Diego to get my first birds-eye view of Navy life.

I was a little disillusioned about the occupation of some of the personnel on board. Then one person whose clothes were neat and clean and whose hair was combed and manicured came down off the bridge, and I immediately asked, "What does that fellow do?" They said, "He is a radio operator." Back at boot camp, when they asked for volunteers for radio school, I held up my hand first off.

Marcello: You didn't want to be a "deck ape?"

Hughes (Chuckle) Nor a snipe.

Marcello: Okay, now I would assume that just because you said that you wanted to go to radio school was no guarantee that you were going to be sent to radio school.

Hughes: No guarantee. There was aptitude tests and those things. In my case it was a little less than I had hoped for at that time because I went to a fleet radio school at the destroyer base. At that time the "Des" base was under the command of a rather colorful captain named Captain McCandless.

This particular school was a fleet radio school and was there for the purpose of educating people who had been in the fleet and had missed the opportunity, the prior opportunity, of going to a trade school. They would come back to San Diego to the fleet school. This is in contrast to the regular training school, where people normally went out of boot camp in San Diego. I had only been in school about a month when the discovery was made that this school was being filled up

by people out of boot camp. It was not being used as the Navy had originally intended, as a reward for those who had been serving in the fleet. Consequently, after a month of school--only a month of school--we were transferred to the fleet and thus ended my formal schooling.

Marcello: So the rest of your training, then, was essentially on-the-job.

Hughes: Yes, sir, but I think the great thing about it was that I had been initiated into communications. Consequently, when arriving at Pearl Harbor in probably in November, 1940, I was assigned to the radio group, which was a great break for me, as I felt and still do.

Marcello: What was the difference between attending the fleet radio school and the regular radio school?

Hughes: The training was probably identical, but it was just that the quota in the fleet school was being filled up. The intent of the Navy was to use the fleet radio school as, as I say, a reward for those that had been out at sea and demonstrated aptitude. So instead of the regular four- or five-month school, I had one month.

Marcello: Having been there only a month, were you in a position to judge whether or not this was the rating that you wanted to go into?

Hughes: I loved it.

Marcello: When you were taken out of this school, where did you go?

Hughes: We were put aboard a four-piper destroyer and transported up to Long Beach. We went aboard the hospital ship USS Relief for passage to Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of being assigned to Pearl Harbor and the Hawaiian Islands in general?

Hughes: I thought it was great.

Marcello: Why was that?

Hughes: That's the second goal I was accomplishing there. I was beginning to get out and see the world.

Marcello: Did you have visions of a tropical paradise and all that sort of thing?

Hughes: Somewhat, yes.

Marcello: How long did it take the Relief to go from Long Beach over to Pearl Harbor?

Hughes: I believe it was about seven days. Probably the speed of advance was about twelve knots.

Marcello: And when you got to Pearl Harbor, is this when you picked up the Utah?

Hughes: Yes, sir. We were transferred...it had been determined that about four of us would go to the Utah. We were met on the quarter-deck by the chief radioman and ushered off to the radio group.

Marcello: Had you heard anything about the Utah prior to having seen it for the first time, and, if so, what were your reactions to being assigned to the Utah?

Hughes: No, I hadn't heard much about the Utah. I learned later that there was some distinguishing background, such as the rumor that John Dillinger had served four years on the Utah. I also heard the King of Wales had held inspection on the Utah, and I knew that it was probably the oldest battleship or, in that case, ex-battleship in the fleet.

Marcello: What were your first impressions of the Utah when you saw it?

Hughes: I was confused by the size. We were almost a skeleton crew--some 360 people more or less--on a battleship that was built for 1,500 or 1,600 people. Later, there was to be some embarrassment when we would pull into harbor alongside...the real battleships, and people would point at the turrets with the big guns removed and poke a little fun at us.

Marcello: Describe for me some of the outstanding features of the Utah as you remember them. When I say outstanding features, I mean some of the things that perhaps distinguished it in terms of its functions. Take me on a tour of the Utah back in that pre-Pearl Harbor period and describe to me some of the distinguishing features.

Hughes: Okay. At that time the Utah...well, in 1927, I believe, there was a world disarmament program to some extent. The 14- or 16-inch guns, whatever, had been removed from the turrets of the Utah. Later--I'm not sure of the year--they had come in and put 5-inch gun turrets on top of the large turrets. That alone made the ship look different or unique. While there

was no outside appearance, I learned that the Utah had been ...there had been electronic equipment installed on the Utah at that time for remote controlling. The idea in mind was that the Utah could be used to bottle up a harbor by sailing it in without personnel and detonating explosions. Of course, our decks had been covered in timbers to accommodate the training of Navy and Marine personnel in dive-bombing.

Marcello: Describe what those timbers were like.

Hughes: They were large, heavy timbers. If I recall, they were like four-by-sixes, perhaps. The idea is that the small, metallic missiles dropped by the dive-bombers would stick into the timbers. During the practices, of course, the crew was all below decks or in the conning tower at some place of safety. Then after the practice, they would come out and mark the hits and score the hits for the Navy and Marine Corps pilots who were perfecting dive-bombing at that point in history.

Marcello: When you say the timbers were huge, could you give me some sort of estimated specifications for these timbers?

Hughes: I'm not sure. I think they were something like four-by-sixes. Maybe that's not quite right, but they were in rather long lengths. They pretty well covered the decks.

Marcello: Is it not true that the Utah was used for experimental purposes, that is, some of the latest Navy equipment would be tested aboard the Utah? I'm referring now to perhaps antiaircraft weapons and things of that nature. In some cases, I guess,

there was equipment aboard there the ships in the fleet didn't have.

Hughes: That's possible. I wasn't too cognizant of the gunnery aspects. I was rather impressed by the uniqueness of the radio equipment on board, that it made guidance of the ship by remote control possible. Of course, at that point in time, that was rather unique.

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

Hughes: (Chuckle) We were really in the Old Navy originally. I slept in hammocks, and each morning, after being threatened by the master-at-arms, we got out of our hammocks and lashed them up and placed them in what they called a hammock netting over to the side of the compartment where our seabags were stowed. Then as we gained a little seniority and advancement, by the time I had been promoted to radioman third class, I had the luxury of sleeping on a cot in a room adjacent to the main radio room. We were able to fold and store our clothing in lockers, and even have pinup girls.

