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Interview with
GLENNON RYAN
September 16, 1988

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Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello
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Oral History Collection

Glennon Ryan

Interviewer: Ronald E. Marcello Date: September 16, 1988

Place of Interview: Cape Girardeau, Missouri

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Glennon Ryan for the University of North Texas Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on September 16, 1988, in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. I am interviewing Mr. Ryan in order to get his reminiscences and experiences while he was a member of the Assembly and Repair Division at the Ford Island Naval Air Station during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Mr. Ryan, 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--that sort of thing.

Mr. Ryan: I was born in Saint Louis, Missouri, on May 22, 1921.

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

Mr. Ryan: I went to a parochial school, then to a public high

school, and graduated in 1940 from high school.

Marcello: And when did you go into the service?

Ryan: I had worked three months as a machinist's apprentice, and I didn't like working in a shop, so I joined the Navy in October of 1940.

Marcello: Why did you decide to join the Navy as opposed to some other branch of the service?

Ryan: My father and another uncle, a brother of my father, had been in the Navy during World War One. Primarily hearing all those Navy stories encouraged me, so it was always in the back of my mind. Somehow or another it was there. They didn't push me at all. I had to ask permission to join and get my father's approval. At the time I was eighteen. I enlisted so I was Regular Navy. Then I went through boot camp at Great Lakes, Company 103-40.

Marcello: And how long did boot camp last at that particular time? Do you remember?

Ryan: Just past Christmas. They gave me a leave of eleven days, up to the week before Christmas, and then I had to be back at camp to sit around that Christmas season (chuckle). We had finished our boot training, and I had to wait for a school to open in Pensacola. Well, I had to sit in boot camp and miss Christmas at home.

Marcello: Back in 1940, how easy or difficult was it to get into the Navy?

Ryan: I don't think it was too difficult--pass the physical. A friend went with me to the recruiting office. He wore glasses, and he asked if he could pass the physical wearing glasses. He was told "no. A chief sitting at the desk asked if he could read the letters on the map behind him. It said United States of America. Without his glasses he couldn't see letters that big, so they turned him down. It was simply pass the physical.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you were waiting for one of the Navy's schools to open up. How difficult or easy was it to get into one of the Navy schools at that time?

Ryan: That was not easy. We had a battery of tests in our entry at boot camp. I don't know how many tests there were. It seemed like it took a couple of days of testing. You had to have mechanical aptitude, and I had that. As I look back on it, I think the "cream" of the class was sent to the aviation branch of the service at the time. That's what they were looking for--to build it up.

Marcello: And which particular school was it that you went to?

Ryan: Aviation Metalsmith's School, Pensacola, Florida.

Marcello: How long did that school last?

Ryan: Sixteen weeks.

Marcello: When you came out of that school, what rank would you have been?

Ryan: Seaman second class.

Marcello: Describe the process, then, by which you went to Pearl Harbor.

Ryan: All right, from there I was given delayed orders to report to the receiving station, San Diego. I went by way of Saint Louis, visited my family, and wound up in San Diego and was there until June of 1941. From there I was shipped by truck to Long Beach and sent aboard the USS Brazos, a tanker anchored off Long Beach. There were twenty of us from this class at Pensacola who stayed together in this period. We chipped paint from stem to stern on that tanker while anchored there, and we painted it, and we loaded fuel to take to Pearl. We had to roll drums of fuel and stow them in the cargo holds and get back to painting when we weren't (chuckle) loading. We were working passengers. We were slaves, is what it amounted to. We had a mean S.O.B. for a boatswain's mate. I have never forgotten that guy. You'd go over the side to chip paint, and if you couldn't climb back up hand-over-hand up the line, you didn't get a ladder, and you didn't get a hand out to help. You slid back down. You missed chow if you didn't do it--if you couldn't get up there on your own.

Marcello: And this is the ship that you took over to.

Ryan: ...to Pearl.

Marcello: ...Pearl Harbor?

Ryan: Yes, it took us a long time getting there. We had to

tow the dredge that you'll see pictures of in photos of Pearl Harbor during the attack. It's sitting out in the middle of the channel with a pipeline running across Ford Island, and the filling is on one side of Ford Island.

Marcello: This is the dredge that the Nevada somehow had to maneuver around, is it not?

Ryan: Yes. It took us a hell of a long time to tow that thing our there. We went at four knots, you know, or whatever it was.

