

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

NUMBER

729

Interview with

LAWRENCE KEITH

November 13, 1987

Place of Interview: Kenner, Louisiana

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Approved: *Lawrence Keith*
(Signature)

Date: 11/13/87

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Oral History Collection

Lawrence Keith

Interviewer: Ronald E. Marcello Date: November 13, 1987

Place of Interviewer: Kenner, Louisiana

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Lawrence Keith for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on November 13, 1987, in Kenner, Louisiana. I am interviewing Mr. Keith in order to get his reminiscences and experiences while he was a member of the Marine Guard Detachment at Ford Island during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Okay, Mr. Keith, 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, and that sort of thing.

Mr. Keith: I was born in New Orleans here on January 29, 1920.

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

Mr. Keith: Well, I went to St. Aloysius High School, but I never went to any college.

Dr. Marcello: Did you graduate from St. Aloysius?

Keith: Yes, but that is no more. They tore it down and changed it and put them all with somebody else now. I've lived here all my life in New Orleans, except when I was in the Marine Corps.

Marcello: When did you go into the Marine Corps?

Keith: I went into the Marine Corps in March. I forget the exact date, but it was in March of 1940.

Marcello: And why did you decide to go into the Marine Corps?

Keith: I don't know. The thing is, I was going out, and it seemed like we couldn't make up our mind whether to get married or not. So I says, "Oh, hell, I'm going to go join the Marine Corps. I went and joined the Marine Corps. Well, we finally got married after I was in the Marine Corps for three years.

So I went and joined the Marine Corps. I didn't have to go and get no consent or anything; I just went on in. At that time I think there was fourteen men here that went into the Marine Corps. We all went to San Diego, California, for training. After we were through with boot camp, we were scattered like the wind--all of us.

Marcello: I'm assuming that you had a steady girlfriend at the time that you entered the Marine Corps, from what you said.

Keith: I did, yes.

Marcello: What part did economics play in your decision to go into

the Marine Corps?

Keith: I don't know because I was working at the time. I was in my twenties. I had a job, and just decided to leave. That was all.

Marcello: Why did you select the Marine Corps as opposed to one of the other branches of the Service?

Keith: Offhand, I can't say, but I always did like the Marines because they were so precise in everything they did. Whatever they did just stood out like a sore thumb--I don't know--so I guess that's what made me go for them.

Marcello: How long did boot camp last there at San Diego?

Keith: Six weeks was the regular boot camp. Then you had your special training for whatever you went into.

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

Keith: Not that I know of offhand, except that we used to make our trips every so often down to Tijuana (chuckle) I guess you've heard that quite a bit. That used to be the favorite pastime.

Marcello: Where did you go when you get out of boot camp?

Keith: I went to Hawaii.

Marcello: You went straight to Hawaii?

Keith: Straight to Hawaii.

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

Keith: Well, I don't know what I thought at the time; but after

I got there, it was nice and everything was fine. I met some of the Hawaiians--I mean, real, whole Hawaiians--and made friends with them. I used to live with them up on the hill in Honolulu there, so whenever I wasn't on duty, I was up in Honolulu. I had a room of my own and everything else--just like home. A couple of them worked on the base there--the main base, at the Marine Barracks--and I got to know them, so I had a good time over there.

Marcello: Was your duty in Hawaii voluntary, or were you simply assigned there?

Keith: Well, we were assigned there to start with. That was peacetime, and there was no such thing as you volunteer for this and you volunteer for that. They'd say, "You do this, and you do that, and you didn't ask no questions--you did it. Like today, they can't even holler at the men in boot camp. You know, in them days they'd haul off and punch you one and knock you on the ground and say, "What are you doing down there? Get up here in line!" In them days they really were tough on you.

Marcello: When you got to Ford Island, what precisely was to be your function there as a Marine?

Keith: Well, Ford Island was a Navy air base, is what it was, and all the ships tied up around us. We were nothing but a little island in the harbor there with the

battleships and carriers and everything. We had to screen everybody coming on the island because the only way they could get on that island was by boat. There was no such thing as a drive over there or anything else. All we had there was planes. The aircraft carriers are really the only ones that tied up to the island because they had a big dock built on the island there where they put them into. There was two carriers there most of the time. The rest of the ships tied up around the island at the buoys they had out there--big concrete buoys--to make sure that the battleships and that wouldn't move.