Marcello: You say, "And even have pinup girls." Can you explain that?

Hughes: Well...

Marcello: Were there some sort of Navy regulations against it or anything like that, I guess is what I'm trying to say?

Hughes: Oh, I don't think so. It certainly wasn't followed if there were. They were fairly lenient. But naturally, you had to have a Hollywood star in scant garb pasted on your locker.

Marcello: You mentioned the hammocks awhile ago. Describe what it was like to sleep in them.

Hughes: I think that for someone my age, it constituted no problem. They were certainly an inconvenience in going to the head during the night and things like that. When you're underway, the swinging and swaying of the hammock bothered some people if they had the tendency to be seasick. It was certainly no hardship.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that they had to be taken up after you got up in the morning. Am I to assume that the chow hall was in the same place where you were sleeping at that time? I know that on a lot of ships, that was the case.

Hughes: It was in some areas. In my area it was rather small, and this was not the case, but everything had to be shipshape and squared away for the day. It became routine. Also, in the Hawaiian Islands, of course, a tropic area, some of us later were able to take cots topside and sleep where it was cooler. We had no air-conditioning, and on the Utah, at least, we had no fans in the compartments, so it was rather uncomfortable at times.

Marcello: Describe what the Navy chow was like aboard the Utah in that pre-Pearl Harbor period.

Hughes: Well, of course, even then and later, the Navy tradition was corn bread and baked beans for breakfast. Everybody was kept "regular" by drinking black coffee and orange juice. I thought it

was fine, coming from a humble background that I came from. I'm so glad that I was in radio and not serving up chow and things like that.

Marcello: In other words, you didn't have to do a tour of mess cooking since you were in the radio section.

Hughes: That's correct. (Chuckle) And for that, I'm grateful.

Marcello: Now was chow served family-style aboard the Utah, or was it cafeteria-style in that pre-Pearl Harbor period?

Hughes: It was cafeteria-style.

Marcello: What role did sports and athletics play in life aboard the Utah in the pre-Pearl Harbor days?

Hughes: Well, aboard the Utah we didn't have space for a lot of athletic events. However, we did not take long sea voyages. Consequently, a lot of the crew members were involved in playing baseball or softball ashore and were on teams.

Marcello: I understand that boxing was a big sport during that particular period of time, and that the boxing smokers were very heavily attended by people.

Hughes: This is true. A lot of improvising went to smokers and putting on shows. Anyone with talent generally had an opportunity to perform at the smoker. It was something that we all looked forward to.

Marcello: In general, as you look back upon life in that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy, and, more specifically, aboard the Utah, how would you describe the morale of you and your shipmates?

Hughes: Well, morale was very high. There was a feeling amongst us --and it proved very incorrect as we moved toward war--that the war would be very short and decisive in our favor. We felt we were superior in number and in quality. The truth is, I think we were over-confident.

Marcello: What do you think was responsible for the high state of morale aboard the Utah? We perhaps mentioned a couple of things in that, at least in your case, the food was quite satisfactory. I think that always helps morale. And you seemed to be happy in your job and so on.

Hughes: Well, first of all, and you have to remember, Ron, that we were volunteers. We were in the Navy because we wanted to be in the Navy. We had a lot of pride, which, I think, had been instilled--pride in our ship, our Navy, and our country. When you have that, you have good morale. We were also proud of our accomplishments as individuals and as groups. From what I saw in the fleet, the pennant--the efficiency pennant --was something people displayed with pride. Generally, I think that there has been a change in the ensuing years. Americans are probably not as proud as they should be of their country.

Marcello: Awhile ago you mentioned the efficiency pennant, and I didn't ask you any questions about that earlier because I wasn't sure whether or not the Utah would have been participating in that kind of competition.

- Hughes: Not in any extent, as to the battle fleet.
- Marcello: I've heard other people talk about the competition involved in gaining the so-called "E." Evidently, the competition was rather keen, and people were rather proud to be able to display the "E."
- Hughes: Very much so. It's so different now from what it was then. Those things obviously contributed to morale.
- Marcello: Okay, let's talk about your training as a radioman. At this point your training is going to consist of on-the-job training. Let me ask you, first of all, about the quality and skills and willingness of the people who are going to supervise you or train you on your on-the-job training.
- Hughes: They were excellent. They were professionals. Our chiefs and first class petty officers were professional Navy men with long years of service. They had attended technical schools. They displayed examples for us to follow, and in my case I was very fortunate in that I had good aptitude for receiving Morse code. There was very little voice communications in the Navy. In fact, I can't recall voice communications on the Utah of any extent. I even remember that we maneuvered airplanes using Morse code, which called for high proficiency in the use of the international Morse code. This was probably my strong suit, and it's why I ended up being a press operator.
- Marcello: Describe the progress that you made as you more or less advanced

in this rating. In other words, when you went in, I'm sure they were giving you the lowest, most menial tasks that they felt you were capable of handling.

Hughes: Absolutely. I made coffee, swept down, and ran messages all over the ship. There were no elevators. There were lots of steps up those ladders--main radio room was on the 03 deck, third deck down, below the waterline, anyway--to the topside and up on the bridge to the conning tower. When a message would come in, we would have it typed up, and it would be routed to the officers concerned, and they were scattered all over the ship. So with a duty belt and a clipboard, I'd do about a 300-yard dash per message, probably. In fact, we even took the messages from the bridge through a pneumatic tube that the signalman received in semaphore. So the first few months, I received (chuckle) only job training in those aspects. Additionally, then, I was given ample opportunity to study and to practice Morse code and to study radio theory and electronics.

Marcello: Did there seem a willingness on the part of these petty officers and chiefs to train you thoroughly in that rating?

Hughes: Yes. I can't fault anyone. As a matter of fact, I was encouraged, and it seemed like they took pride as I advanced. We had somewhat of a division. Some of our people worked more from an electronics--we called it a material--side, where others were more into operations.

