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Interview with
THOMAS HOUSENFLUCK
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Oral History Collection

Thomas Housenfluck

Interviewer: Ronald E. Marcello Date: April 23, 1988

Place of Interview: Austin, Texas

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Thomas Housenfluck for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on April 23, 1988, in Austin, Texas. I am interviewing Mr. Housenfluck in order to get his reminiscences and experiences while he was stationed at the Pearl Harbor Submarine Base aboard the submarine Narwhal during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Mr. Housenfluck, to begin this interview, just very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, tell me when you were born, where you were born, your educational background--that sort of thing.

Mr. Housenfluck: I was born in Beaumont, Texas, on April 6, 1919. I moved to Nederland, Texas, approximately six years later, and I've lived there to the present date.

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

background.

Housenfluck: I'm a high school graduate, and I've gone to radio vocational school.

Marcello: When did you join the service?

Housenfluck: December 13, 1939.

Marcello: And why did you decide to join the service?

Housenfluck: Well, at that time I could not get a job in the radio broadcast field, which I held a first-class radio-telephone broadcast license.

Marcello: Was it simply because of the Depression?

Housenfluck: Possibly that had a lot to do with it.

Marcello: I think that economic reasons are one of the standard reasons why a lot of guys went into the service around that time, so in that sense your story is kind of similar to theirs. Why did you decide to go into the Navy as opposed to one of the other branches?

Housenfluck: Well, I had not planned on going into the Navy. I wanted at that time to go into the Army. I went to the Army recruiting station, and they could not accept me. They said I wasn't physically qualified. So I walked down the hall to the Navy recruiting station. They accepted me, and I was physically qualified. That's how I got into the Navy.

Marcello: That's kind of interesting because, usually, I think it was a given that the Navy's standards were higher

than the Army's. You couldn't meet the Army's qualifications, but you could meet the Navy's.

Housenfluck: I was quite surprised, myself.

Marcello: Where did you take your boot camp?

Housenfluck: At San Diego, California.

Marcello: And how long did it last at that time? Do you know?

Housenfluck: Approximately six to eight weeks.

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

Housenfluck: Nothing that I can recall, other than that there was a notice posted on the bulletin board requesting volunteers for submarine duty. And that is how I volunteered for submarine duty. I was accepted--passed the physical there, also.

Marcello: Why did you want to volunteer for submarine duty?

Housenfluck: I was not sure just why. At the time it just seemed an interesting branch of the service, and so I volunteered.

Marcello: Was there any extra pay associated with being on submarine duty at that time?

Housenfluck: Yes, there was what was called "submarine pay" at that time. I forget the dollar amount.

Marcello: I'm assuming, then, that if you volunteered for submarine duty, you probably had some additional training that you had to undergo. Tell me what

happened after you leave boot camp.

Housenfluck: Well, after I left boot camp, of course, I took the trip to Pearl Harbor and was assigned to the Narwhal.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of being stationed in the Hawaiian Islands?

Housenfluck: Well, I thought that was quite interesting. It was a place that I had heard a lot about and never been to.

Marcello: Tell me a little bit about the Narwhal. What kind of a submarine was it? Was it a new submarine? An older one?

Housenfluck: The Narwhal was classified as one of the V-boats. There were three of them--the Narwhal, Nautilus, and Argonaut, V-1, 2, and 3. It was one of the larger submarines of the fleet. In fact, I think the Narwhal was the largest. She mounted 6-inch/.50 guns fore and aft. I think the complement at that time was approximately ninety-five to a hundred persons.

Marcello: And what essentially was its major functions, major purpose?

Housenfluck: Its major purpose, as you say, eventually was to seek and destroy the enemy.

Marcello: And these were called V-boats?

Housenfluck: V-boats.

Marcello: How did they get the name V-boats?

Housenfluck: That is what I have been trying to find out. As I understand it, it was a classification of the type of

boats that were made after World War I and prior to World War II. There were only three of them made, that I have been able to determine.