Marcello: When you say that you had to screen everybody that came on Ford Island, I'm assuming that there were only certain piers where the boats and so on would land.

Keith: Oh, yes, there was one spot where the boats landed--a regular landing there for the boats. For us to go to Honolulu or anything, we had to get our boat across the bay and then get the bus to go to Honolulu.

Marcello: How would this particular duty section work there for you personally? When would you have duty, and when would you have off?

Keith: Well, it depended. You might have a midnight watch, or you might have...because there was watches all around the clock, and you might have morning, noon, or night. You never knew. Just like the time of Pearl Harbor

there, I had the midnight watch.

Marcello: And when you had one of these watches, how many hours would you be on duty?

Keith: Eight hours.

Marcello: It was eight on? Did you have any other obligations or functions or duties other than standing watches there at Ford Island?

Keith: Your regular training went with it, like, you kept your guns and all clean; your antiaircraft guns had to be manned. All that stuff had to be taken care of. It just depended upon who got what to do.

Marcello: You mentioned the antiaircraft guns. I'm assuming that another one of the functions of the Marines was to man some of those antiaircraft weapons?

Keith: Yes, we did. We had a couple of them right up on the top of the roof of the barracks. We had them up--open and waiting--two weeks before Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: Did you specifically have some function on any of those antiaircraft weapons?

Keith: The only function I had with them was supplying the ammunition to them, because if they ran out of ammunition, that was my tail. I had to see that they had the ammunition. I think there were four or six of us on that detail at the time.

Marcello: Where did the Marines live on Ford Island?

Keith: Right on Ford Island in the barracks. They had a big

barracks there.

Marcello: Did the Marines have their own special barracks, or were you in that large barracks that was on the island?

Keith: No, we had a barracks on Ford Island, and the main Marine detachment had a big barracks on the other side of the water. There was a big Marine detachment over there. We had our own barracks on Ford Island.

Marcello: So you were, in essence, segregated from the Navy personnel?

Keith: Yes.

Marcello: About how many people were in that Marine detachment?

Keith: I think we had around 350. I'm not sure. I don't remember that far back anymore. That's too many years.

Marcello: Were would the Marines take their chow? Would that be in the regular mess hall there?

Keith: Right in the mess hall in the barracks. We had our own cooks and everything else there.

Marcello: The Marines had their own cooks there, too?

Keith: Yes.

Marcello: So the Marines were, in essence, almost completely segregated from the Navy personnel. You had your own barracks; you had your own mess hall and so on.

Keith: Right, right.

Marcello: How would you rate the chow that you were getting?

Keith: Well, at the time it was all right. I didn't lose any weight.

Marcello: When exactly did you get to Ford Island? Do you know?

Keith: I think it was sometime around May or June of 1940. I was scheduled to go to Wake Island to be with my buddy. I knew him from here--I went to school with him--and he was in the Marine detachment at Wake Island. I was scheduled to go there in January, but the war stopped that when it broke out in December.

Marcello: So if you were there in May of 1940, you were there just about a year-and-a-half before the actual attack itself.

Keith: Yes. That's why I was scheduled for a transfer.

Marcello: Describe what the liberty routine was like for the Marine detachment there on Ford Island. How did the liberty routine work?

Keith: Well, every so often we'd get passes to go to Honolulu. I think it was about every other weekend that you got off or got called to guard duty. You'd have to be spotless and go across. There was no such thing as civilian clothes or anything like that; it was strictly uniform. You had to cross by boat. You had a bus that took you to the main gate, and from there you had to catch a regular bus to go to town--a transit bus--to Honolulu; and that was, I think, about a fifteen- or twenty-minute ride, something like that.

Marcello: And where would the bus or the taxi drop you?

Keith: Well, they had a regular depot in Honolulu, and after you got there, you scattered around in all kinds of

ways. They had nice hotels there, and I used to like to go to --if I remember correctly--the Royal Hawaiian Hotel.