- Marcello: Those on the material side would mainly be concerned with repair of the equipment and the maintenance of the equipment and that sort of thing?
- Hughes: Yes, repair and maintenance of equipment. The operation side, of course, was the transmission, reception and deliverance of messages and following of procedures.
- Marcello: You mentioned this awhile ago, and I'll have you repeat it. Ultimately, that is, by the time the Pearl Harbor attack occurred, what was your function aboard the Utah?
- Hughes: Because of my aptitude for receiving Morse code, I had been able to understudy the first class radioman, Stewart. We called him "Stu." And we were producing the ship's newspaper, getting up very early in the mornings and copying press wireless from the U.S. We copied and posted several newspapers a day, two or three a day, at strategic points in the crew's quarters, the bake shop, the galley, the CPOs' and officers' wardroom, and because of this we certainly were informed on world events and that type of thing.
- Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that you received this assignment also because of your aptitude in receiving Morse code and so on. I guess I'm a little confused here. Would all of these messages that you were ultimately using to produce this newspaper be sent to you in Morse code?
- Hughes: Yes, sir. They came from a press wireless service in the United States to subscribers overseas, but military personnel

were authorized to copy this and to disseminate it to military personnel.

Marcello: So this was also another method, perhaps, of keeping you sharp in terms of receiving Morse code.

Hughes: Particularly, the press was transmitted at a speed of approximately twice that of the military communications, so it required some honed skills to handle it.

Marcello: How rapid or slow was promotion in that particular rating in the pre-Pearl Harbor period?

Hughes: Well, it was a lot slower, I'm sure, in leading up to Pearl Harbor. In my case I had been very fortunate because within a year I had been promoted to radioman third class. But I think that the Navy, in order to expedite the training and promotion of critical skills, had changed some of the rules. They had required people in our branch to become seamen first class, and personally I stumbled all over becoming a seaman first class, and if they hadn't changed the rules, I might not have become a radioman (chuckle).

Marcello: Describe the process by which one would be promoted. What did you have to do to get promoted in the pre-Pearl Harbor period?

Hughes: To become a radioman third class--I will address that particular skill--we had to pass written examinations covering various topics of communications, Navy procedures, a certain amount of electronics and radio theory. We had to demonstrate the

ability to tune and make minor repairs to radio equipment. Certainly, we had to pass sending and receiving tests in Morse code because virtually all communication was done in Morse code.

Marcello: So you had to take fleet-wide examinations, then?

Hughes: Fleet-wide competition. We had to complete correspondence courses...well, training courses, rather than correspondence courses. They were administered aboard ship, but they were graded. You had to be issued a certificate of completion of your particular course before you were even recommended. So it was very competitive, but I always felt it was very fair, though.

Marcello: And is it not true that there also had to be openings for that particular rating?

Hughes: There had to be openings, and also your personnel record, service record, had to meet certain qualifications of conduct and deportment.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about the particular functions of the Utah after you got aboard it there in Pearl. Describe for me a typical training exercise in which the Utah would engage. First, when would the Utah normally go out? I guess what I'm asking is, was there a specific day on which the Utah went out on a regular basis?

Hughes: Operating out of Pearl, where most of my training experience occurred, we would go out early in the week, and we'd be out

virtually all the week. Of course, the training, as we said, primarily involved around the training of Navy and Marine Corps pilots for dive-bombing. Certainly, there was preparation for this, and, as I recall, the crew, of course, during the exercise would stay below decks for what seemed like hours to me at the time. However, after the training we were very relaxed. We were allowed to swim off the ship in the very clear waters in the islands. We had our smokers, and it was a great life to a young man.

Marcello: So on these training exercises, then, if you were able to go swimming, I would assume that the Utah wasn't that far off the islands?

Hughes: No, we were never far out of the islands. We had no reason that I knew of. Early in my experience on the Utah, we were sent to Bremerton Navy Yard for the additional blisters on the side of the ship. Again, in retrospect it may indicate that the Navy foresaw some problems coming and went to the expense, and we were there three months in the summer of 1941, getting these blisters which, as I understand, would cause torpedoes to explode on the outer hull of the ship without causing any damage. Ultimately, the Japanese proved that we wasted our time and money on the blisters (chuckle).

Marcello: What was your particular function during these training exercises?

Hughes: I stood normal watches. Now some of the radiomen worked in

the conning tower on the bridge with the aircraft, directing them on their diving runs and communicating between them. Again, surprisingly, they did that with Morse code. All of the Navy pilots in those days had to know Morse code. I'm not sure about the particular planes involved. At that time I wasn't attuned to aviation. They may have had some of them radio-operated. But I do know that Navy pilots had to be able to transmit and receive Morse code. It sounds archaic now.

Marcello: As one gets closer and closer to December 7, and as conditions between the two countries continued to deteriorate, could you, even in your position, detect any changes in your training routine or in the routine of the Utah? You mentioned, for instance, that you did go back to Bremerton to get these blisters. Do you remember or could you detect any other changes in your routine?

Hughes: It may have been that we stayed in the islands longer. We were due to come back to Long Beach for Christmas. We had just come in from training leading up to the first of December. Due to this press news I was involved in, I was aware of, or had a probably greater sense of awareness of, what was happening elsewhere--the sinking of the Reuben James in the Atlantic and things of that nature--that we felt ...in fact the feeling aboard the ship was that war was definitely coming.

Marcello: When you and your buddies sat around in your bull sessions

and discussed current events and world affairs, did talk ever turn toward a possibility of a Japanese attack in the Hawaiian Islands?

Hughes: Never. Our rosy conception of war with the Japanese would be sending an aircraft carrier and four "tin cans" into Tokyo Bay and blasting Japan, which obviously was totally wrong.

Marcello: This more or less leads up to my next question. I was wondering what kind of impression you and your shipmates had of the Japanese? In other words, when you thought of a typical Japanese, what sort of person did you usually conjure up in your mind in that pre-Pearl Harbor period?

Hughes: Inferior. We never envisioned they had the fighting ability or the ingenuity or the tenacity, which they so definitely proved to us. We felt that their military would be inferior. Cheap Japanese products were the byword of the day in those days.

