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Interview with  
NICHOLAS DE YOUNG  
November 13, 1987

Place of Interview: Kenner, Louisiana

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Approved: Nicholas DeYoung  
(Signature)

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Oral History Collection

Nicholas De Young

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

Place of Interview: Kenner, Louisiana

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Nicholas De Young 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. De Young in order to get his reminiscences and experiences while he was aboard the sea-going tug USS Bobolink during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Mr. De Young, 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--things of that nature. Just be very brief and general.

Mr. De Young: All right. I was born on July 30, 1915, in Hamshire, Texas.

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

Mr. De Young: I was educated in several different schools and completed high school in Giddings, Texas.

Marcello: Where are those places located? What section of Texas?

De Young: Well, Hamshire is about twenty miles southwest of Beaumont; Giddings is about sixty miles due east of Austin.

Marcello: When did you join the service?

De Young: I joined the service on February 16, 1934.

Marcello: Why did you decide to join the service?

De Young: Well, I took my girlfriend's brother to Houston to the recruiting station. He wanted to try to join the Navy, and so he needed transportation, and I was able to give him transportation over there. Well, he was just a little fellow (chuckle), and I was a pretty big, strapping sort of a guy, and when the recruiters looked at both of us, they gave him a courtesy examination and so forth, but they went after me (chuckle), and they pretty well sold me on the Navy. You know, it was right in the middle of the Depression and everything, so it was very easily done. And I haven't been sorry since.

Marcello: Are you saying that economic factors played a part in your decision to join the service?

De Young: Somewhat, yes.

Marcello: What kind of employment did you have at that time? As you mentioned, this is right in the middle of the Depression.

De Young: Yes. I had none, really. Another recent high school graduate and I were together, and we were trying to get

a radio station going. We were working together on that. That was the only thing I was doing.

Marcello: So you had very little income at that time.

De Young: Very little (chuckle). Very, very little.

Marcello: Where did you take your boot camp?

De Young: In San Diego.

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

De Young: Well, it was pretty well just the normal boot camp. I marched and everything just like everybody else. Nothing untoward happened, although they were making a movie at the time. A movie company came down to make a movie while I was there, and I remember Pat O'Brien and James Cagney very well. I marched right beside them (chuckle). That was quite an event, but it had nothing to do with the war or anything.

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

De Young: The boot camp was three months.

Marcello: That's interesting because I had a person in here last night that I interviewed who went in the service in about mid-1941, and boot camp by that time had been cut back to six weeks.

De Young: Right.

Marcello: But it was three months when you went in.

De Young: It was three months, yes. It was two different camps.

The first camp that you went to was isolation completely for a month, I think. Then the rest was senior camp.

Marcello: How difficult or easy was it to get into the service in 1934 when you enlisted?

De Young: At the time I wasn't that much aware of it, but in looking back at it, it was quite competitive. It was pretty difficult.

Marcello: I gather that, among other things, the service simply didn't have too much money.

De Young: They were just starting to expand at that time, and they were opening up. I think Roosevelt had just started to build up the forces. But it was still highly competitive.

Marcello: When you got out of boot camp, where did you go?

De Young: The first thing I did out of boot camp was go to the Bobolink (laughter).

Marcello: You went directly.

De Young: .directly to the Bobolink. I was on the Bobolink, then, for about a year-and-a-half. I can't remember just what it was, but I had an injury of some sort, and I went to the USS Relief--it was the hospital ship in the port of San Pedro--and I spent, I guess, a month-and-a-half aboard there. When I was released from the hospital ship, I went to the USS Nevada, and I completed my four-year term on the Nevada and reenlisted. I actually didn't reenlist. I extended that first

assignment by two years and completed that.

Then by that time, I was married--we had a child--and the wife wanted me to go out. So I did. I pounded the pavements in Los Angeles for about, oh, I guess, four months. I was living with my brother-in-law and his wife in Hollywood. I could find jobs, but they were union shops and so forth. I'd go to the union, and they'd say, "Well, we can't take you because we got hundreds of men just waiting for a job like that. After a while, I just got tired of that. I went home one evening and was tired and out of sorts, and I just told the wife, "I know where I can get a job. She said, "I do, too. Let's go!" (Chuckle) So that's the morning I went down and reenlisted.

Marcello: At that point you had had how much time in the service?

De Young: I'd had six years.

Marcello: Again, we get back to economics. Even as late as 1940 or 1941, even though things were beginning to get better as the defense build-up picked up steam, jobs still weren't too easy to come by.

De Young: No, not really. No, they were very scarce, really.

Marcello: What had you been striking for or what had been your rating during those six years that you had been in the Navy?

De Young: Well, the first three-and-a-half years, I was in the deck force--deck hand--and I was boat coxswain. Then I

transferred over to the black gang--the engineering--and changed my rating to fireman. Then I worked my way up eventually in the machinist's mate line. That was some time later, of course.