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

Ryan: Fine! I liked it. I enjoyed it. It was nice. It was beautiful where we were. I had dreamed of being in the tropics sometimes when I was in knee-deep snow in boot camp at Great Lakes. Snow and ice gets pretty heavy up there. So I couldn't have been more fortunate.

Marcello: When you got to the Hawaiian Islands, did you go directly to Ford Island?

Ryan: The ship tied up at Ford Island to unload, and we offloaded there. Five of the twenty were assigned to Commander Cruisers, Scouting Forces. Each of them went aboard a different cruiser--the V Division of ships, which is their aircraft division. They all had scout planes. The other fifteen of us went to...some went to...I have forgotten how many went to the Assembly and

Repair Division, and others went to patrol wings and others to utility squadrons. They split them up.

Marcello: Exactly what was going to be your function when you got to Ford Island? What exactly would you be doing? You're an aviation metalsmith.

Ryan: I was a striker at that time.

Marcello: I see. You were still striker even though you had gone through the school.

Ryan: Yes. I had to qualify, then, for a rating. Practically, they had taught us more or less to be blacksmiths. There was more shipfitting involved in what they taught us with heavier metals, so we had to learn "hands-on, then, to fashion aluminum, to repair parts. The Assembly and Repair Division wasn't equipped to handle major repairs, major overhauls. We could tune-up engines and so on after 100 hours and so on. We were equipped to do that. You couldn't rebuild an entire wing on an aircraft, or the fuselage. You had to replace it with a replacement part and stuff like that. We patched shrapnel holes later on. The PBYS, the old patrol planes with the fold-down wing tips, were terrible for buckling the end of the wings. When it hit a wave with the pontoons down, it would tend to buckle part of that structure out there. We worked in teams. We did many repairs on PBYS primarily. One guy would have to get inside the wing while the other guy drove

the rivets with an air gun from the outside. So it took two people. You had to be a snake to weave your way through all those struts on the inside of the plane, inside the wing, with a light. I worked with a little guy named Kosko from somewhere in Pennsylvania. I have never seen or heard of him since the war.

Marcello: So basically, when you got there to Ford Island, you were undergoing on-the-job-training? Is that what you would call it?

Ryan: We were doing the job, yes. We were doing the job. We had inspections. There were two inspections before anything was passed for use. It had to be approved, and the chief metalsmith oversaw all of our work. I guess it was on-the-job-training; we learned as we went along. In some cases we developed our own tools. The first time I ever saw a mirror on an arm is when we did it. We made a wire or something like that so we could see. The hole went in here (gesture), but you couldn't tell where the interior damage may have been. We developed what you are now seeing the telephone company using for communications. We used this--about a three-eighths to half-inch piece of solid plastic in a cylinder. We would bend it to shape, affix it to the end of a flashlight, and bend light into a difficult spot. Now the phone company is using something similar to that for lines. We did little things like that. We didn't know

we were inventing anything (chuckle). It was just for utility.

Marcello: How fast or slow was promotion in that particular rating before the war?

Ryan: Before the war?

Marcello: Yes.

Ryan: Right at that time, it was fast. It became fast. They were looking for aviation specialists. They wanted to build up the naval air forces. It was pretty fast--faster than any of the deck ratings.

Marcello: At the time of the attack, what was your rank?

Ryan: Seaman second.

Marcello: Seaman second yet? Well, that's true because you would not have gotten to Pearl Harbor until when? It was pretty late when you got out there in 1941.

Ryan: August of 1941. I hadn't had my nine months in as seaman second. We skipped seaman first. That's an indication that there was a speed-up. To be honest, I skipped seaman first class. Everybody else had to go apprentice seaman, seaman second, seaman first class before they take the exams for third class petty officer. We skipped seaman first and went right into petty officer third class. I passed the practical factors and the written exams in time to be advanced to petty officer third class in January of 1942. All of us did. We used to cram together before the exams.

Marcello: In that period prior to the attack, and as one gets closer and closer to December 7, 1941, could you, despite the fact that you had not been there that long, detect any changes at all in the routine where you were working or in the activities of the patrol wings that were there?

Ryan: No. I was pretty green in that respect. All of us used to sit around on the steps of the barracks at times and discuss the war in general. We didn't think the Japs were going to attack there. That was too far for them to go.

Marcello: How did the liberty routine work for you there at Ford Island during that period before the war? What kind of liberty did you have?