Marcello: When you went aboard the Narwhal, what were your initial responsibilities and functions?

Housenfluck: I went aboard as seaman and had seaman duties. Then after they found out that I held a radio commercial license, I became a radioman striker.

Marcello: How slow or fast was promotion in that particular rating before Pearl Harbor?

Housenfluck: Before Pearl Harbor? Not too fast. However, it was not slow, either, and the fact that I had the training, I feel, helped me progress.

Marcello: And just for the record, what rank were you at the time of the attack? Do you recall?

Housenfluck: I was radioman third class, as I recall.

Marcello: Am I to assume that most of your training as a radio striker aboard the Narwhal was on-the-job training?

Housenfluck: That is correct.

Marcello: How would you describe the training that you received there from the experienced people?

Housenfluck: I thought that it was quite good. However, there were times that I had my doubts about some of the qualifications of those instructing me, since they seemed to know a little bit less than I did at the time.

Marcello: Talk a little bit about the food over there at the submarine base.

Housenfluck: Well, I can't talk about the food at the submarine base, but on the submarines it was excellent and plenty of it. Usually, the submarines were given the choice of the foods at that time, and they still do, I understand.

Marcello: You said that you can't talk for the food at the submarine base. Would you not be eating there, let's say, when the Narwhal was tied up over at the sub base? Would you still eat aboard the sub itself?

Housenfluck: We still ate aboard the sub itself. However, I did choose to eat in the cafeteria up there quite frequently. But that was cafeteria-style and not submarine-style.

Marcello: You mentioned submarine-style. How was the food served aboard the Narwhal? Was it family-style?

Housenfluck: Yes.

Marcello: Did you gain weight?

Housenfluck: I probably did. I was fairly hefty when I went aboard the submarine.

Marcello: During this pre-Pearl Harbor period, take me on a typical training exercise in which the Narwhal might engage.

Housenfluck: Well, a typical training exercise...I guess we could call it quite involved. We'll take, for example,

perhaps a simulated attack on a surface craft using the underwater sound gear, taking sound bearings and ranges, and setting up for a torpedo attack. The torpedoes would be fired, and the track would be observed by aircraft above. They could determine their accuracy by the wake of the torpedo. Those torpedoes at that time were air-driven, and there was a trail of bubbles always left behind. And they could see if the torpedo went under the sub ahead or behind. They were always set at a depth that would clear the target by a considerable distance, and they were always fired with dummy heads.

Marcello: There are a couple things I'd like to ask you here, and this is more historical curiosity on my part rather than having anything to do with the Pearl Harbor attack. At that time, were the submarines at Pearl Harbor using the wolfpack techniques that the Germans were using in the Atlantic? In other words, would the Narwhal work with other submarines, or was it more or less on its own out there?

Housenfluck: At that time, the wolfpack operation was not in use. That developed later on in the war.

Marcello: There's something else I'd like to ask you about. We know that those torpedoes, after the war started, were unreliable, and I'm being charitable, I think, when I say that. Did the crew of the Narwhal have

any idea that that was the case during this period about which we're talking, before December 7?

Housenfluck: I doubt very seriously that they did know too much about the malfunction of the torpedoes because they were not fired in actual combat.

Marcello: I guess one of the reasons that they didn't use warheads and so on is because the Navy Department was kind of cheap at that time. You even retrieved those torpedoes in many cases, did you not?

Housenfluck: That is true. They were retrieved by a tugboat--retrieved and reused.

Marcello: Let me ask you one more question along these lines relative to your training. You mentioned that, of course, your primary mission was to hunt and destroy. But is it safe to say that this objective was to be carried out mainly--or at least it thought of at that time--in terms of warships as opposed to merchant shipping and so on?

Housenfluck: Offhand, I would say it was approximately half-and-half because the merchant vessels were considered a vital force of the Japanese fleet for their ability to supply and transport.