Marcello: You mentioned that the Utah kept a fairly regular schedule, and I think you had also said it went out early in the week. Would it normally go out on a...well, I'll ask you the question. What day of the week would it normally go out, and when could you expect to come back in?

Hughes: I can't be specific on those dates. The elapsed time is too great. I know it was early in the week, and we'd come back in...we were out the best part of a week.

Marcello: Could you normally expect to be in port for a weekend?

- Hughes: Oh, absolutely. There was some other training I probably should mention. We did work with submarines in their practice runs on us. We liked that because we were able to be out on the decks and observe some of the operations and to look at the ocean and those things which still had an appeal to young guys like myself in those days.
- Marcello: In other words, I gather that the submarines would be firing dummy torpedoes and this sort of thing?
- Hughes: That is correct, and retrieving them. It was very interesting to me.
- Marcello: Describe how the liberty routine was organized aboard the Utah when it was back in Pearl.
- Hughes: In the matter of liberty and a few other things, there was some discrimination in the Navy in those days, and it had to do with your rank. A seaman second class got paid last, he went on liberty last, and he probably had to return first. We had the standard port-and-starboard liberty--half the crew one night and the other half the next night. I believe that we observed "Ropeyarn Sunday" on Wednesday afternoon. I'm not sure we had liberty...I think it was the time the British Navy set aside for sailors to darn their socks and replace or repair their ropes or whatever they were into in those days. But it was a carry-over...a time of relaxation. But liberty was a port-and-starboard operation.
- Marcello: You mentioned that half the crew could go ashore one day and

half the next day. I would assume, then, from what you said, that you had to be back aboard that ship at a certain time when you had liberty. Do you recall when that liberty expired? For instance, I know that aboard a lot of the battleships, the personnel had to be back aboard by midnight unless they had an address or someplace to stay ashore.

Hughes: I don't recall exactly when liberty expired. I think that you may be right. Married people, of course, didn't have to return. I just don't recall.

Marcello: My information is that the Navy's rationale for this was that the enlisted personnel weren't receiving much in terms of pay, and there wasn't a whole lot of hotel space in Honolulu, and they didn't want those guys sleeping on park benches or on the beach or things of that nature. There may be some logic to that.

Hughes: This could have been. Actually, my recollection of Honolulu-Pearl Harbor-Waikiki area was very pleasant. Skiing on the surf at Waikiki before the high rise condominiums was very inexpensive. It was a pleasure. Life in the islands was very relaxed, and I rather enjoyed it.

Marcello: I guess there were only two hotels on Waikiki, weren't there? The Royal Hawaiian and the Ala Moana?

Hughes: That's correct.

Marcello: What did you personally do when you went on liberty? What was your liberty routine?

- Hughes: Oh, sightseeing, and I tried surfing, which I enjoyed. I was never good at it. But up until I made third class, I stayed aboard and studied. Because of my background--my rural, agrarian background--I was having a little problem with electronics and electricity in those days. Everyone had a camera, and you sent pictures home. You managed to find a studio with some hula girls, and you could take their picture and maybe get in the picture with them if you were lucky--that type of thing.
- Marcello: I gather that picture-taking and putting together a photo album was a very popular pastime during that period.
- Hughes: Oh, yes. Navy personnel, at least, was known to do a little beer drinking, things like that.
- Marcello: I know that one of the popular spots in Honolulu was Hotel Street, Canal Street, and that area. Take me on a walk down Hotel Street. What would we find?
- Hughes: I was never on Hotel Street, in case my wife listens to this (chuckle).
- Marcello: But what sort of establishments were on Hotel Street?
- Hughes: I think they called it a red-light district. There were a lot of nightclubs, tattoo parlors, barber shops with female oriental barbers that people liked to frequent for haircuts, mudpacks, believe it or not, and things of that nature.
- Marcello: In other words, there were establishments there that were basically designed to take a sailors' money.

Hughes: And they did a really good job of it.

Marcello: You have on a suit, so I can't tell whether or not you have any tattoos. Did you ever get that salty?

Hughes: No tattoos. Twenty-two years.

Marcello: You were twenty-two years in the Navy?

Hughes: Yes. I was a coward, I guess.

Marcello: It is true, is it not, that at that time, I guess, getting a tattoo was a sign that one was a "real sailor" and that sort of thing?

Hughes: It was a symbol of machoism, I suppose. Most of the tattoos, I think, though, were gotten in the first liberty out of boot camp, which constituted, as a result and which I noted, swollen arms and fever in the tattooed area.

Marcello: Is it not true that the Navy frowned upon people getting tattoos in that you better not lose any time on the job because of infections and this sort of thing resulting from a tattoo?

Hughes: That's correct. I believe they called it "sickness due to misconduct" if you did. The Navy certainly didn't encourage tattoos. I think that it was detrimental to the image.

Marcello: Okay, I think this leads us into that weekend of December 7, 1941, and, of course, we want to go into this period in as much detail as we can. When did the Utah come in that weekend, and where did it tie up?

Hughes: I'm thinking it was on Friday. We berthed on the side of Ford Island where the carriers normally berthed when they're

in port. I don't remember our berth number, but we were just aft of the cruiser Raleigh.

Marcello: Was this your normal docking space? You mentioned that you were berthed where the carriers normally tied up. Was this usual?

Hughes: I'm not sure. A lot of times we dropped anchor out in the harbor, and we ran liberty boats ashore.

Marcello: From the air...now, again, I have to ask you this question on the basis of what you possibly had heard from others, a pilot perhaps. From the air would the Utah have looked like an aircraft carrier, perhaps?

Hughes: I thought about that, it seems like, all my life. We were certainly a huge ship. They must have felt that we were very important because of the priority that we were given in the attack. Having the decks covered with timbers possibly made it look like a carrier. On the other hand, we didn't have the standard carrier island; we had the mast, the standard battleship caged mast. I'm not sure that they really thought it was an aircraft carrier. They knew they had a large amount of ships, and they went for the kill.