Ryan: Oh, we had a nice time. Usually, we spent more time on the beach. We weren't carousers; we didn't drink. Most of us were too young to go in the bars, anyway. I wasn't interested in drinking that much. My father was a small-time bootlegger, and we always had home brew at home. I could have had beer at home, but I didn't like it. I didn't like it then. We spent the time on the beach swimming. We would occasionally go to a football game when they were in season there, when the University of Honolulu played, and we went to the movies. The big bands didn't come out there until after the war. But it was nice. One weekend out of the four you stayed aboard

on duty, so three weekends out of four you had all to yourself.

Marcello: Theoretically, if you had had the money to do so, could you have stayed overnight when you had the weekend liberty?

Ryan: Anywhere, yes. If I could afford it, I would have gone to the Royal Hawaiian. I used to go in there and buy cigars (chuckle). That was the extent of it. They didn't want enlisted men in there. I never saw--but there were all kinds of rumors--the signs at San Diego: "Sailors and Dogs, Keep Off the Grass. They did have areas that didn't want sailors.

Marcello: I gather from what you said that you did not find anything attractive down on Hotel or Canal Streets.

Ryan: Oh, yes. There was a stop, yes. You mean the cathouses.

Marcello: Yes, the cathouses were down there, but the curio shops and the tattoo parlors and all that stuff were there, too.

Ryan: Oh, yes. I got no tattoos. Nobody was going to puncture me with any purple dye or whatever it is, so I didn't get any. I kept seeing some crazy tattoos (chuckle). We all stripped down in the showers, and I don't know where the hell this was, but one guy who was pretty heavy-set was tattooed all over. On his rear end he had a propeller on each cheek of his rear end, left

and right; he was twin-screwed. That was the big thing, to be tattooed with twin screws, so he had to have himself tattooed with twin screws.

Marcello: Describe what your living quarters were like there on Ford Island.

Ryan: We had nice barracks. It was just a big open bunk room with rows of small lockers back to back, an upper and a lower locker, and that was the extent of it. You had to stow all of your personal possessions, uniform, in there. The Navy blue uniform stayed in rolls packed in the bottom of the sea bag along with the peacoat.

Marcello: What was the food like?

Ryan: Good food. The station had good food. It had a reputation for it.

Marcello: In general, as you look back upon life in the Navy before Pearl Harbor, at that time do you feel that you made a good decision when you joined?

Ryan: Yes. I was talking to a fellow younger than me. He was in the Korean War. We both expressed how we enjoyed the Navy. I enjoyed my time in the Navy, yes. In fact, I went into the Reserves following my six-year regular hitch. I think I would have gone with Patton to fight the Russians (chuckle). For Korea they didn't call me up. They called up a guy up the street, and he had a couple of kids. But they didn't call me, so I just let it run out more or less.

Marcello: This, I think, brings us into those days immediately prior to the attack itself, and, of course, we want to go into this period in as much detail as you can remember. Let's talk about that weekend of December 6 and 7 of 1941. Let's start with the Saturday, December 6. Do you recall what your routine was on that day?

Ryan: No. I think I had the day off, but I didn't go ashore. I don't know what I did. I don't recall.

Marcello: Why was it that you decided not to go ashore? Do you know?

Ryan: No. We had pretty good recreation facilities there. We had a swimming pool--a good one. I don't recall that it would be Olympic-size, but it was a large swimming pool, outdoor. We had sailboats that we could sail in the harbor--good-sized sailboats with a 2,000-pound keel. In fact, one of them was up on chocks...well, I didn't work on it. But, anyway, it was in the boathouse at the time. But they had been working on that one--stripped the paint and all that--on December 7. There were two of them. We could take them out. We had a ball diamond, movie theater. We had better movies than...the only times you got better movies would be when the ship came in from the West Coast, and then we would go aboard them to see a better movie. We had everything right there. There was no reason always to go ashore. We didn't have much money, anyway--thirty-six bucks a month

as a seaman second. That didn't go very far.

Marcello: To your knowledge, did anything eventful happen back on base that evening of Saturday, December 6, or was it more or less a routine and uneventful night?

Ryan: Routine. I think it was uneventful, yes.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us into that Sunday morning of December 7. Of course, we want to go into this one in as much detail as you can remember, and I'll let you pick up the story at this point. But let me start with one question. On a Sunday morning, if you didn't have the duty, was there not a holiday routine? Couldn't you sleep in?

Ryan: Oh, yes, and many were sleeping in.

Marcello: Okay, describe what your routine was on that Sunday morning.

Ryan: I happened to have the duty that Sunday. We had to muster, answer roll call, with a junior officer who was the officer-of-the-day. We mustered in front of the administration building. The USS California was right to our back. There may have been--I'm guessing--about a hundred men in the ranks at that time answering roll call because we had to man various posts around the base.