Marcello: As one gets closer and closer to December 7, 1941, and as conditions between the two countries continue to get worse, could you detect any changes in the training or the exercises in which the Narwhal

engaged?

Housenfluck: Yes, I could. The training got more frequent and of various types, and the operation of the sub itself seemed to intensify in that they operated more submerged and rigged for war conditions.

Marcello; There's another question that I want to ask you. Sometimes submarines are referred to as "pig boats." How did that apply to the Narwhal?

Housenfluck: The Narwhal, in my estimation and to a lot of others, was really not a "pig boat." As I understand the term "pig boat," that referred to the World War One type of subs, the O,R, and S boats, in that the compartments was so small inside that everything was in a jumble and rather not as clean. That is where, I think, the term "pig boat" originated.

Marcello: Tell me a little bit about your crew's quarters aboard that submarine. Obviously, they had to be a little cramped.

Housenfluck: Well, not necessarily on the Narwhal. It was rather a large sub. As I said, it was one of the larger of the fleet. We had, I would say, sufficient room for everything that we wanted to do. In the crew's quarters there was sufficient room to get around to your lockers and between the bunks and to the head.

Marcello: Is it not true that on some of those later boats that were smaller, people would actually share bunks?

Housenfluck: That is true.

Marcello: In other words, one group would go off duty, and they would take the bunks of those that were going on duty.

Housenfluck: Yes, I think they applied a term to that called "hot bunking." As one crew would go on watch, the offcoming crew would occupy their bunks.

Marcello: What kind of esprit de corps was there among the submariners in that period prior to December 7?

Housenfluck: Very good, very good.

Marcello: What do you think was responsible for that esprit de corps or the high morale?

Housenfluck: Well, I believe that it had to do with the personnel themselves. They seemed have the same ideas in mind, plus the fact that we had the submarine pay, later on sick pay, the good food, and the time in different ports.

Marcello: When the Narwhal was in Pearl and over at the sub base, would you continue to live aboard it, or did you have other quarters ashore?

Housenfluck: Most all of us continued to live aboard. The only time that we possibly would live ashore would be on a long weekend, at which time, in my case, I would get a room at the Army-Navy YMCA and do my shore sightseeing and swimming and so forth.

Marcello: Okay, you brought up the subject, so let's pursue it

a little bit further. Describe how the liberty routine worked aboard the Narwhal for you and the crew.

Housenfluck: As I recall, there was three-section liberty. Usually, it would be one section aboard, called the duty section, and two sections at liberty.

Marcello: On a weekend, would it be possible to get both the Saturday and Sunday?

Housenfluck: Yes. And in some cases, we would get a long weekend --Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Marcello: Normally, when you went ashore, what was your liberty routine? What would you do?

Housenfluck: Well, in my case, I would do a lot of sightseeing and see the area; and since I am also a ham radio operator, I would go to the local ham radio outlet and meet some of the ham radio operators and probably, in some case, operate with them. I'd make friends that way. There was one real good ham radio operator there that I visited and stayed with and still do.

Marcello: Did you go down to Waikiki very much?

Housenfluck: I was on Waikiki Beach quite often, but I can truthfully say I didn't think too much of the beach area.

Marcello: I've heard other people say that, also. Let me ask you this relative to Waikiki. It's my understanding

that there were really only two hotels along the beach at that time. Is that correct?

Housenfluck: That is correct. There was the Moana and the Royal Hawaiian right close together. As a matter of fact, they are still there and still in service.

Marcello: The Royal Hawaiian, I guess, was to become rather important later on so far as the submariners were concerned.

Housenfluck: Yes, it was. It was used or taken over by the government for "R and R" [Rest and Recreation], which the submarine crews enjoyed very much at the Royal Hawaiian.

Marcello: In other words, they got to stay there when they came back from one of those missions after World War II had begun.

Housenfluck: I think it still is, and was then, referred to as the "Pink Palace." We were there last September, I believe it was, and enjoyed seeing all of that again. There's no comparison, however. That area is really developed.