Marcello: What did you do that Saturday? What did you personally do that Saturday of December 7, 1941? Do you recall?

Hughes: I don't recall. That Saturday seemed so unimportant after Sunday that I don't recall.

Marcello: Do you recall whether or not you had liberty or whether you were aboard ship?

Hughes: I was probably aboard ship.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us into that Sunday morning of December 7, and this is the period, of course, that we need to go into with as much detail as we can put together. Let me ask you this before we get to that point. When the Utah would be in port at Pearl, I would assume that it was basically wide-open, so to speak, in terms of doors, hatches, and that sort of thing.

Hughes: We were in no state of readiness.

Marcello: And this was normal procedure?

Hughes: Normal.

Marcello: This brings us to that Sunday morning, and I'll let you take up the story at this point from the time you got up until all the action started.

Hughes: I'm somewhat embarrassed to say that, not unlike so much of our military and, indeed, our country at that time, I was asleep when the attack started.

Marcello: Is it not true that on a Sunday morning, one could stay in the sack if one didn't have the duty. It was holiday routine.

Hughes: That is correct, and our bunking space was isolated, and no one disturbed us. It was routine for us to sleep late on Sunday morning.

Marcello: Incidentally, where was your battle station? I should have asked you that question earlier.

Hughes: At the main radio, which on a battleship is below the waterline.

Marcello: Third deck down, I think you said.

Hughes: That is correct.

Marcello: Down on the 03 deck.

Hughes: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, so you're in the sack Sunday morning. Pick up the story at that point.

Hughes: I was awakened by a tremendous jar to the ship. My initial reaction was, "We've been rammed!"

Marcello: Was there any noise, or was there simply this jarring effect?

Hughes: Well, the obvious explosion is what awakened me. I can't recall--and it was some distance--I can't recall the noise. The jarring effect is most prominent in my mind.

Marcello: Okay, and what happens at that point?

Hughes: As I say, my initial reaction was, "We have been rammed, and we might not get back to Long Beach for Christmas!" Those were my priorities in those days. I sat up in the bunk, and it almost seems like immediately that there was another explosion and tremendous jarring of the ship. I began to gather some clothes--some minimal clothing--because the senses began to indicate to me it was something besides being rammed. Something, perhaps horrible, was happening. I guess by this time several people were dressing, and we began to yell at each other, "What's happening? What's going on?" As I recall, and there's been some discussion previously on this subject, my contention is that we received a third torpedo and actually started listing almost immediately.

Marcello: Describe what it was like when that third torpedo hit, and the ship started to list.

Hughes: Well, I think that our senses were that we had to get above decks.

Marcello: Is everything in your compartment shifting and moving around and so on, such as bunks and that sort of thing?

Hughes: No, that hadn't began happening yet. I'm sure that all happened by the time we had cleared the area and gotten topside. We had no real difficulty in getting topside.

Marcello: From the time the first torpedo hit the Utah until you got topside, how much time, would you estimate, had passed?

Hughes: I don't think it was longer that five minutes.

Marcello: Was there ever General Quarters sounded?

Hughes: Not to my knowledge. You have to recall that the Utah was an old ship. We did not have a public address system on the Utah. As a matter of fact, our communications between the main radio and the radio aft was by telegraph system. The normal way of passing the word on the Utah was the boatswain running around and tooting his horn and making the announcement, "Now hear this!" So I heard no General Quarters. As I say, the attack went so fast. The listing started so soon that there was no hope of fighting or saving the ship, so I think that most of us shifted into a survival mode.

Marcello: You mentioned that you had dressed. What was the uniform-of-the-day as you put it on?

Hughes: In my case it was a white T-shirt and white shorts, and in my "lofty" job as a radio operator, we wore white uniforms.

That's what I came out in.

Marcello: That was a lesson that was learned at Pearl Harbor that day, also, that is, the danger in being...

Hughes: From flash fire.

Marcello: ...dressed in short-sleeve shirt and shorts.

Hughes: Right.

Marcello: You're on the 03 deck, and, of course, you proceed to topside. Was this procedure being carried out in a rather orderly fashion, or was there panic and chaos at this point?

Hughes: It was somewhere in between, Ron. There was no one standing by like they do in the movies calmly directing people. We were acting on intuition. I don't think that it could be called chaos.

Marcello: I guess you really don't know what's happening at that point, really; I mean, you have an idea but nothing definite.

Hughes: By the time we reached the topside, we could see the planes coming, and the danger there was from strafing in our case.

Marcello: Was there any difficulty getting to topside as the ship was listing?

Hughes: In my case, and in those around me in the radio group, we didn't experience...some of the people that were coming from further down in the engine rooms, I think that some of the hatches were probably closing on them, and there was a danger. I don't know what the record shows, but I'm sure that some deaths resulted from that very factor. It didn't take us

long to get to the topside. Our real danger there was to get off without being strafed.

Marcello: You reached topside. Describe the scene that you see before you actually get off the Utah. You mentioned a moment ago that you did see a great deal of strafing taking place.

Hughes: Absolutely. They were coming over in waves, and they were strafing. Our people were trying to get out from under the sheltered area and go overboard and swim for shore between the waves of planes that were strafing.

Marcello: Were they strafing the Utah directly, or were they simply coming over the Utah on their way to strafe other areas?

Hughes: That could have been. I felt they were strafing us, and so did everyone else, because as they would approach, we'd all run back under the superstructure and the sheltered area.

Marcello: So this went on for some time before you actually got off the Utah. When I say for some time, you simply didn't come out on deck and get into the water.

Hughes: That's correct. We probably made one or two attempts, and then I guess the other danger was in jumping over. Then we were all jumping without any organization. As I say, there was no one there calmly directing us.

Marcello: Okay, the ship was listing, and you decide...

Hughes: It was listing to port.

Marcello: It was listing to port, and you decide to go into the water.

Do you go off the ship on the side that is listing? In other words, I can see you simply walking into the water, or do you go off on the starboard side...

Hughes: First of all...

Marcello: ...that's farther out of the water?