Marcello: Would this be mainly clean-up and maintenance and things of that nature?

Ryan: Clean-up, maintenance...the firehouse crew would change

...yeomen in the administration building...radiomen (we had a lot of radiomen)...control tower. A lot of personnel were changing. I had the duty that day--being an aviation metalsmith striker--to being "Captain of the Head" in the chief's quarters. (chuckle) I had to clean the men's room in the chief's barracks.

We answered roll call just before 8:00, and the flag hadn't even been taken up the staff yet. I heard a plane buzzing; he was diving on the island. The carriers, when they came in, always sent their planes in first, and somebody said, "It must be from the 'Big E. That would have been the Enterprise. But it wasn't. It was a plane with a big red dot on it, and it wasn't diving like our planes dive. This was a shallow dive, and he threw his bomb, more or less. He threw it out, and it went out in the water. I could see a big splash. I think the first one missed. The junior officer-of-the-day then ordered us into the administration building.

Marcello: In other words, was it known immediately that it was a Japanese plane?

Ryan: Yes.

Marcello: Okay.

Ryan: Yes, with the big red dot, you couldn't miss it.

Marcello: Describe your movement from the muster area to the administration building.

Ryan: Well, it wasn't very far. There was no panic. The bomb wasn't that close to us. There wasn't anything to create any panic, you know, just some cussing about the "dirty Japs" then. It was a surprise; certainly no one expected it. And we were in there after the Arizona blew. We didn't see all of this going on until we were ordered out of there.

Marcello: About how long were you in that administration building?

Ryan: I have no recollection of the length of time. It was sometime after the Arizona blew because the concrete deck in the administration building rippled like a wave when you felt that tremendous force, that concussion. It was like if you'd squeeze and then let go.

Marcello: While you were in that administration building, what did you and and your buddies talk about? What thoughts went through your mind?

Ryan: Nothing. I wasn't with any buddies at the time, you know, close buddies that we had worked together. One guy was sitting there reading the funny papers. I was just waiting for somebody to tell me what to do. I didn't have a battle station that I know of. Some people were trying to get in a small armory there. Nobody knew who had the key. They were bashing in a steel door with a fire extinguisher. Eventually, somebody, either the O.D. or the junior O.D., found a key for the room and got sidearms, is what they amounted

to.

Marcello: This is in the administration building?

Ryan: Yes.

Marcello: Did you get a sidearm?

Ryan: No, they had to go to a special team that came in to get them. What were they called? They had a name for them, but I don't remember what it was. But they got the side-arms there.

From there we were ordered over to the barracks, which was across a narrow street. "Watch for the planes, they said. Somebody held the door open for you to run, and, son-of-a-gun, here comes a plane, and, boy, he made a pass. He looked like he was strafing, but he was banking left to come back. I dove under that dredge pipe that ran up that street. I could hardly squeeze under that doggone thing (chuckle). He made his pass, and I got up and went into the barracks from there.

Marcello: What was the purpose in sending you back over to the barracks?

Ryan: I don't know. Well, it had a concrete roof. It was concrete decks all the way, for one thing. They wanted us to get out of the ad building, I guess, to get out of their way. There were a hundred people milling around.

Marcello: Who is it that was giving orders? Is it still this officer-of-the-day, or has he disappeared by this time?

Ryan: Well, he had disappeared, yes. He was manning his post,

I suppose. More than likely, a chief petty officer was giving orders. I went over to the barracks, and somebody told me they were issuing weapons down at the hangar. I went down to the hangar, and by the time I got there all they had was a .45 and no ammo. I strapped on the .45. I thought maybe I would find some ammo later. I ran across the chief. He saw me with that, and he said, "Give it to this guy! He's got the ammo!" (Chuckle) So that was my armed experience that day.

Marcello: So by this time, have the Japanese more or less forgotten about Ford Island?

Ryan: Oh, no, no, no! No, not by any means! I started carrying stretchers for the wounded. The battlewagons were tied up all in a line more or less against Ford Island, and when they abandoned ship, the first place they came was Ford Island. Many of them were burned, blistered, when they came through the burning oil, you know, after the punctured tanks spewed the bunker fuel, which is almost like asphalt. It was two to three inches thick on the water. When they abandoned ship, they went into this stuff, and when they came swimming out of it they got...they didn't splash it away and try to swim underwater. They came up through it and got blistered. Tremendous football-size blisters were hanging on some of them.