Marcello: The Royal Hawaiian?

Keith: Yes. It's not there anymore, because I've been to Hawaii and couldn't find it. I used to like to go in there and sit down, eat me a nice meal with somebody to wait on me, you know; and you'd have your coffee and your cocktail. In them days, every third cocktail was free. No matter where you went in Honolulu, you paid fifteen cents for a highball, and every third one was free. It was a pretty good deal, I'm telling you. It was not like it is today. It's strictly commercial over there now.

Marcello: I've heard a lot of people say that they liked to take meals in town because it was just a good way to rid of the routine from the mess hall.

Keith: Well, like I say, you sat there at the table and somebody waited on you and brought you this and brought you that. You got a nice, big seven-course meal--not like going through a line with a tray in your hand, you know (chuckle).

Marcello: I'm curious. Was the Royal Hawaiian painted pink in those days, too?

Keith: I don't know. To tell you the truth, I don't remember.

Marcello: I think they used to refer to it as the "Pink Lady."

Keith: I think so, but I'm not sure. I don't remember anymore.

Marcello: What else would you normally do when you had liberty?

Keith: Well, you had movies, and then I always had a place to go with people I knew. I'd get a cab and go on up to the hills.

Marcello: Talk a little bit more about how you developed that relationship with the local Hawaiians. How did that come about?

Keith: Well, I used to save stamps, and he worked in the post office on the base.

Marcello: This was a native Hawaiian?

Keith: Yes. He was born in Honolulu, and his grandparents were real royal Hawaiians because he had papers showing that they were royal blood of the royal Hawaiian descent. He used to brag a lot about it, and that's how we knew it. So I would save stamps, and he'd sometimes run across stamps coming in from different parts of the world. He'd tell me about them and that, and I got to know him. Then I went out to the house to eat with him sometimes. I met his mother and his sisters and all them. The old lady took a liking to me for some reason or another and told me, "When you're in, come on over. Don't wait for him to tell you. So I was over there, and I used to go out with the girls and all. She gave me a room: "Put your stuff in here. Whenever you come in, there's your room. You're right there. I had all kinds of clothes

in there because I used to go in there and I'd change clothes. I'd take my uniform off and put civilian clothes on to make me feel better, you know (chuckle)!

Marcello: Was this person who worked in the post office a person that was your age, or was he the husband of this woman?

Keith: No, he was about my age. He was one of her sons. Their name was Silva, and his name was John. I don't know the other names. The Hawaiian names, I don't remember them. But, anyway, we went back over there, and the old lady was pretty sick. My wife and I took a trip back there, oh, about ten years ago. We met the old lady in the hospital. We called Marion, one of her daughters, who took us around town. Her son had a band of his own and is playing at one of the big hotels out there now.

So we had to go up there, and the time we were out there, they had some kind of a celebration or a parade and that, we could sit in the hotel and watch it. We had a good time. We went on a tour, but I never went anyplace with the tour. We went with them. So they took us around the island and everything. We took my wife to meet the rest of the family, and we went to the hospital and met the old lady. I think she died about two or three years after we saw her. But I was glad my wife met her, because they used to communicate and send cards and letters to one another. She sent my wife some beautiful presents from Hawaii even before she met her.

Old man Silva passed away right after the war.

Marcello: Well, it sounds like you have a pretty good deal there because, given the pay you guys were getting, you could save yourself a little bit of money when you went into town on weekends.

Keith: Oh, yes, yes. Well, things were awful cheap in town like that, too. You could always sit there and drink all night for maybe a buck or a buck-and-a-half. Somebody would buy you a drink. A civilian would buy you a drink, and then every third drink was on the house. So it didn't make much difference. We only made twenty-one dollars a month, and when they took out ten dollars a month out for insurance and that, that didn't leave you much. Still in them days it went a long way.

Marcello: How slow or fast was promotion in the Marine Corps during that period before Pearl Harbor?

Keith: Slow. In peacetime it is always slow, because once they get in a position, they don't look to get out of the Marine Corps. After four years they stay in, because after you passed that fourth year, you're over that hill. From then on, you know just what the ropes are, and you can take it.