Hughes: ...the starboard side is to shore, and the shore is closest; and I think with the timbers on the ship and the danger of them falling to the port or the listing side, almost everyone...I know of an exception. We had twin brothers in the radio group, the Durham brothers from Arizona, and they were separated during the attack by that very thing. One of the brothers went off on the port side and was picked up in a boat and went to Pearl City. The other abandoned ship on the starboard side, or the high side out of the water, with me and was over in a ditch.

Possibly a little danger existed with people jumping on each other because between waves there was a great exodus to get over the side, and, as I say, we were in a survival mode--get off the ship; it was going over. There was nothing you could do. You couldn't fight back; you were helpless. And the least you could do was survive.

Marcello: I assume that nobody gave you the order to abandon ship. It was self-evident to most of you that that had to be done.

Hughes: Well, again, on the Utah the way of passing the word was the boatswain running around blowing a boatswain's pipe and saying,

"Now hear this!" Obviously, with a sinking ship and falling timbers, no one was doing anything like that.

Marcello: So you did go off on the starboard side.

Hughes: That is correct.

Marcello: Describe your descent into the water.

Hughes: I jumped feet first. It was a pretty good jump because the starboard side was well out of the water by that time. I probably wasn't in a lot of danger, although I felt I was... that I was being strafed.

There was some leadership displayed. Someone in the ensuing time managed to get a rope. Now we all could swim. It was part of the qualifications for being in the Navy. While we probably weren't all excellent swimmers, we certainly could swim. But if anyone had any injury, having that rope ...and whoever strung the rope certainly should have been commended for the initiative and for doing that, which enabled some of the people to grab on to the rope just in case they were in trouble. Someone also had gotten a motor launch operating and started ferrying people back and forth. Again, the crew of the Utah was, I think, helpless; we were frustrated; and quite honestly, we were scared.

Marcello: Approximately how high was it from where you jumped into the water? Again, this is something that you would have to estimate.

Hughes: I've got to believe it seemed like twenty feet. It was a nice

leap, although yet it wasn't totally unrealistic to do.

Marcello: Had you discarded any of your clothing, such as shoes?

Hughes: I'd either discarded or never put on my shoes. As a matter of fact, I suffered the only wound that I suffered in World War II, was stepping on some coral and cutting my foot.

Marcello: Okay, you go into the water. Now what is the condition of the water at that time?

Hughes: That was the least of the problem. Obviously, there in port it was very calm, and I thought it was a little chilly in retrospect.

Marcello: I guess what I was thinking is...

Hughes: It was very crowded.

Marcello: ...was it covered with oil or anything of that nature yet?

Hughes: I can remember no oil. I think that we were very fortunate in suffering no more casualties than we did, although the ratio was still pretty high, considering the low number of personnel that that ship had. I didn't see anyone.

Marcello: Okay, you jump off the starboard side. You're now in the water. Pick up the story at that point.

Hughes: I'm in the water. I'm swimming to shore. I'm keeping out of the way of the motor launch. As I say, someone by that time had strung a rope, and about halfway to shore I was able to grab hold the rope, although it really wasn't needed, and get over to the beach.

Marcello: Now where had this rope been strung? From where to where?

Hughes: From the beach back to the ship, as I recall. Maybe it was to the pilings there at the berth--the moorings which we moored to. I know I stopped there and held on to the pilings for a little bit and kind of hid behind them as some planes came over. It was not too great a distance.

Marcello: Approximately how far did you swim to get to shore?

Hughes: I want to say probably in excess of a hundred feet. It was not far--no great distance.

Marcello: Okay, pick up the story at this point.

Hughes: My recollection for some reason is that there was a ditch, maybe four or five feet deep, on Ford Island. Now we're really still in the early moments of the attack, which was to last, what, approximately two hours? Again, we were a helpless group. We had no guns. It was very frustrating. We couldn't fight back. We had left all our worldly belongings and were lucky to be there in our wet clothes hunkered down in a ditch to watch this thing go down.

Marcello: How far was the ditch from the shore?

Hughes: I can't recall exactly. It wasn't a great distance, though.

Marcello: Was it around this time that you cut your foot on the coral? Was it done in getting out of the water?

Hughes: Well, in the shallow water--wading in.

Marcello: How serious was this cut?

Hughes: Not serious. It's just been something I've joked about.

Marcello: Okay, you've hit the shore. What was your mode of procedure

in getting into that ditch. In other words, are you running, trotting, or what?

Hughes: We're doing a real good job of following the leader. Someone had discovered it ahead of us, and that's the operation--to get into safety, and that was the only safety available.

Marcello: I've heard many people talk about that ditch. Is this the one that was being built for the purpose of putting in some sort of a pipeline or whatever?

Hughes: I don't know.

Marcello: Was it a long ditch?

Hughes: I think it was. I know that before the ordeal was over, we were all in a long line inside the ditch in relative safety. Two or three things occurred there that, believe it or not, in an awful catastrophe seem humorous.

Marcello: Describe what did take place in that ditch.

Hughes: Well, as I said, we semi-crouched in the ditch to observe the goings-on. We witnessed a real act of heroism in my estimation. One of our crew members was trapped inside the ship. The bottom was totally up and visible, and a pecking or knocking was heard in the bottom of the ship.

Marcello: Now you couldn't hear it from the ditch?

Hughes: No. Someone had heard it. At least two or maybe three of our people...one, I remember, was a warrant officer who went to the Raleigh, a cruiser that was berthed just off our bow, and borrowed a cutting torch. The Raleigh itself was in

trouble. I think they abandoned ship maybe once and called the guys back. These people went out and during the attack proceeded to--and it was time-consuming--to cut a hole in the bottom of that ship and bring this fellow out, who came over and joined us in the ditch.

Marcello: Can you describe this in a little bit more detail? Of course, in our conference before the interview started, I indicated that I was very interested in this because we've interviewed the man who was cut out. You did observe that whole procedure?

Hughes: I observed the whole procedure, and I thought, "How brave they are, indeed, to be out there working so diligently to make that hole and to get this fellow out!" Then he came over and joined us in the ditch. I talked to him. He was suffering from an apparent hearing problem, having been enclosed in the pressure underneath the ship there.