Marcello: And I understand that the developers would like to tear down the Royal Hawaiian and put something bigger in there, but they can't do it because I think it's on the list of historic landmarks.

Housenfluck: I believe that I heard that it was, and I would not like to see it torn down.

Marcello: As a historian, I certainly wouldn't, either. Okay, this brings us into those days immediately prior to the actual attack itself. Let's talk about that weekend of December 7. More specifically, let's begin with Saturday. Do you recall what your routine was on that Saturday of December 6, 1941?

Housenfluck: As I recall--as you know, it's been quite a long time ago--I was in the duty section. I had the duty and was the duty radioman at the time. On Saturday there was the normal holiday routine--nothing really out of the ordinary.

Marcello: What did you do that Saturday evening?

Housenfluck: Just the normal routine in the radio shack. I probably was listening to the AM broadcast stations, maybe writing a letter, but nothing out of the ordinary.

Marcello: Would this be the kinds of activities that would usually be going on aboard the Narwhal on a Saturday evening?

Housenfluck: That is correct, yes.

Marcello: I'm assuming that probably there would be some acey-deucey games going or something like that.

Housenfluck: There was that, true, but I did to play much acey-deucey. Maybe there was some required necessary work going on that had to be done, but usually the weekend was holiday routine with very little going on.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us into that Sunday morning of December 7, 1941. Of course, we want to cover this in as much detail as you can remember. Let me ask you this. What kind of a view did you have of the rest of the harbor from the submarine base--from where the Narwhal was located?

Housenfluck: I had a relatively good view of the rest of the harbor in that the Narwhal and the submarine base was on sort of a slip, and at the entrance of that slip was the main channel; and just across it, very visible, was what is referred to as Battleship Row and Ford Island.

Marcello: So you had pretty much an unobstructed view of that area.

Housenfluck: That is right.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk about December 7, and I'll let you pick up the story by giving your routine from the time you woke up until things started to happen.

Housenfluck: On the morning of December 7, I had been up and had breakfast and had taken a cup of coffee and gone topside to sit down and drink coffee and talk to the other members of the crew. Along about the time of the air strike, we heard planes coming, flying overhead, but we did not pay any attention to them until we observed and heard explosions over in the vicinity of Battleship Row. On Ford Island was the

first explosion that I can recall seeing. We thought that seemed rather odd, and we were all watching that when from the upper end of the slip, across the stern area of the Norwhal, toward Battleship Row, we saw Japanese planes. By seeing, as they peeled off, the red rising sun on the wing, we realized at that moment that we were under attack, and all of us were quite stunned momentarily.

Marcello: What was your reaction at that point, then?

Housenfluck: The reaction was that we would notify the below deck watch to sound the general alarm and advise the officer-of-the-day that we were under attack. From then on we were at battle stations, and we could see the planes coming and hear the explosions and see them attacking. The Japanese seemed to be more after the battleships and such rather than the smaller craft such as the submarines. They did not bother us at all.

Marcello: Where was your battle station?

Housenfluck: In the radio room.

Marcello: Which means, in essence, that you would just be mainly hearing things at that point, or would you be getting reports over the radio and so on?

Housenfluck: I would be getting continuous reports. From the time I set up on the emergency frequency, I began receiving messages, at which time I would type out

quite a string of them, and then I would tear them off, and I would run topside with them to give them to the officer-of-the-deck. As he read them, I had time to observe what was going on. He had to initial each one, return the clipboard to me, and during the interval I was able to see quite a lot of the Japanese attack.

Marcello: Describe some of the things you saw during those intervals when you would come up on deck.

Housenfluck: I remember specifically seeing one torpedo plane cross our stern in the slip there at very close range. In fact, you could distinguish the pilot looking over and grinning at you. He released his torpedo. It went on out the slip and hit one of the battleships, which I do not know which one. During one of my topside visits with the radio messages, I observed the Arizona explode.