Marcello: What was your rank at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack?

Keith: When Pearl Harbor was attacked, I was a corporal acting as a sergeant. See, they had too many sergeants

already, so I couldn't be a sergeant. So they would just put you as "acting" sergeant. You're nothing but a corporal, and you get corporal's pay; but you still act as a sergeant.

Marcello: I know that among the Army units, sports played a very important role in the life of that pre-Pearl Harbor Army. How about in the Marine Corps?

Keith: Well, where we were there wasn't very much space for any kind of, like, ball games or anything else. They had a recreation room with, like, ping pong and things like that. Then you had dances every so often. Maybe once month you'd have civilians come out there at the main barracks--not at ours, now, but at the main Marine barracks on the other side. You'd have, like, the USO come out--civilians and that--and you'd have a dance, and they had sandwiches and whatnot. But on the other side, they had ball teams and that.

Marcello: As one gets closer and closer to December 7, and as relations between the United States and Japan continued to get worse, could you in your capacity detect any changes in the routine of the Marine guard there on Ford Island? Could you detect any changes?

Keith: Well, the thing is, we had a two-week red alert.

Marcello: Okay, what did that involve?

Keith: That involved all guns manned twenty-four hours a day waiting for an attack, because they said, "They're

coming. I think it was on a Thursday that they said, "No, it's all off. They're talking peace now. So they gave half the group liberty in Honolulu. The other half had your regular guard duty to catch. I had guard duty from midnight to 7:00 in the morning.

Marcello: This was on that Sunday...this is the Sunday morning before December 7

Keith: In the morning.

Marcello: Let me ask you this. As one gets closer and closer to December 7 .well, let me put it to you this way Normally, when you were on guard duty--when you were manning those guard positions--did you have live ammunition?

Keith: Yes.

Marcello: That was always routine?

Keith: With the Marine Corps, there was no such thing as dummy ammunition. In fact, we had live ammunition...the first Marine outfit to come back to the United States after the war was loaded down with live ammunition. And after the incident that happened there in California, they said, "From now on you unload all ammunition before you go aboard ship going home.

Marcello: So in that sense, then, there was no change at all in the routine. That was just standard procedure.

Keith: Yes. We never did carry dummy ammunition or empty rifles. You always had your live ammunition; and even

to your bullets, your brass was shined (chuckle)! You never had anything that was dull; everything had to sparkle.

Marcello: When you came off guard duty and you put up your weapon, what happened to your ammunition?

Keith: It goes into your footlocker--a certain amount of it. A bandoleer of ammunition will go into the locker in the guardroom.

Marcello: So you would always have some ammunition right there at your locker.

Keith: Right. You'd have one clip--six rounds.

Marcello: And were you using the Springfield rifle at that time?

Keith: Yes, it was the big '03. We had the '03, and we had a couple of what they call Browning Automatics. There was no such things as any new guns they got. We didn't get the M-1 until about a year after the war started. That's when we got our M-1's.

Marcello: Okay, this takes us into that weekend of December 7, 1941, and we want to go into this in a great deal of detail. Now you mentioned that you went on guard duty that Saturday night at midnight. Did anything eventful happen on that particular watch?

Keith: Well, there was nothing on the watch that happened. See, on a Sunday morning, you got off around 6:00. I came in, ate my breakfast in the mess hall, and was getting ready to lay down and take my sleep. All of a

sudden, the alarm went off.

Marcello: What kind of an alarm was there that went off?

Keith: Every alarm. The first thing out of our mouth was, "That damned Army with their drills on a Sunday morning! Just when I wanted to sleep!"

Marcello: How did this alarm come? Was it a bugle? A klaxon?

Keith: No, big ol' sirens--yes. we always had them up there. They had them when I went out there. I remember that. The only bugles were for flag raising and different things like that. Most of it was loudspeaker systems, and that's the way the sirens went off.

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

Keith: Well, everybody had a position that they were supposed to man. We ran out of the barracks to get to our positions with our six rounds of ammunition and our guns. We looked up and said, "Air raid! Raid, hell! Give me some live ammunition!" And you ran back to get your bandoleers.