Marcello: Were you a machinist's mate during that first six-year period that you were in the service?

De Young: I became a second class machinist's mate the last six months of that six-year period.

Marcello: I haven't run into too many individuals who were married and in the service at that time. In a sense, as an enlisted man, being in that situation was a rarity, was it not?

De Young: Yes. It was not unique, but there weren't too many married men.

Marcello: What provisions, if any, did the Navy make for married enlisted personnel at that time, 1940?

De Young: Practically none (chuckle).

Marcello: In fact, didn't they kind of discourage enlisted people from getting married?

De Young: Yes, they did. They didn't prohibit it, but they discouraged it.

Marcello: In other words, they didn't make any moves to provide housing or anything of that nature?

De Young: No, none whatsoever.

Marcello: Okay, so you enlisted in the service again. Was this in 1940 or 1941?



De Young: Let me see...1940, yes.

Marcello: Did you have any problems getting back in?

De Young: No.

Marcello: I would assume they probably looking for experienced personnel by that time.

De Young: They were beginning to, I think, a little bit.

Marcello: What rating did you get when you went back in?

De Young: The same rating that I left at.

Marcello: Which was machinist's mate second class?

De Young: Second class, right.

Marcello: You know, that was a fairly high rating at that time, was it not, for an enlisted person?

De Young: Yes, it was.

Marcello: How difficult or slow was promotion in that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy?

De Young: Very slow, very slow. When I went in, my pay was \$17.50 a month (chuckle) plus my initial clothing allowance. That was what you got when you went in. Of course, that was a 15 percent reduction in pay that the President on down had taken at that time. But I had a place to sleep and clothes to wear and food to eat.

Marcello: The service offered a little bit of security, didn't it?

De Young: Yes, it did. It sure did. Then as a second class machinist's mate when I got married, I was making a lot of money [facetious comment]. I made \$64.50 a month (chuckle). The strange thing about it was that we lived

on that and lived fairly well.

Marcello: You get back in the Navy in 1940. Where did they send you?

De Young: They sent me back aboard the Bobolink.

Marcello: How had it changed since your first time around? Can you remember any changes that might have occurred other than maybe a different skipper and things of that nature?

De Young: Oh, yes. The personnel has changed somewhat. Other than that...I went back in the engineering department rather than the deck force. Other than that, it hadn't really changed all that much. It was pretty much the same.

Marcello: While you were aboard the Bobolink, where were you staying? Where were you living? Were you living right on the ship at that point, or were you living ashore?

De Young: Well, when we were in port, in the States, I would go home on liberty and then go back to the ship. You lived aboard as well, so you had two residences, you might say.

Marcello: Describe the process by which the Bobolink got to Pearl Harbor. Maybe I ought to ask, first of all, when did it go to Pearl Harbor.

De Young: That's what I'm trying to remember right now. It was in the latter part of 1940. I think within about four or five months after I had gone aboard, we went back out to

Pearl Harbor. But before that time, we were in the Navy yard, and they had installed some sonar gear aboard. Then they sent us out to Pearl Harbor. That was in the latter part of 1940.

Marcello: What was to be the Bobolink's function once it got to Pearl Harbor? What kind of work was it doing?

De Young: Well, general ocean towing. We used to tow what we called battle raft targets--large wooden targets that they strung targets up on--and the battleships and cruisers and destroyers would practice firing at it. That was mainly what we were doing. Then there would be other little runs that maybe we would make. One time we had to make a run out to French Frigate Shoals, and I don't remember just what it was we went out there for. I remember that. We got out there and went on the shoals out there and chased the gooney birds for a while. There must have been some purpose why we went--I'm sure there was--but I don't recall just what it was. We towed rafts and just did general tug service. We used to tie up at the old coaling docks there, and we nested there with other tugs.

Marcello: As I recall from my experiences aboard a sea-going tug when I was in the Coast Guard, those ships were used for just about everything.

De Young: Everything and anything, even during the war (chuckle).

Marcello: I recall that they used ours as an ice-breaker on

occasion, and they used it as a fireboat.

De Young: Fireboat, yes.

Marcello: Then it did the usual activities that you would associate with a tugboat.

De Young: Of course, on December 7, we were going alongside the battleships and were trying to pump them out. We had two big wrecking pumps down in the fire room, and we'd go alongside and connect hoses and put them down in and try to pump them out. We did as much as we could, but it was kind of a lost cause (chuckle). It was coming in as fast as we'd pump it out.

Marcello: Okay, the Bobolink is out at Pearl Harbor. I have to come back to your wife again. Does she join you in the Hawaiian Islands during this period before Pearl Harbor?