Marcello: Describe what you saw there.

Housenfluck: Well, I was looking at the battleship just ahead of her when the Arizona erupted in the ball of fire and black smoke. Moments later, we felt the heat wave and the concussion, and we all stopped momentarily and looked at her. Then I returned back to the radio room again.

Marcello: Generally speaking, how would you describe the conduct and so on of the men aboard the Narwhal while

all this was going on. It seems to me, among other things, that there might be somewhat of a feeling of helplessness.

Housenfluck: Well, they did appear to be that. However, the conduct was excellent. Battle stations were manned, and the gun crews did get off some shots. As I recall, our .50-caliber machine guns were not too effective in that the cooling water to them could not be obtained on a reliable basis, and they would jam. However, I have heard at a later date, after reading some of the material available, that the Narwhal and one other boat were credited with a combined shoot-down of one of the planes.

Marcello: On the other hand, to your knowledge, as you pointed out awhile ago, the Narwhal itself never came under any direct attack on the part of the Japanese.

Housenfluck: That is true. The Narwhal nor the other submarine--and I cannot think of the name of the other tied on the other side of the pier--were not attacked. The other submarine submerged as best they could alongside the dock. Of course, that left a lot out of the water. The Narwhal was unable to do that due to the fact that we had what was called a soft patch, which is a huge sheet of metal over the engine rooms, where the soft patch could be removed and the heavier machinery taken out. And this happened to be off at

the time, which left a gaping hole, so we could not submerge. We stayed on top. The others did submerge alongside the dock.

Marcello: Approximately how many submarines might there be at Pearl Harbor at any one time on a weekend?

Housenfluck: That would be a hard question to answer. At the submarine base piers, I think they could accommodate...there were three piers, and if you put one on each side, that would be six. Of course, they could be two abreast. Then the submarine tender was over there, which would take on a whole squadron abreast. However, at the time, I don't think there were but six submarines in.

Marcello: Had the Japanese wanted to, though, they would have had some pretty easy targets over there, I guess, would have they not, at the sub base?

Housenfluck: They could have very easy targets at the sub base.

Marcello: You mentioned that your battle station was in the radio room, and you were receiving messages. What was the general tenor of the messages? Can you remember mainly what they were about?

Housenfluck: I can remember some of them. Of course, the first ones that I got was that Pearl was under attack and it was not a drill. That was repeated quite frequently and then followed by reports in various places as to where the Japs were attacking. There

seemed to be quite a lot of confusion. In fact, there was a reported landing of troops on various parts of the island, which was totally unfounded.

Marcello: But those came over the radio?

Housenfluck: Those came over the radio. It appeared to be, well, mass confusion for quite a long time.

Marcello: When you heard rumors such as the possibility of the Japanese landing, did you believe them?

Housenfluck: I just don't personally know whether I personally believed them or not. It's quite possible that I did because...

Marcello: Considering what had happened, they might have been pretty plausible.

Housenfluck: That is right. And I have always said that if the Japanese had followed up that attack with a land force, they could have taken those islands with very little difficulty. That's my personal opinion.

Marcello: How long did you remain at your battle station?

Housenfluck: We were at battle stations the whole time that we were at Pearl. We remained at battle stations. Of course, the crew began to filter back from shore leave, and we got more and more personnel back. But we stayed at battle stations and commenced to take on stores and to do the repair work to get the soft patch back in place and the machinery below deck in preparation for going to sea.

Marcello: Did all of this begin almost immediately after the attack?

Housenfluck: Not immediately after. I would say it was well into the night and the next day before things began to get organized and preparations were made.

Marcello: What did you notice taking place that evening?

Housenfluck: There were quite a lot of shore personnel assuming battle positions along the shoreline, along the wharves, and antiaircraft guns were being assembled and set up all along the area. Guards were being posted everywhere.

Marcello: How safe was it to walk around ashore that evening?