Well, we began carrying stretchers. We put the first group on top of our tables in the mess hall since that was vacant. I don't know where we got the morphine, but there were boxes of these little tubes with the needle on them with morphine. We'd give a guy a shot of morphine to kill the pain. The mess hall was getting loaded with people. We stripped all the bunks we could, of sheets and blankets, and we kept them warm, anyway. We kept them covered, and that's about all we could do at the time.

Marcello: Who was giving orders?

Ryan: Nobody that I can say gave you an order to do something. We just did it. It seems like that's what we did. I don't remember hearing anybody order me to do anything.

Marcello: In other words, there was an individual recognition that certain things had to be done?

Ryan: Things had to be done, and we did them. The boatswain's mate, master-at-arms at the time, went around knocking the windows out with a golf club. He was the master-at-arms of the barracks.

Marcello: I'm assuming he did that to prevent somebody getting hurt by flying glass.

Ryan: Yes. Well, they had dropped a bomb in one of the hangars. There were fires, and they strafed a hell of a lot. The planes were all on fire. We had planes from the ships. They had scout planes--SOCs and SO-2Cs and

SO-3Cs. They were all on our launching ramps beside the hangars. They had guns in them, and some people armed those .30-caliber machine guns and tried to fire from them, but they were blocked in by the hangars. There was fires down that way because planes had been strafed. There had been a bomb dropped in one of the hangars. It was a dud, but it bored a hell of a big hole. You could go over and gawk at it later.

There was one in the middle of the mess hall. We didn't notice it before. In the middle of the mess hall, there was built an atrium, hollow square with no roof over this center portion, and there was a bomb that went right in the middle of it. Those who were severely wounded, bleeding badly, we took up there on stretchers. Somebody had to get on top of this thing to hand the stretchers over to the corpsmen on the inside. I laid on it. It wasn't the bomb itself. It was this quarry tile. It was slick as glass with dust on it, and you couldn't climb it. You had to lay against it. The bomb, another dud, was buried underneath it. You had to hand the stretcher over to somebody on the far side. Somebody told me that we had one doctor--and that was a dentist--aboard at that time, so there wasn't much surgery going on. We had some walking wounded who were bandaged. They came from the ships.

Marcello: I guess all these people were covered with oil, too,

were they not? Most of them?

Ryan: Yes, more like asphalt. It's not like motor oil that you could rub off. They had to go to sickbay and have it removed. We took them down to boats the next day, and from there they went to the Navy hospital in the Navy Yard.

Marcello: Now is this the kind of work that you were doing most of the day there?

Ryan: That's what I did all day, yes. We stood up and cheered when the Nevada went by. We dropped everything. Everybody cheered. The ship was on her way, and then it got hit. That was the ship my uncle had been on many years ago. It was part of the Great White Fleet.

Marcello: Did you have a chance to eat at all that day?

Ryan: The boilers had been knocked out. They had been preparing chicken. I wouldn't eat raw chicken, but some guys did. They said it was partly cooked, but I wasn't going to eat it. I don't recall eating, no. There must have been something. Sandwiches! Yes, there were sandwiches--bologna, two pieces of bread.

Marcello: What did you do that night?

Ryan: I stayed down in this area--a room off the mess hall. We slept on the floor. My mattress and bedding had been gone, so I wound up with a bloody blanket and slept on the floor. Somebody had a lantern. No power, no lights on, no nothing. We put some things over the window, so

we had a little dim light. That's where I slept that night.

Marcello: Did you sleep very well?

Ryan: I guess so. Not sound, no. No, it was only a few hours.

Marcello: What kind of activity was going on outside during the night?

Ryan: Not much. Oh, I passed up one important thing. These people with weapons, who did have weapons, were put on a perimeter defense or guard duty. We expected that landing parties would be put ashore. When the Enterprise was within range, she launched...I think it was five planes. We shot down a number of those planes, or the guys with weapons did. Not waiting for the signal to fire, they fired at will. The word had been passed not to fire. It was a friendly plane, but they fired, anyway. The planes came in with lights on.

Marcello: What did the sky look like?

Ryan: Oh, you've never seen a Fourth of July like that. It was all tracers, it seemed. The guy that I had given the .45 to, he was an idiot. He was standing on the lanai firing straight up in the air with that .45. I don't know who he was. I saw him out there. He was firing into the concrete above us.

Marcello: I guess everybody was trigger-happy that night, were they not?

Ryan: Yes.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were expecting an invasion. What other rumors did you hear, if any?