De Young: It's sort of ironic. The Navy at that time was giving some consideration to married enlisted personnel (chuckle). By that time I had made first class, anyway, so I guess that was...yes, I think the Navy even made some concessions to second class petty officers. I applied for one of the apartments on the island--at Pearl Harbor--and it had been approved, and the wife was scheduled for sometime between the 7th and 14th of January, 1942. Of course, needless to say, that was changed, and she never got out at that time.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you had made arrangements relative to this apartment. Was this Navy housing, or

was this housing that you had to procure on your own?

De Young: No, it was federal housing right in Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: From what you've said, I'm gathering that the Bobolink was a working vessel in that it really didn't go out on any of the training exercises with the battle fleet or anything of that nature.

De Young: Well, we did but we were towing the targets. We went out before them and then followed them back in.

Marcello: Well, describe in detail how one of these exercises worked. For instance, when would the Bobolink normally go out? What day of the week?

De Young: If they were scheduled to have target exercises at 10:00 on Monday morning, we would spend Sunday more or less getting alongside of it and checking it all over and getting the screens hoisted and moored alongside to proceed out. We'd probably leave out at 5:00 or 6:00 Monday morning, get on station, get the tow set and in position for whatever group was going to be practicing on it in order to start at 10:00.

Marcello: How far behind the Bobolink would that target be towed? I'm just asking that as a matter of curiosity.

De Young: Oh, oh, somewhere between, I would say, 1,500 to 2,000 yards.

Marcello: So they were a safe distance behind the tug.

De Young: Yes.

Marcello: At the end of the day, would you stay out there with the

rest of the battle fleet, or would you come back into Pearl?

De Young: If they were scheduling target exercises, we'd stay out.

Marcello: What would the longest period of time you might spend out there?

De Young: On one of those exercises?

Marcello: Yes.

De Young: Oh, we'd spend as much as a week out there.

Marcello: As one gets closer to December 7, and as conditions between the United States and Japan continued to get worse, could you, as a first class machinist's mate, detect any changes in the exercise routine? Did the training change in any way?

De Young: Not noticeably. It didn't seem to change any. It was pretty much standard. It'd be a little heavier at one time than it would at another.

Marcello: Did the Bobolink hold general quarters drills just the same as any other ship?

De Young: Yes.

Marcello: Where was your battle station?

De Young: Well, at this time, it was the engine room.

Marcello: Doing what in particular? I guess, as a first class machinist's mate, you'd be supervising a lot of people down in that engine room.

De Young: Yes.

Marcello: When the Bobolink came in off one of these maneuvers or

exercises, where did it normally tie up?

De Young: As I said before, we berthed at the coaling docks. The coaling docks were just that--they were coaling docks. They had been there for many years. It's when the old coal burners used to moor in there. At that time, of course, there were no more coal burners, but the docks were still there, and it was an ideal place for the auxiliary craft to moor to. It was right inside the entrance of the channel a little ways, not too far from Ford Island.

Marcello: So the battleships and so on were moored farther in.

De Young: Yes. They were moored around Ford Island.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about the Bobolink itself. What was the food alike aboard the Bobolink?

De Young: Excellent.

Marcello: What made it so good?

De Young: (Chuckle) Well, I guess the cooks had to have been responsible. It was plentiful, and it was well-done. It was just enjoyable.

Marcello: Plus, we're talking about a small crew, are we not?

De Young: Yes, very definitely.

Marcello: That always makes cooking easier.

De Young: Yes.

Marcello: You might have to estimate this, but what was the complement aboard the Bobolink at the time of Pearl Harbor?

De Young: At the time of Pearl Harbor, the figure thirty-six comes to mind, but I think at that time it was a little more than that. I think it'd be close to forty.

Marcello: Did the Bobolink have any kind of armament aboard?

De Young: Yes, (chuckle) we had two 3-inch guns.

Marcello: Where were they mounted?

De Young: They were mounted on both sides in front of the pilot house.

Marcello: Were they dual-purpose guns? In other words, could they be elevated for antiaircraft fire?

De Young: To an extent. They weren't primarily antiaircraft guns. They were the old broadside-type of things, but (chuckle) we tried to use them as antiaircraft guns.

Marcello: You're referring to the day of the attack?

De Young: (Chuckle) Yes. Well, we didn't get them going that day.

Marcello: That's part of the story we'll want to pick up on a little bit later. How would you describe the morale of the crew aboard the Bobolink during that period prior to the attack?

De Young: It was excellent. It wasn't outstanding, I don't guess, but it was good morale--very good. It usually is on something with a small group like that.

Marcello: It promotes a certain amount of closeness, I guess, does it not?

De Young: Yes, especially when you've got a mascot like we did--



(chuckle) a stray white dog, Sealyham terrier. He had a great quality of making everybody feel like a friend.

Marcello: What kind of dog was it?

De Young: A Sealyham terrier.

Marcello: What would you do when you went on liberty? Your routine might be a little bit different since you were a married man.