Marcello: And this is John Vaessen that we're talking about?

Hughes: I'm sure it is. There was only one person. I had not met him before this incident. He was probably one of the luckiest people in the world at that point.

Marcello: How long were they working on the bottom before they were able to cut him out?

Hughes: It seemed like around...I'm not sure. It was in minutes. It seemed like a rather long time to me, and I'm sure to them it seemed like a lifetime; but on the other hand, they stayed with it, and they stuck with it, and they got him out.

It did take some time.

Marcello: Approximately how far were you from this activity?

Hughes: Two or three hundred feet, it seems like, not far.

Marcello: The story that I get in having interviewed both Hill, who was one of the people who did the cutting, and from Vaessen, who, of course, was the person who was cut out, that almost immediately after the hole had been made and Vaessen was able to get out, he almost simply popped out of this hole like a scared animal and swam to shore without saying, "Thank you! This was great!" or anything. Maybe you can't remember anything about that part of the procedure, but I'll ask, anyhow.

Hughes: I know he appeared in the ditch with us very shortly, and I think we all understood his anxiety to get ashore.

Marcello: Can you remember anything else about his physical or mental state after having gone through that ordeal?

Hughes: Other than an apparent hearing problem, his physical state... and I thought, for someone who had come out of that, he was in very good condition emotionally and physically.

Marcello: Do you recall him having any equipment with him?

Hughes: No.

Marcello: The reason I asked that is because in having interviewed him, I think he got out with his flashlight that he'd had at the time and one or two other things.

Hughes: Okay, I remember the flashlight. He had the flashlight. Yes, he had the flashlight.

Marcello: He still has it to this day.

Hughes: I would hope so.

Marcello: What do you talk about while you're watching this attack take place?

Hughes: Well, in my case, as I mentioned before in this interview, I was copying the world news, national and international news, and in the last few days, so many news dispatches were coming out of Washington: "President Roosevelt said...", "and "This one said...", and "According to Washington...." Somehow, I managed to quip to "Stu," the first class radioman, "'Stu,' what do you think Washington's going to say about this?" Of course, we were somewhat bewildered, too.

The only other thing that's a highlight in my mind is that while we were there, during the ordeal, rumors, of course, were flying, and how they spread so fast one never knows, but the rumor came to us that the Japanese had landed on the other side of the island. They were asking for volunteers to repel the invasion party. I did not volunteer.

Marcello: I'm sure that rumors were rampant that day.

Hughes: Yes. That was one of the rumors that was impacting me at the time. As a sailor, I just hadn't been trained and equipped to repel invaders.

Marcello: And I assume that, given what had happened, there was no reason not to believe those rumors.

Hughes: Given what had happened, you were susceptible to believing

almost anything because that had been a totally unimaginable occurrence.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about the Japanese. Describe their activities as you observed them while you were in that ditch.

Hughes: Of course, my only observation of the Japanese were the planes. I could not believe their tenacity in continuing to come back for so long a period. It seemed that they would just never stop coming back. After an hour or an hour-and-a-half, it seemed like that you would have thought they had accomplished their primary mission and would have gone, but they continued to come back. I think that right there would have been indicative of the type of war we were going to get into.

Marcello: Did you observe any of the torpedo planes coming in, or had most of that activity been completed by the time you got in the ditch?

Hughes: Of course, they're the ones that dropped the torpedoes that sank us. By the time we'd gotten topside and gotten ashore and got settled, or semi-settled--that's a poor choice of words--I think most of the torpedoes probably had been dropped. I just remember the "rising sun" on the planes. I could see the pilots in the cockpits.

Marcello: Describe what you saw.

Hughes: I saw a little fellow with his goggles and his aviator-type cap on burrowing straight ahead. As I say, I just had the feeling that they were very tenacious and determined--more

than anything we had ever envisioned them being.

Marcello: Awhile ago, you were talking about your own emotions and those of your shipmate's, also, and you mentioned that among other things, you and your buddies were frustrated because of the feeling of helplessness that you had. Were there any other emotions that you can recall having had at that time, that is, while the attack was going on?

Hughes: Well, I think that we saw generated or kindled a strong desire for vengeance--if we get out of this, what we're going to do to them. I saw that in the forthcoming weeks. I had occasion to see that displayed--that feeling--a strong need to retaliate.

Marcello: What did the harbor look like at that time? I'm referring now to the physical destruction, the smoke, the fire, and all that sort of thing.

Hughes: From where we were, we didn't have a view of Battleship Row, but the explosions were so strong and so rumbling, and from the smoke, the billowing, black smoke, we knew that something horrible had happened on that side of the island. Actually, as it turned out, the most disaster and death was occurring on the other side of the island on Battleship Row. We didn't know exactly what, but we knew it would be bad, and we just were very apprehensive to even find out.

Marcello: Could you detect a lull between a first wave and a second wave of planes that came in?

Hughes: Absolutely, yes. There was a lull, and I had the false hope that maybe it was over; but as I say, they kept coming back.

Marcello: Approximately how long of a lull do you remember?

Hughes: I don't remember.

Marcello: What was the difference between the tactics and kinds of planes being used in the two raids?

Hughes: I don't recall.

Marcello: In other words, I gather from everything I've read that the second wave was essentially high-level bombers, high-altitude bombers.

Hughes: Probably was. They didn't appear to be...they'd pretty well done their job on us, and it was being concentrated more in the dry dock area and on the battleship side.

Marcello: Approximately when did you leave that ditch, and what were the circumstances under which you left?

Hughes: Of course, we didn't leave until they were convinced the attack was over, and that probably exceeded two hours. Then we were told to go...in fact, again, it was a group-type thing. You followed the people in front of you who had the directions to go and get some clothing. The next thing I recalled was standing in line and being issued some dry clothing.

Marcello: So in other words, you never really observed anybody giving specific orders. Rather, the word simply was passed down the line.

Hughes: Right.

Marcello: So where did you go to get your clothing?

Hughes: We went to a building on Ford Island that had been some type of clothing supply that hadn't been destroyed. It was all intact, and we were issued clothing.

Marcello: What kind of clothing did you receive?