Marcello: By this time, had the Japanese already started bombing the planes on Ford?

Keith: Oh, yes. They strafed most of the planes on Ford Island. I think they got one plane up out of all that was on Ford Island.

Marcello: Mostly what you had on Ford Island were the PBVs, didn't you?

Keith: No, they had quite a few of these small planes with the

pontoons. Just two men could get in them. The one that got off had a pilot and a Marine with a rifle in it, and they were going up to fight the Japs (laughter)! You've got to laugh at it sometimes because in them days you didn't worry about anything.

Marcello: At that point, how close were you to where the PBYS and so on were being strafed?

Keith: Well, they were on the other side. They had the barracks between me and them. I was over where the Arizona was. I was about, say, maybe 300 yards away from the Arizona. But I was on land, and she was in the water.

Marcello: I know that some people had problems in getting their ammunition. You mentioned that you went back into get that bandoleer of ammunition. Did you have any problems getting it?

Keith: Well, the thing is, we had problems getting our guns back out because the weekend when everybody went on liberty, all antiaircraft guns were dismantled and repacked and put in the warehouse. I had my .45 because I was sergeant-of-the guard for the night watch, and as the sergeant-of-the-guard you wear your .45. You don't carry a rifle. We couldn't find the guy who had the key to our sheds where the ammunition and all was.

So I go and I blow all the locks off. Well, we got the ammunition and all that out, but later on, for

blowing the locks off, I got court-martialed for destroying government property. I got fined one dollar for each lock that I broke, and they gave me two cartons of cigarettes for each lock I broke. In other words, that wasn't nothing but a deal that later on in life nobody can come at you for destroying government property. You paid for it; you were court-martialed. You paid for it, and that was it.

Marcello: It was simply a formality that they had to go through.

Keith: That's right.

Marcello: Where were your rifles? Would you always have those rifles at your lockers or wherever?

room where you stood your rifle. Everybody had his own pigeonhole for his rifle to sit in.

Marcello: So this ammunition that you were trying to get, that is, where you blew off the locks, was that the antiaircraft ammunition?

Keith: Yes, that was for the big guns. Well, most used the same-sized bullets, like, the BARs and the .see, at that time, we didn't have the water-cooled machine guns. We had air-cooled machine guns. They were the same-sized things, but all them bullets were in belts, see. We had one Marine that got up on the roof of the barracks, and he picked up that machine gun; and he held it on his arm while shooting at the planes, and that made his arm all raw. He had that arm. .I think it was

six to eight months before it got better. It just burnt the heck out of his arm.

Marcello: Okay, so you blow off the locks, and this ammunition is stored there in the barracks, I gather.

Keith: No, it's in the sheds. You had big sheds on the side.

Marcello: I see. There were sheds.

Keith: Yes. They kept the guns and the ammunition there. Each one had their own section, see. They were more like, I'd say, a big shed like these big storage sheds today. Each section there was just about like that.

Marcello: Okay, so the locks are blown, and you have the ammunition, and you have the antiaircraft weapons now.

Keith: Now the thing is for the men to get them up. Everybody's grabbing something and running.

Marcello: So describe what you're doing.

Keith: Well, I don't know. I was right in the middle doing a little bit of everything--getting the guns out, helping to carry them up to the roof so we could get them assembled. In the meantime, you heard the machine guns going off, and you heard explosions. After we got them up, I went back down for some more ammunition up there. I was about 300 feet from the Arizona when she went up.

Marcello: Describe what you saw.

Keith: Well, I heard one explosion, and I stopped to turn around and look. There was a big explosion with a lot of smoke going in the air. That was the Arizona, but I

didn't realize it at the time. We had two other explosions on the island. Their torpedoes hit the docks on the island where the aircraft carriers was supposed to be tied up. But bad weather kept them out at sea, and they didn't come in. They told me that they had twenty-five Flying Fortresses flying overhead watching everything going on, and they didn't have any live ammunition aboard them. They couldn't do nothing but stay up there out of the way and watch what went on. That's how they found out what was what. But I didn't see them; I'm only going by what they told me.