Housenfluck: To me it seemed relatively unsafe because everyone there seemed to be quite trigger-happy. I can recall one instance in which one of the guards thought that he saw someone coming ashore. He fired and quite a lot of others fired, also, and what they had done was cut down a swaying palm. I can remember that story there.

Marcello: Did you perchance witness the firing that went on when those planes off the carrier Enterprise came in that night?

Housenfluck: I heard about it, but I don't know anything further except there was a radio message or two indicating that they were friendly aircraft and not to be fired upon. That is all I can recall of that.

Marcello: Were you on your radio? Were you still on your battle station when those messages came through?

Housenfluck: Yes. Yes, I was. It was well into the next morning before another radioman appeared so that we could work together and I could get a little time off.

Marcello: Did you have much of a desire for sleep that night?

Housenfluck: No, we were too well-worked-up and too high-keyed. I don't think anyone could have slept.

Marcello: Okay, so when does the Narwhal then leave Pearl?

Housenfluck: As I recall, it was approximately...I really don't know, but I think it was approximately three or four days later, after she had made the repairs and taken on stores. Then she was sent out on patrol.

Marcello: When was the first time you really had an opportunity to look at the harbor after the attack and observe a panorama of the damage that had been done?

Housenfluck: Really, the total concept struck most of us as we left Pearl Harbor to go to sea--going out the channel.

Marcello: What did you see?

Housenfluck: We saw total wreckage. Quite a number of ships were still on fire. Ford Island was demolished, it appeared to us from the water. Battleship Row was in terrible condition. Those battleships that were still afloat were more or less resting on the bottom. Some of them had begun to roll and list. We

passed...I believe it was the Nevada that tried to get out. Rather than sink it in the channel, I think the captain just ran it ashore and ran it hard up on the beach. We could see that it was pretty well damaged, too.

Marcello: What did you see when you observed the Arizona?

Housenfluck: It was a burning hulk. There was quite a lot of small boat activity around it--possibly still picking up what few survivors there was or looking for them. The yard tugs and other firefighting boats were still pumping water on it, which I understand they did for days.

Marcello: What was the condition of the water itself like in the harbor?

Housenfluck: The water itself was just about totally covered with oil and a lot of debris.

Marcello: And that had normally been a fairly clean harbor, had it not, prior to this?

Housenfluck: Yes, it had been a relatively clean harbor. The water was clear, but after the attack, as I said, it was pretty well covered with oil and debris.

Marcello: You mentioned that the Narwhal left about three or four days after the attack. What did you do personally during those three or four days?

Housenfluck: Getting the radio gear set up on the frequencies which were designated, testing the radio gear and

also the underwater sound gear.

Marcello: Okay, so the Narwhal leaves. Where does it go? What do you do?

Housenfluck: We were assigned a specific area to patrol in the Pacific. We went on that patrol, and, as I recall, we did make contact with some of the Japanese fleet. However, our purpose was reconnaissance, and we did not attack. We just shadowed the part of the fleet that we did see and radioed back the information. Then we continued on our way, and we did not make an attack on that first patrol.

Marcello: Do you know in which direction you were heading? Was it maybe in the direction of the Marshall Islands or something like that?

Housenfluck: No, it was more toward the Philippines along the chain of Hawaiian Islands, such as Midway and Wake and that particular area.

Marcello: Approximately how long were you out there?

Housenfluck: As I recall, this patrol was about the longest. In fact, it was the longest that I made--approximately ninety days.

Marcello: How long did you continue to serve on the Narwhal?

Housenfluck: I made, as I recall, two or three patrols. I cannot remember the exact number. Possibly the latter part of 1942 or the first of 1943, I went to new construction.

Marcello: And what did you pick up at that point?

Housenfluck: New construction?

Marcello: Yes.

Housenfluck: I was assigned to the USS Gurnard, a submarine at New London being built. I do not recall her number at the present time.

Marcello: After you picked up the Gurnard, did you go back to Pearl Harbor, or were you sent to Fremantle or...