Hughes: Some more white uniforms (chuckle).

Marcello: Shorts or long sleeves?

Hughes: I believe that we received long sleeves and long pants--just the standard white uniform.

Marcello: Where did you go from that point?

Hughes: I believe that most...in fact, our group went to the supply ship there in the harbor. I believe it was the Argonne, and that's where we spent the night.

Marcello: What did you do once you got aboard the Argonne? Were you given any kind of sort of assignment?

Hughes: We were fed and worked late into the night bringing up and passing ammunition. As a matter of fact, I was in line as a shell handler and was standing outside the CPO quarters listening to President Roosevelt. I don't think it was the initial broadcast. It was probably a replay of his broadcast to the nation. I certainly remember that and will all my life.

Marcello: Now that would have occurred--what--the next day?

Hughes: No, that was in the evening of December 7. As I say, it

might have been a re-broadcast, although knowing that we were four or five hours behind Washington on time, it was in the evening of December 7.

I can't remember where I slept. I slept in a bunk through the waning hours of December 8. Then we were assigned...in my case, I was assigned to replace a radioman on a minesweeper --I believe it was the Vireo--there in the harbor. The radioman had received shrapnel during the attack. So I went over there wearing the same clothes for the week and replaced him for one week until the Saratoga came in from the States.

Marcello: Let's back up a few minutes. You mentioned that you went aboard the Argonne very shortly after you had received the clothing, and you mentioned that you'd been fed. What kind of food was the Argonne serving that day, do you recall?

Hughes: I don't recall, and it didn't seem terribly important.

Marcello: I think that's a good answer. You did mention that during most of your time on the Argonne, other than the few hours that you managed to sleep, you were passing ammunition, handling ammunition.

Hughes: Right. They were bringing ammunition up out of the hold. We were actually passing the shells down a passageway that ran outside the chiefs' quarters, and I think they brought them to the topside and were carrying them someplace for possible use.

Marcello: You also mentioned that that evening you had heard President

Roosevelt's speech, and I think you're referring to the one he gave to Congress--the famous "Day of Infamy" speech.

Hughes: That's correct.

Marcello: Describe that scene as best you remember. You also indicated awhile ago that it is something you would never forget.

Hughes: Perhaps because of its historic value, it lingers in my mind more. Now we were not allowed to stop passing shells, but there were some of the chiefs listening to it. People were very quiet, very intent, hanging on every word probably, as I recall.

Marcello: Was it the kind of speech, as you look back, that would have inspired you or reassured you? What effect did it have on you?

Hughes: I think that it was reassuring at that point. We didn't need to be inspired to "get with it" because we sensed that just a terrible thing had happened to us--a sneak attack. As I say, we wanted retaliation. We wanted to retaliate. We wanted to get going and to get out in the fleet and start... I felt a need for vengeance, really.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were aboard the Argonne. Do you recall the planes coming in off the Enterprise that night, that is, the ones that were fired upon?

Hughes: I sure do. We were handling shells when that happened, and being again below decks, we were just certain that the whole Japanese Navy and Air Force...that the attack had started all over again.

Marcello: I would ask you if General Quarters sounded, but I guess you were still at general quarters, were you not?

Hughes: I'm sure we were. I don't recall General Quarters sounding. Fortunately, this didn't last for a long period of time. It was very short.

Marcello: Was it the next day that you picked up the Vireo?

Hughes: Right.

Marcello: Was there anything eventful that happened while you were the radio operator on that ship?

Hughes: Well, I'll always remember receiving the message that came out to the fleet saying that a state of war existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire, and, also, I copied the message saying a state of war existed between the United States and Germany.

Marcello: What exactly was the Vireo doing during that period?

Hughes: I'm not sure. I think that we certainly...you know, it was a minesweeper. I can't recall anything in particular that it was doing.

Marcello: How long did the fires and the smoke and that sort of thing linger there at Pearl in the days following the attack?

Hughes: I can't say. I think, as my memory serves me, it was minimal the next day. I'm not sure there was any left by the second day, by the ninth.

Marcello: You mentioned that eventually you picked up the Saratoga. Approximately how long after the attack was it that you picked

up the Saratoga?

Hughes: About a week. The Saratoga came in from San Diego shortly after the attack. I'm not sure of the date of the arrival, but within a week I was...and I think about sixty, perhaps even more, survivors were put on the Saratoga.

Marcello: And did you assume your duties as a radioman aboard that ship?

Hughes: That's correct. We went aboard the Saratoga still in the one uniform that had been issued us on the seventh and without records, without personal belongings. There was some skepticism as to whether we were the grade that (chuckle)...in fact, I think my pay was possibly delayed until they verified my rank. I did have a letter. I was able to get a letter from an officer stating as to who I was and my serial number, which, unlike many Navy personnel, I never had tattooed on me. It's a good thing because later in years they used Social Security numbers.

Marcello: Did you have your dog tags on?

Hughes: We didn't have dog tags. We had not been issued dog tags on the Utah.

Marcello: Was that standard throughout the Navy at that time? I don't know. I was just asking.

Hughes: I don't believe that Navy personnel...it was some time later before I was issued dog tags.

Marcello: When was it that the Saratoga finally left Pearl?

Hughes: I believe that we were out to sea within a week. One of the

things I believe is that the task force, the Saratoga and the Lexington task force, was going to Wake Island to relieve the Marines down there.

Marcello: And this was the task force that was turned around and brought back.

Hughes: We were turned around because of the Japanese fleet being so superior in numbers, and the disappointment amongst the crew members...no one wanted to come back. We wanted to engage them. Everything was so fresh on our minds that it was just highly disappointing that we were turned around and returned to Pearl.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Hughes, I think that's probably a pretty good place to end this interview. I think that covers quite thoroughly the events that transpired at Pearl. I want to thank you very much for having participated. You said a lot of interesting, and, I think, very important things, and I'm sure that scholars are going to find your comments quite valuable.

Hughes: Thank you. Dr. Marcello, I would like to just add that we hope that scholars who might listen to this receive some sort of lesson as to the need for military preparedness. Hopefully, it will never be allowed to happen again.