Marcello: Am I correct in thinking that the action directed at Ford Island specifically was over pretty early during the attack? They took care of those planes right away.

Keith: Yes, right away. They did the same thing when they hit Hickam Field. That was what they hit first, was the airfields, to keep the planes on the ground. That was the main thing.

Marcello: So once you set up some sort of a resistance, you were really firing at planes who were mainly by-passing Ford Island and working on the ships and so on.

Keith: Yes. But they had to go over Ford Island to the ships or from the ships.

Marcello: Did you at any point in this activity do any actual firing yourself?

Keith: The only thing I was able to fire at the time was a

rifle, and that was like throwing peanuts at them.

Marcello: And were there lots of Marines firing their rifles?

Keith: Oh, yes! Oh, yes!

Marcello: Is everybody more or less acting on their own, or did you set up some sort of a skirmish line or anything like that?

Keith: No, everybody was just about acting on their own because you didn't have time for anything else.

Marcello: Is anybody there giving any orders? Are there any officers there?

Keith: Yes, we had an officer that day that was there, but what he was doing and whatnot, I don't remember.

Marcello: So essentially, everybody was more or less on their own.

Keith: More or less on their own.

Marcello: Approximately how many rounds did you personally fire at those Japanese planes?

Keith: I don't know. I used the whole bandoleer.

Marcello: How low were those Japanese planes coming over?

Keith: You could see their face and see them grinning at you. That's how low they were.

Marcello: Can you remember anything else about the pilots or anything?

Keith: You couldn't tell whether they were Japanese or anything else. All you could see was the grin on their face with the goggles and helmets on. You couldn't make out who they were or what.

Marcello: How low would you estimate that they were coming in?

Keith: Low enough that if they didn't pull out fast they'd be just crashing into the barracks. I know that they hit one of them with the guns off the barracks, and he crashed into the water. When they got the pilot out, he had a map of Pearl Harbor strapped to his leg, and it showed where every ship was supposed to be. The one he was supposed to hit was marked with a red "X. So that was all prearranged and everything else, as far as we could figure out. I have some things--I did have them, rather--some letter openers and that that I made from parts off that plane (chuckle)

Marcello: The action was about over at about 9:45 or something like that.

Keith: Oh, yes, yes, yes. I'd say that in about an hour it was all over with.

Marcello: Okay, what do you do once the attack is over?

Keith: Then we had to take and try to get organized to see what damage was done and what could be done to take care of the wounded and whatnot. The sailors and all that was wounded had to be transferred off of that island. We were lucky I don't remember of any Marines getting hit, though.

Marcello: What were you personally doing?

Keith: Right after it was over with, I went back and got the sergeant-of-the-guard to get guards posted all around

the island to watch for any re-occurrence of it. That's what we did. We set up our guards like we did for the two weeks before. But it was too late then.

Marcello: What did you do that evening? Describe the activities of that evening once darkness fell.

Keith: Once darkness fell, we just patrolled the island, and you were close enough that night that one could see the other one, and nobody was going to get between you and the inside of the perimeter. There were some planes came in that night, and, boy, they were shooting like hell at them. I don't know who started the shooting, but once the shooting started, there was a lot of. .you could see the tracers flying through the air. It surprised me that a lot more didn't get hurt on that island from their own guns because of all them tracers. And it was our own planes coming in.

Marcello: I believe those planes that you're referring to are those who had flown off the carrier Enterprise that was outside the harbor.

Keith: Yes. We had the "Big E, and I think it was the Yorktown that was still out there.

Marcello: Some people said that had it not been so serious, it was kind of pretty--all that fireworks that went up at those planes.

Keith: That's just it. It would have been nice--like fireworks and that--but the thing is that it was so serious that

you were worrying about what was what--whether it was them coming in or the Japs coming back.

Marcello: Am I to assume that everyone was a little trigger-happy that night?

Keith: Trigger-happy! Trigger-happy was right (chuckle)!

Marcello: How safe was it to walk around?

Keith: Well, if you couldn't see the man in front of you, it wasn't safe, I'm telling you. The way I think I felt that night, if somebody had been trying to sneak by me, I don't think he'd have walked away (chuckle)

Marcello: Could you hear shots ringing out all night or most of the night?