Housenfluck: Subsequently, yes. At the time the Gurnard was commissioned, we were sent overseas to Roseneath, Scotland, to operate over there. We operated out of there for a couple of patrols, at which time we were sent back to the States, on through the Panama Canal, on to the Hawaiian Islands.

Marcello: And then did the Gurnard operate out of the Hawaiian Islands--continue to operate out of Pearl Harbor?

Housenfluck: Yes.

Marcello: By this time, of course, we're talking about some of the new fleet boats that were coming off the line, is that correct, and the Gurnard was one of those?

Housenfluck: Yes.

Marcello: And I guess these were probably--at least I've seen it written--the finest submarines produced in World War II.

Housenfluck: That is correct. They were. They were much more advanced than the submarines at the time of December

7.

Marcello: Again, I'm asking you these questions as a historian in the sense that they don't have very much to do with Pearl Harbor. Describe one of the patrols that the Gurnard would go on. I'm assuming you would be operating with other boats by this time. The wolfpack techniques had more or less been utilized.

Housenfluck: Not at this time, I don't think. They came along a little bit later. I don't think that the Gurnard, at the time I was on her--in fact, I know she did not--operate in the wolfpack. It was the third boat that I commissioned that operated in the wolfpack.

But a typical patrol would be to depart from base and go to the assigned area, start the patrol, and seek and attack any enemy that we encountered, which we did. In fact, we attacked and destroyed quite a number--I think on one patrol six or eight--of merchant ships and, as I recall, two or three men-of-war. That was on the best patrol. It was called a "clean sweep," and as the subs usually did, they flew the broom from the periscope coming in, indicating a "clean sweep."

Marcello: What does a "clean sweep" mean?

Housenfluck: That they attacked, sank, and destroyed everything that was encountered.

Marcello: You mentioned that you also put two other boats in

commission. What were they?

Housenfluck: No, only one boat.

Marcello: Only one.

Housenfluck: At the time, from the Narwhal and the Gurnard, they kept asking for experienced personnel for new construction, and I then volunteered for new construction, was accepted, and was sent to Manitowoc, Wisconsin, to commission the Hardhead. Again, I cannot recall her number. I have it written somewhere, but I don't know. She was one of what a lot of people call "freshwater boats." It was made and launched, and trial runs were made in Lake Michigan. Then we brought it down the Mississippi River, on through the Panama Canal, to Pearl, and on to Fremantle. That is where we first became involved in wolfpack operations, was on the Hardhead.

Marcello: Now you continued to be a radio operator?

Housenfluck: Yes.

Marcello: I have another question here. We know that somewhere along the line the Japanese naval codes and military codes had been broken. I guess it was Pearl that was getting this information, and then am I correct in saying that in some way or another it would be relayed to the submarines that such-and-such Japanese convoy was coming from Point A to Point B and it was going such-and-such speed and all this sort of thing?

Housenfluck: That is correct. The Japanese code had been broken. We were continuously monitoring what was called the Fox Schedule, which was a continuous broadcast from fleet headquarters to all vessels; and the information, as you said, was given to the particular submarine along the known course of the Japanese convoys or fleets or whatever by way of the Fox Schedule, and also by direct contact with the submarine. We all had special call signs which were changed quite frequently, and we monitored the Fox Schedule as well as the submarine frequencies continuously. When we were called on the submarine frequencies, we would answer. Then they would send the message, and we would shut down the radio.

Marcello: I gather that on many occasions those Japanese convoys were more or less sitting ducks, in the sense that they evidently didn't put very much emphasis on escorts and that sort of thing.

Housenfluck: Not necessarily. Most of the convoys were pretty well escorted during the first part of the war. Then most of the escorts were taken for the battle formations. However, the convoys still were escorted, but the escorts were smaller craft.

Marcello: Mainly, where was your wolfpack operating? Was it operating in that area, let's say, somewhere between the East Indies and Japan?