De Young: Well, it perhaps was, yes. I'm sure it was. Well, we did whatever where the place where we were at provided. We might just go over and see a movie. When we were in Pearl Harbor, of course, the YMCA downtown was a big place.

Marcello: What were the advantages of going to the YMCA? What was there to do there?

De Young: Well, it was sort of a headquarters (chuckle). They had activities there--provisions for activities. Then you could get transportation there, and you could rent lockers. It was just a good headquarters (chuckle).

Marcello: Yes, the YMCA evidently was a center of activity. Like you pointed out, I believe that the taxis normally dropped off people there at the "Y, did they not?

De Young: Yes.

Marcello: And as a result, I guess, the first bar that most people hit was the Black Cat Cafe, which was right across the street.

De Young: It was right across the street, right (chuckle). I

never was one for the heavy drinking type of thing. I'd go over and have one, and then that would be about all. I'd lose interest in doing that.

Marcello: What was the attraction of the Black Cat Cafe? Was it simply that it was the first bar that one would hit once they got out of a taxi?

De Young: That must have been it. I guess so. I don't know what else it could have been. I didn't see anything else to make it any better than any other one.

Marcello: Is that basically what it was--simply a bar?

De Young: Primarily, I guess. That's all I ever knew.

Marcello: In other words, it wasn't one of the houses of prostitution that you would find, like, on Hotel Street or Canal Street?

De Young: If it was, I didn't know about it. It wasn't as open for that main purpose as far as I could tell.

Marcello: How did the liberty routine work aboard the Bobolink? In other words, you were a first class machinist's mate. What kind of liberty could you expect to receive when it was in Pearl?

De Young: About two out of every three days. About that time is what it was. Sometimes, if the situation would warrant, it would go to four sections. Generally, I think three sections is what it was.

Marcello: When you had liberty, as a first class machinist's mate, I guess you could stay overnight if you wanted, is that

correct, as long as you were back by a particular time the next morning?

De Young: Most anybody could.

Marcello: Is that right? I think a lot of the battleship sailors, however, had to be back at midnight.

De Young: They may have. It's possible. I wasn't on a battleship then, so I don't know.

Marcello: Did you have quarters ashore, or did you strictly stay aboard the Bobolink?

De young: No, I lived right aboard.

Marcello: What kind of quarters might a first class machinist's mate expect to have aboard the Bobolink? Obviously, it'd be a little bit different than the regular enlisted personnel.

De Young: No way.

Marcello: Is that right?

De Young: That's right. We had the same bunks. We were right in the same compartment and everything. They just didn't have that much space that they could do anything with, I guess. Now they did have a chief's quarters, which I moved to when I made chief.

Marcello: Did you make chief after Pearl Harbor?

De Young: Yes. I guess it wasn't more than two or three weeks after Pearl--after the attack.

Marcello: Promotion was speeded up considerably, was it not, once the war started?

De Young: Yes. Right at that time, I guess, we did have a chief machinist's mate there that was transferred, and that left me. So as soon as paperwork could be completed and everything, I was made chief.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us to those days immediately prior to the actual attack on December 7, and what I want you to do at this point, Mr. De Young, is to go into as much detail as you can remember concerning that day. Let's start with the weekend of December 7. More specifically, let's go back to that Friday, which would be December 5. Do you recall what the Bobolink was doing on that weekend?

De Young: That weekend, we were right in at the dock. We were there--just regular port routine. I had the duty. My shift was on duty at the time.

Marcello: For the entire weekend?

De Young: The entire weekend, yes.

Marcello: What did that involve so far as you were concerned?

De Young: Well, it was standing watches. That was what it involved. Of course, we had our normal Saturday. I guess we had an inspection Saturday morning--that was pretty routine--and then you more or less just stood your watches the rest of the weekend.

Marcello: Again, remembering my experiences, as a first class petty officer, you probably weren't standing any watches, but you had to make sure.

De Young: Yes, I was.

Marcello: Oh, you were actually standing watches, too?

De Young: Well, I was standing OD [officer-of-the-deck] watches.

Marcello: I see.

De Young: Officer-of-the-deck watches. It's the responsibility of a first class petty officer.

Marcello: Did anything eventful happen that Saturday?

De Young: That wasn't the only time. Sometimes I stood that, and sometimes I stood the engineering watch, which I was doing that morning.

Marcello: Did anything eventful happen that Saturday night, or was it a routine night as you recall?

De Young: As far as I was concerned, it was a routine night. I might inject right here a little thing. Right opposite the coaling docks, see, the Navy Yard was excavating a huge new dry dock, and this was going on seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. And part of this was requiring dynamite--blasting--in there, and we could hear every blast that went off--it'd kind of shake the boat a little--so we were getting pretty used to that. This was just going on, as I said, at the time when the bombs starting falling.