Keith: Well, only when you'd hear planes coming in because they could detect them coming in. They came in with lights on and that, but once some trigger-happy guy started shooting, everybody else followed suit, unless you knew what was what. But where we were with rifles, there was no use shooting because you knew darn well you couldn't do any good.

Marcello: Did you dig any foxholes or slit trenches or anything like that?

Keith: No, no. There was no place to dig it because you had mostly paved landing strips and parade grounds, and then you had a housing section over here where the officers and their families lived. You had all that to worry about, so you didn't have anyplace to dig any foxholes.

You were surrounded by water (chuckle)

Marcello: What kind of rumors did you hear that night? What were some of the rumors that were circulating? Surely, there must have been a lot of scuttlebutt.

Keith: Oh, there was a lot of things, but I don't remember anything I could say that I really heard that night.

Marcello: Did you ever hear the rumor about paratroopers landing or anything like that?

Keith: Not that I remember on that night, no.

Marcello: How much sleep did you get?

Keith: That night I didn't get any. That night I didn't get any sleep. In fact, I went three days without any sleep.

Marcello: How would you describe your feelings or emotions during the attack itself and in the immediate aftermath of the attack?

Keith; Well, the only thing I can remember is that during the attack you couldn't feel scared or anything because you were worrying too much about getting things done. That's one thing about the Marine Corps--when something comes up like that, you knew what you had to do, and you went and did it, and you didn't worry about anything else. The next day or so, you were wondering whether they were going to come back or what was going to happen. You had to go out in the boats to pick up the bodies that you'd see in the harbor because for days

later that's all they were doing, was picking up bodies coming off them boats. The next day they had to start cutting into the Utah bottom to get them men out, because that went upside down. I think it was the Nevada that started to go out the channel and got hit, and a warrant officer backed her up on the beach. If he hadn't have backed her up on the beach, she'd have been right in the middle of the harbor, and nothing could have went in or out.

Marcello: Describe the scene you saw the first time you had a chance to view the harbor after everything had calmed down. Describe what you saw.

Keith: Let's see. You had a lot of spots with smoke, overturned boats that you could see. There was a lot of smoke and damaged planes turning this way and turning that way, upside down, leaning one way, and burnt to nothing. But it was like everything had come to an end. It was nothing but a disaster area, is what it was.

Marcello: What were your thoughts and reactions when you saw one of those huge battleships completely turned over? I'm referring to either the Oklahoma or the Utah.

Keith: Well, I don't know. I couldn't say, because the only thing I could think was, "Good God! What the heck happened here? How can you turn them big things over?"

Marcello: What kind of attitude or feelings did you have toward the Japanese who had done this--at that time, in the

immediate aftermath of the attack?

Keith: Well, we knew plenty of Japanese that were at Pearl Harbor, and you were wondering if they were part of it, whether you should go out and shoot all the Japanese and get them out of the way. There was one Japanese who they said was a spy. On the other side of the island. I'm trying to think of what section they called it. On the leeward side of the island, where they had plenty of pineapple fields, when they went to arrest him the next day, he tried to run through the pineapple fields to get away, and they just cut him in half with machine guns. They wasn't worrying about taking anybody They just wanted to get them out of the way.

Marcello: What kinds of jobs or functions were you performing in those days after the attack? What were you doing?

Keith: Well, for the first six months or so, it was nothing but guard duty there and training new ones coming in. A lot of us got shipped out, and there were new ones coming in. You'd go out on some kind of patrol or something. Sometimes you'd go out on a boat. One time I was gone for six months. We were at a guard detachment on an island. We had about 3,000 drums of high-octane gasoline and a couple thousand drums of denatured alcohol, and I had twelve men out there. We were out there for about six months. Finally, when we got relieved. Well, the reason they relieved us was because

when they'd catch the boat coming out with the chow and that, we were shooting at them (chuckle)! You must have heard this one before!

Marcello: No (chuckle). When did you actually leave Pearl Harbor on a more or less permanent basis?