Housenfluck: Yes. I was trying to think of the area. It was somewhere off Lombok Strait or in that area. We would always go through the Lombok Strait, and we would operate as a wolfpack of three boats. Later on, I think the wolfpack number was increased to include more boats, but three was the total number of the wolfpack at that time.

Marcello: I guess one of the prize targets operating in that area would be tankers that were bringing oil from the East Indies toward Japan.

Housenfluck: That is true, yes. That was one of the major targets that we attacked and sank on a number of occasions.

Marcello: Did any of these submarines that you operated on get involved in any of the other battles that took place in the Pacific? I'm referring now to such things as Leyte Gulf or around the Marianas or anything of that nature?

Housenfluck: Yes, quite a number of them did. In fact, we did on a couple of occasions. We did a lot of reconnaissance work around some of the Pacific islands that were to be attacked later. By reconnaissance I meant close-in observations and pictures taken through the periscope.

Marcello: Did you ever get involved in any of the rescue operations of downed fliers and so on?

Housenfluck: Yes, we did quite a lot of that. It seems that

during the latter part of the war, there were just not the targets left for the submarines, so we were assigned what was called lifeguard duty in various areas when the Army Air Force would make their attacks on the land. We would be positioned off the island, and those planes that did get in difficulty knew about our position and would try to get back as close as possible to us before ditching or bailing out. We did rescue quite a number of airmen in that manner.

Marcello: While you were operating out of Pearl Harbor, as you were on the Gurnard, I think you said you did have an opportunity after coming back off one of these cruises to enjoy life in the Royal Hawaiian?

Housenfluck: I did. I made two, what was called, "R and R's" in the Royal Hawaiian and enjoyed it. It was good relaxation. The facilities were very nice. There was a lot of things to do, and it was enjoyable. The food was excellent (chuckle).

Marcello: We talked earlier about the submarines being referred to as "pig boats," and you said that the Narwhal wasn't necessarily that way, given its size and so on. How about these fleet boats that you were picking up now and going out on these extended patrols? What was their general condition when you would come back off one of these cruises?

Housenfluck: Their general condition was good, and they could not, in my opinion, be referred to as "pig boats." They were kept in very good shape and very clean.

Marcello: In addition to getting free rooms at the Royal Hawaiian, how about the food and so on? Did you have to pay for that, or was that on the government, also?

Housenfluck: No, the food and drinks were on the government, so to speak, and not paid by the crew. And it was excellent.

Marcello: And approximately how long did one of those "R and R's" last?

Housenfluck: Approximately two weeks.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Housenfluck, that kind of exhausts my list of questions. Is there anything else relative to the Pearl Harbor attack that you want to mention that we haven't talked about?

Housenfluck: Nothing that I can think of. Of course, there's lots of little things that went on, but there's nothing really of major interest other than what we have covered. On a different fact, I would like to say that in operating in wolfpacks, at one particular time we did lose one of our boats in the wolfpack, and the reason has not really been truly established because they really don't know. That was the USS Growler. She was part of our wolfpack and failed to respond after an attack and was finally given up as

lost.

Marcello: I'm sure that that was obviously always one of the hazards of submarine duty, because there were quite a few of those that were lost within the course of the war. On the other hand, I don't think that the true contributions of those submarines toward the winning of the war has ever really been fully acknowledged or understood by most people.

Housenfluck: That is quite possibly true. However, some publications, some of the books, that I have read give a very, to me, complete account of what damage was done by the submarine force as well as by the individual submarines. Of course, right after the Pearl Harbor attack, the submarines more or less were the main line of defense since our battle fleet was incapacitated.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Housenfluck, I think that is a pretty good place to end this interview, then. I want to thank you very much for giving me your comments. You obviously said a lot of things that I haven't heard before, after having done all of these interviews. Of course, we're always looking for new information, and I'm sure that scholars are going to find your comments very useful when they have a chance to use this material.

Housenfluck: I hope they do. Thank you.