Marcello: And I'm assuming, then, that when the bombs first started falling, until you saw the planes and so on, you must have assumed that it was that dynamiting continuing?

De Young: That's exactly what it was. I happened to have the 8:00-12:00 watch that Sunday morning, and we usually took the watch over at .that was down in the engine room.

Marcello: What time would you take the watch over? Would it be 7:45?

De Young: Yes, 7:45. And I had just finished breakfast, cleaned up, went and got my paper and started down below to relieve the watch. Of course, the dynamiting had been going on all night and everything. I did hear--what I came to find out later--the bombing. But when the first class boatswain's mate came...above the engine room there was a grating, from one side to the other, with the doors open. The boatswain's mate came running across the grating up there and looked down at me and said, "The Japs are bombing! The Japs are bombing!" (Chuckle) I just shoved him off, you know. I wasn't in any mood to be jazzed like that, you know. Good night, I had been listening to that "bombing" for days (laughter). I guess about five minutes later--less than that--he came back again: "The Japs are bombing! The Japs are bombing!"

Marcello: In the meantime, did you continue to hear these explosions?

De Young: Yes, so I didn't pay him any mind. I thought he was just having fun. Pretty soon the intercom rang. I

think it was the commanding officer who called down, and he said, "We're under attack! The Japs are bombing! Let's get everything lit off!" Well, normally the procedure required about an hour-and-a-half to get everything warmed up. We had an old steam reciprocating engine down there. So we got that thing going in seven minutes (chuckle). I knew it was the truth when he came down there, and we got it going.

Marcello: That's not really dangerous, but it's certainly hard on an engine, is it not, to get things started like that?

De Young:P Oh, yes. Yes, it is. Of course, you had to get the fire in the boilers going up. Of course, we had the boiler room and then an engine room. The fireman had to get extra or larger tips in his burners and everything like that, and I had to get the vacuum pumps and various accessory pumps and equipment going and start rocking that engine as soon as possible.

Marcello: While all this is taking place, how would you describe the scene down in the engine room where you were? Was it chaos? Was everybody acting in a professional manner? What was happening?

De Young: Well, the thing about it is that there was just me and one fireman.

Marcello: Normally, how many people would be down there?

De Young: Well, that would be the normal amount down there, and we knew what to do. We were old hands at it,

so it was just a matter of doing it--at double time. We were concerned. Now I don't mean to say we were just normal. We were mighty concerned.

Marcello: In the meantime, did you get up on deck to see what was happening outside?

De Young: No, at no time. It was at least four hours later before I could get outside.

Marcello: Okay, so you finally get up steam within a few minutes. What happens at that point?

De Young: Well, as soon as we could go. .well, I don't know if it was immediately. Yes, it was a matter of, oh, I guess, thirty minutes afterwards that the captain took command on the bridge, and we pulled out from the nest. I think the first thing we did is that we proceeded to Ford Island, and we started going along...I remember going alongside the California and, I believe, the Mississippi. This is all kind of vague.

Marcello: It wouldn't be the Mississippi because it wasn't there. It could have been the West Virginia, which was sunk. The Tennessee was hit.

De Young: It might have been one of those. Then we ended up alongside the Nevada.

Marcello: What were you doing at each one of these stops?

De Young: We were using these wrecking pumps that I was.

Marcello: They're called wrecking pumps?

De Young: That's what we called them--wrecking pumps. They were



used for everything that needed them.

Marcello: And what were you trying to do?

De Young: We were trying to pump water out of them (chuckle).

Marcello: In other words, these were the ships that were hit.

De Young: Yes, right.

Marcello: What kind of results were you getting?

De Young: None. Just as much water as we could pump out, that much poured back in.

Marcello: All of this time, you're still down in the engine room.

De Young: Yes.

Marcello: The attack is going on up above while some of this is taking place?

De Young: Yes. Well, some of these was in the aftermath, but, yes, there was still some activity going on. By the time I was able to get up, it had ended.

Marcello: You mentioned that while you were moving around the harbor, you also went over to try to give assistance to the Nevada. What kind of assistance were you trying to give that vessel?

De Young: The same as the rest of them--trying to pump water out of her.

Marcello: What kind of luck were you having with that one?

De Young: None.

Marcello: Earlier in the interview we mentioned the two-3-inch weapons that you had aboard the Bobolink. Of what use were they being put while the attack was going on?

De Young: None. We didn't have enough men to man them. See, some of the men weren't aboard. It was operating with a reduced complement. As sort of an interesting little by-play here (chuckle), I think it was a third class signalman who went down to our armory, if you could call it an armory, and he came back on deck with a .30-30 Browning automatic. These Japanese...one of the flight patterns of the planes that were coming in was right over us--there at the coal dock. They weren't paying any attention to us, of course, but he gets up there with that Browning and starts firing at them with that thing (chuckle). Apparently, he did get one of them's attention a little bit--this is what I understand--and this Jap did bank around and come back and do some strafing. He didn't hit us or anything.