Keith: Well, the only time I left Pearl Harbor on a permanent basis was when I came back to the States. I tried to stay with that one outfit all the time, but I had to go out on patrols, as they called them. Like, that one guard detachment there, you figured, "What the hell! If they come back and one bullet at me with all of this gasoline, it ain't gonna make no difference. I ain't gonna know it!" We didn't give a darn about anything.

Marcello: Where was it that you were guarding this high-octane gasoline and the denatured alcohol?

Keith: It was on one of them low islands in the Hawaiian group, and there was nothing you could see from there. You'd get on that little island and look all the way around, and you could see nothing but water. We got the Navy to fix us up a couple of stills.

Marcello: (Chuckle) Is that what you used the denatured alcohol for?

Keith: Yes! We emptied at least a fifty-five-gallon drum a day.

Marcello: A day?

Keith: A day! Well, you don't get much out of it when you're

running it through a still, see. You take a fifty-five-gallon drum, and you wound up with about three or four gallons of good, pure alcohol. And they used to wonder why we were drinking so much pineapple juice. We'd take a cup of pineapple juice and put a little alcohol in it. Hell, after a couple of weeks, you'd put less pineapple juice and more alcohol! We had quite a few of the Marines that died from stomach trouble because we were drinking 190-proof alcohol straight. I was one of the lucky ones. I still wear a "girdle, but I was one of the lucky ones.

Marcello: I gather, then, that you were also lucky in the sense that you didn't participate in any of the island-hopping campaigns or so on later on.

Keith: Oh, yes, yes.

Marcello: You did?

Keith: No, I didn't go into any of them islands, like, when they went and took Wake back and the Philippines and all that. I didn't go with any of that outfit. I was lucky. I was damned lucky because all of mine was just right out of Pearl Harbor, just close by in the Hawaiian group.

Marcello: When did you get out of the Marine Corps?

Keith: I think it was September of 1947

Marcello: Now you mentioned at the very beginning of the interview that sometime during this enlistment you got married.

Keith: Yes.

Marcello: When was that?

Keith: When I came back in 1943. I came back in December on my first leave from the Marine Corps since I joined, and we got married. I was going to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. After I got over there, my wife came over and lived with me over there. From there they transferred me to California, and my wife came over to California with me. She got a job with the Marine Corps as a payroll master. So they shipped me back to Hawaii again. I get back to Hawaii, and I didn't go to Ford Island. I went to the main outfit back there. That time they had about four or five other setups of Marines over there where the Marines came in and then got transferred here and transferred there, or they came back for certain rest periods and whatnot.

So I had a deal where I took over one of the galleys because in the meantime, after we come back from the States, one of my buddies that was on the island--one of my alcohol buddies--says, "You know, we've done everything else in the Marine Corps but cook. They said, "We need a couple of cooks in the bivouac area. He says, "Well, let's go do that. We've never done that before. So we went out to be a cook. When they sent me back to Hawaii, I took over a galley. I had a jeep of my own, and I had living quarters. Then my wife was

going to come over there with me because I was getting 20 percent overseas pay, 20 percent for longevity because I was on my second hitch. She was going to get 20 percent for overseas, and she was making good money them days in the Marine Corps payroll, you know. But in the meantime, my stomach acted up, so they shipped me back for a medical discharge (chuckle). She was there in California waiting for the boat to bring her over, and they shipped me home.

Marcello: So that ended your Marine Corps career.

Keith: That ended my Marine Corps career. Not because I wanted it. I tried to stay in, but they wouldn't let me stay in.

Marcello: You had every intention of making it a career.

Keith: Oh, yes, I had the intentions of staying in because after I got over all that and the war almost over and all that, I says, "What the hell! They're fighting over there, and I'm sitting over here. I've got a gravy train. I'm going to stay here!"

Marcello: Okay, well, Mr. Keith, that's a pretty good place to end this interview. I want to thank you very much for having participated. You've said a lot of interesting and, I think, important things, and I'm sure that the students will.

Keith: Well, the way you've acted, I know you've heard some of it before (chuckle)!

Marcello: I'm sure that the researchers and students will find
your most valuable. Again, I thank you.

Keith: That's all right.