Marcello: But while all of this was going on, you were still actually down in the engine room?

De Young: Oh, yes, I was down there. This is what I was told.

Marcello: What kind of thoughts or feelings did you have while you were down in that engine room and all this action was going on up above and you really couldn't see it, although maybe you could feel some of it? What kinds of thoughts did you have? What do you think about in a situation like that?

De Young: Well, something that played a big influence on it was...I had just been able to read the headlines in the

paper and read about the Japanese envoy in Washington, you know, and read that the progress wasn't going too well. Well, I don't know just what I was thinking. I was bewildered, I guess you might say, more than anything else. But I was too busy to really give it that much thought.

Marcello: Where was the Bobolink when the action was over and you were able to come up on deck for the first time?

De Young: We were alongside one of the battleships. I don't remember just exactly which one. The California, I believe.

Marcello: Describe what you saw when you came up on deck.

De Young: Well, I saw that we were right in the middle of a whole lot of oil. Oil was spread all over the water. Well, it was just a scene of devastation. You just couldn't hardly believe what you were looking at. I didn't get to see any of the fellows that had got burned with the oil and so forth. I really didn't get to see any of that. I just saw just the devastation and damage to the ships. There was still smoke around and so forth.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you came up at a point where the California was. The California, of course, had sunk.

De Young: Yes.

Marcello: But its superstructure and all of that sort of a thing were still out of the water.

De Young: Still out of the water, yes.

Marcello: Describe what you saw there when you looked at the California. Describe that scene.

De Young: Well, I don't know. It was sort of organized disorder. Of course, everyone was...well, they weren't normal. They were just highly tense. There seemed to be a feeling that you had to do something but not knowing what to do. It was an overall consciousness that there was an aim and a purpose to everything. But as far as the ship, it was strange to see a ship like that. All those ships, you know, were incapacitated.

Marcello: Did you get a chance to see the Oklahoma? This is the one that had turned over.

De Young: Yes. The Oklahoma turned over, and so did the Utah.

Marcello: What were your thoughts when you viewed this for the first time, that is, after seeing one of these huge battleships turned over?

De Young: It's a sight you don't forget, I'll tell you. I don't know what my thinking was--just awe more than anything else, I guess. Then I wondered, "How many people are in there?"

Marcello: How about the Arizona? What do you recall from the Arizona when you viewed it?

De Young: She was down.

Marcello: Was it still burning and smoking?

De Young: Maybe some. I don't recall if it still was or not.

Marcello: What kind of activities did the Bobolink engage in the

rest of the day?

De Young: Well, from that part there, we just went around alongside the Nevada then.

Marcello: This is the second time now?

De Young: No.

Marcello: This is still the first time.

De Young: The first time we went to the Nevada. It was the last one we went to. We were working on her when we got orders to proceed out the channel to the mouth--using sonar--as a submarine patrol, which was a joke. We could only make ten-and-a-half knots at full speed (chuckle). They put a Y-gun on our fantail, and depth charge racks. That's what they equipped us with before this all took place--a little while before. When we got out to the mouth of the channel, we did start picking up echoes on the sonar, and we just started firing that Y-gun back there. Of course, we weren't fast enough to get completely clear of it, so everytime we fired it, our fantail would go sky-high (laughter).

Marcello: Everytime the depth charges went off?

De Young: Yes (laughter). We did get credit for one kill there that day.

Marcello: On a submarine?

De Young: On a submarine (laughter). That's what we did the rest of the day.

Marcello: Do you recall any more of the activities relative to

this alleged submarine kill?

De Young: I don't know any more, but it's just sort of ironic. We felt that, anyway.

Marcello: Were there other ships out there thrashing around with the Bobolink during this period?

De Young: There were. I don't remember just which ones they were. There were some others out there, too.

Marcello: What did you and the fireman talk about while all of this was going on? Do you recall?

De Young: Well, I was in charge, so it was more or less telling him what I wanted him to do. It was just normal chatter between us. We were just more or less speculating what it was all about, what was going to happen now. Just speculation.

Marcello: By that evening, were there rumors going around aboard the Bobolink? Did you hear any rumors that evening?

De Young: About the situation around there?

Marcello: Yes, what would be happening next or what was supposed to happen next.

De Young: (Chuckle) Oh, they flowed just like water.

Marcello: Do you recall what some of those rumors were?

De Young: Oh, some of them might not have been rumors. I don't know. Well, a lot of it, of course, was what damage had been done, how many lives were lost, and what caused a lot of the problems. There was a lot of apprehension and rumors about a possible invasion. I do remember

that. That was typical. Then there was all kinds of...you'd hear firing all over the place--continuous practically. Rumors were that some landings had been made by the Japanese and they were moving in--that sort of thing--and filtering in. Of course, that was all rumors, we know now.

Marcello: In the meantime, is the Bobolink still out at the mouth of the harbor thrashing around, or have you come back in by this time?

De Young: No. We came back to nest back up at the pier.

Marcello: What did you do that evening after you came back into the pier?

De Young: As a ship, we really didn't do anything. We just stood by. We lit off and were ready to move at a moment's notice. But we actually didn't do anything more that evening.

Marcello: Did you mention a while ago that you could hear sporadic firing all night?

De Young: Oh, yes. Yes, that went on, I guess, all night.

Marcello: I do know that a couple planes off the Enterprise were coming in, and they were fired upon. Do you remember that situation at all?

De Young: No, I don't remember that. I don't know if I even knew that.

Marcello: How much sleep did you get that night?

De Young: Practically none. You'd just go lay down and take a nap

and try to sleep, but you couldn't sleep.

Marcello: What kind of an appetite did you have?

De Young: When I got hungry, I ate (chuckle). A little while after that attack, the cook went up and took that steam kettle, and I guess he took something of everything he had and threw in there with some water and lit it off. That's the best soup I ever had in my life, and we had it for days.

Marcello: What did you do in those days after the attack? What kind of work was the Bobolink doing?

De Young: We continued on that patrol out there for a few days, and then we got ordered to tow a barge of something to Christmas Island. I don't remember now what it was. It was about a month after the attack. We towed that barge down to Christmas Island. Until then we were doing various tow jobs.

Marcello: Did you ever do any work relative to getting any of the battleships out of there, that is, where they were located. For instance, the Maryland would have been, at least for a while, pinned in by the Oklahoma, which had turned over, and I was wondering if you got involved with any of those vessels.

De Young: We didn't, ourselves. I'm sure there were some that did, but the Bobolink didn't, though.

Marcello: Did you ever get involved in any of the cleaning up of the debris or picking up bodies or anything of that



nature?

De Young: No, we didn't. No, we didn't get involved in that. That was more in the inner harbor and around Ford Island where that took place. We didn't get involved with it. They probably had the vessels more adapted to that that they used. I'm sure they did have landing craft and whatever.

Marcello: What was your attitude toward the Japanese in the immediate aftermath of the attack, if you can remember? Obviously, there were many people of Japanese descent who were living in the Hawaiian Islands, and you must have come in contact with them when you went ashore, directly or indirectly. What was your attitude toward the Japanese in the immediate aftermath of the attack--the Japanese who had committed this act?

De Young: Well, I didn't like them (chuckle). I don't think I ever did have a bitter hatred for the Japanese. I know I've had fights with people all my life, you know, as kids and so forth, and when it was over with, why, we were best buddies. I can't say that I really had a burning hatred for the Japanese.

Marcello: Was there more or less a feeling that everybody wanted some sort of revenge for what had happened at Pearl Harbor? In other words, were you wanting to get into action and get back at the Japanese in that way?

De Young: Well, I guess. I definitely wanted to get with it and

get it over with. We had to win.

Marcello: In other words, there was never any doubt in your mind that you would win?

De Young: No, never. I guess I was...I don't know. There at Pearl Harbor I praised the Lord that I had so much to do that I didn't have to dwell and kind of feed on anything like this. I knew what I had to do. That was one of the things, I guess, in being such a small crew. Everybody had so much to do that they didn't have to dwell on these things.

Marcello: How long did you remain aboard the Bobolink following the attack?

De Young: I remained aboard the Bobolink until mid-1944.

Marcello: And was it mainly at Pearl Harbor on more or less a permanent basis?

De Young: Oh, no. We left there within four months, and we never saw Pearl again until early 1944.

Marcello: Where did you go?

De Young: We went west and south, but mostly south. We went with a fleet. We entered Guadalcanal shortly after they had taken over. That area right in there is where we did most of our work. We were there for a year-and-a-half or so.

Marcello: I'm sure you had a busy time around Guadalcanal.

De Young: Oh, boy, I'm telling you, that was something else! That was a busy time. At one period there for three weeks,

all we had was the Army and Marines on Guadalcanal, and we were in Tulagi Harbor. We were the only craft in there. The Marines had fighters and some other planes over on Guadalcanal, and their gasoline was in fifty-gallon cans over in Tulagi (chuckle). We were the only means they had of getting gasoline for those planes, and at night we would load those fifty-gallon drums of gasoline all over the deck; and early, about daybreak, we would head across the channel there to Guadalcanal. We'd get over there and then roll those drums off over the side. They'd take the Higgins boats and push them into the shore. They managed to keep about three planes in the air for about three weeks. As a matter of fact, we heard later that they actually had given up the island. In fact, they had given up the island, you know, and pulled out everything but us. But then since they held out for the three, they were able to bring some support back in and bring in more men, more supplies, and they maintained it then (chuckle).

Marcello: As a result of what took place at Pearl Harbor and everything there at Guadalcanal, you must have gained a certain amount of respect for the Japanese navy. That was not a second rate outfit, was it, at that time?

De Young: No, it wasn't. They knew what they were doing, though I think they could have done a lot more. I don't know whether it was lack of communications or lack of

planning or knowledge or what. But, as you say, yes, we gained a lot of respect for them.

Marcello: Even there in those naval battles at Guadalcanal, they more or less held their own pretty much against the United States Navy.

De Young: You bet they did! Yes, indeed! They really did. They gave our fleet a fit out there.

Marcello: I was thinking, for instance, that at Savo Island alone, in that one battle, they sank four cruisers.

De Young: That was a bad one there, I'll tell you, and we were right there, too. We were out there the next morning at daylight. Let's see...what cruiser was that that we pulled in?

Marcello: I can't recall which ones were out there now. Was it the Astoria and the Quincy and the Vincennes?

De Young: Yes, I think it was. It seems to me it was the Portland that we pulled in that day.

Marcello: What kind of work would you be doing there? Obviously, you wouldn't be out there when those battles were taking place, but what kind of aid and assistance would you be giving in the aftermath, perhaps?

De Young: Well, when it was over and they pulled away, well, we got ordered along the Portland. We went alongside of her. I don't remember what we did when we went alongside of her. We gave some support alongside her, and then we rigged the tow and towed her a ways.

Marcello: What other particular operations did you participate in aboard the Bobolink after Guadalcanal? Did you remain in that area up until 1944?

De Young: In early 1944, the USS Foote became incapacitated and damaged beyond...she wasn't able to navigate at all, so we towed her to Pearl. It seems to me, I believe, that we took her all the way to Long Beach. I know we towed her to Pearl, but I believe we towed her all the way to Long Beach. We went on to Long Beach--I remember that--but I don't know if we had her in tow. I wouldn't swear that, but I believe we did tow her to Long Beach, California. That's where I left the Bobolink (chuckle).

Marcello: What vessel did you pick up at that point?

De Young: Well, shortly after we got there, I made warrant officer, and I was transferred off of her. I was reassigned to commission an ATR in Antioch, California. An ATR was being built there. It had a wooden hull--an ocean-going rescue vessel. It was called an ATR. So we commissioned that, and I was the engineering officer on it.

Marcello: And did you remain on it until the end of the war?

De Young: I was on her at the end of the war. We towed some barges, I believe, up to Alaska--actually, it was to Dutch Harbor, Alaska--and we operated around there for some time. Then we were ordered back to San Francisco, so we went back to San Francisco and picked up a set of

barges. They were these pontoon barges that were used at advance bases and so forth, and they had seven of them stacked--one on top of another--and we were headed back out to the western Pacific. In about four days, we headed out with these in tow, and then the war ended. About three days after peace was declared, they ordered us to turn around and come back (chuckle).

Marcello: I have one last question. Mr. De Young. Did you make the navy a career?

De Young: Oh, yes.

Marcello: I assume that you did after you had had that much time in. How many years did you put in?

De Young: Thirty.

Marcello: Thirty years.

De Young: A little over thirty years.

Marcello: Well, I think that's probably a pretty good place to end this interview. I want to thank you very much for your comments. You've said a lot of interesting and, I think, important things and I'm sure that students and scholars will find them most valuable.

De Young: (Chuckle) There's a little thing that happened there at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack. We had a second class shipfitter who had spent, I guess, about eight to ten years out in the China Fleet. He'd come aboard about six months before then, and if anybody ever hated the Japanese, that man hated them. He was bound and

determined that we were going to go to war with Japan, and the sooner the better. It would only take us about two days to wipe them off the face of the earth, he thought. They held muster right after the attack or shortly after the attack--well, it was about two or three hours, anyway--I went on board to see who was there. He was in the duty section, so he was supposed to be aboard. He didn't make muster, and nobody could find him. Nobody knew where he was at. Eventually, about two or three hours later, they found him. We had a big towing engine on the stern, you know, and somehow he had got down underneath that towing engine and among that big wire cable (laughter). He wasn't moving, boy! We finally persuaded him to come out of there. We had to transfer him. He was a nervous wreck. He had had it. It got to be quite a joke around there (laughter). Oh, how he hated those Japanese! He wanted to go to war right now (chuckle).

Marcello: Those Asiatic sailors were something else.

De Young: They were. They were a different breed (chuckle).

Marcello: Did he have a bunch of tattoos?

De Young: Yes. Oh, yes.

Marcello: Most of those guys did, did they not?

De Young: Yes, they did. They sure did. He was kind of a crusty character.

Marcello: Well, once more, I want to thank you very much for

having taken time to give me your comments.

De Young: Okay. I've enjoyed it.