Ryan: There were some weird ones. I don't know. I tended not to believe the rumors. This guy heard this; this guy heard that. That was scuttlebutt, and I never did believe much in scuttlebutt, you know, what this guy said to this guy. If you didn't get it first hand, forget it. I was always skeptical of them.

Marcello: What did you do the next day?

Ryan: Carried more stretchers. I was carrying stretchers down a step the last time I did, and we had a real heavy guy. It must have just been the lopsided configuration of my spine or something, and I must have pinched a nerve. I got a hell of a pain in the back, and I almost dropped the stretcher. I motioned the guy over that was standing there to take my end of the stretcher. I couldn't handle it. That was the last one I carried that next day. They were taking them to boats and over to the Navy Yard.

Marcello: What did you do for the rest of the day?

Ryan: I think I just wandered around. There wasn't much left to do. The fires were out, and I went and gawked. I went and gawked at that bomb in the hole; I had seen the other one in the sickbay. They had fished out one of the Jap planes. We had barges with booms for this

purpose of salvaging our own, and they pulled up this damned thing--whole, intact. I went over and cut a souvenir off of it. I've still got it at home. It was probably made by Goodyear or something (chuckle). I don't know what it says in Japanese (chuckle), but it's the emblem off of the side of the tire.

Marcello: Since you had some free time the next day, that is, on December 8, describe what you recall from the damage done there on Ford Island. Just take me around Ford Island and talk about the damage that you saw in the aftermath of the attack.

Ryan: Oh, this was terrible. It looked like all the ships were down. They weren't. I forgot which...the West Virginia was inboard. Yes, it was.

Marcello: The West Virginia was outboard; the Tennessee was inboard.

Ryan: The West Virginia was outboard, and the Tennessee was inboard. The Oklahoma was completely rolled over. All you saw was the bilge keel. The California was scuttled. Water was, oh, just a few feet from the deck. The Nevada was down, run aground.

Marcello: What was happening over at the Arizona?

Ryan: Smoke. Still a hell of a lot of smoke pouring out of everything. Dense, black smoke. Well, on the seventh, you couldn't see. You couldn't see any of the ships very well from the ad building and our barracks. There

wasn't anything happening there. It had happened. There was nothing that anybody could do. They were trying to put fires out on the superstructure and everything.

Marcello: What had happened to the planes, the PBYs, there at Ford Island? What was their condition?

Ryan: They were all destroyed, burned. Oh, they didn't get the two Sikorsky utility planes. These planes, if you've ever seen the old China Clipper, a picture of it, look something like a smaller model of it. It had rows of portholes on the side, but they were seaplanes, amphibious seaplanes. They were part of the utility squadron. There were volunteers who went up early in the morning on December 7 in those dizzy things with .30-06 rifles poking through those portholes. They were going after the Japs (chuckle). Do or die, you know. They would have died--been shot down--if they would have met another plane. They went up, anyway. I remember one guy came back and told us about it. He was one of the guys who had been in our class in Pensacola. He was from Minnesota--a tall, lanky guy named Maxwell. They went up with rifles to fire at the Jap planes, but that was too late. They were gone. To get back to the eighth, those were practically the only planes that survived there.

Marcello: What was the condition of the hangars there at Ford

Island?

Ryan: It was only this one that was really badly damaged. They were all sheet metal, corrugated iron. You could blow sheets off and get some more and put them back up. You know, it's that easy. That's all they were.

Marcello: Had there been planes in those hangars?

Ryan: Yes.

Marcello: So one of those hangars that had planes in it would have been untouched?

Ryan: Yes, repair hangars. They wouldn't have any damage.

Marcello: How were your skills as an aviation metalsmith put into use in those days and weeks following the attack?

Ryan: Not at all with that stuff. Well, most of the planes were destroyed by fire. You can't do much with a plane that's been burned. Part of the old planes were cloth--fabric-covered ailerons, rudder, things like that. We did have a small stock of spare parts that had been scavenged from other planes in the past, so we had a little stockpile of things like that. But none of those planes were...well, they were just junk. It looked like a junkyard, you know, beyond repair. The only planes that came in had been from the Enterprise when she did come into harbor.

Marcello: What did you do then during those weeks following the Pearl Harbor attack? What was your function?

Ryan: Well, I guess there were planes to repair because we

went back in the shop. I don't know how long I worked in the shop. I was put on an outside detail...I goofed off, and the chief caught me in it, and he put me on an outside detail. An outside detail at that time was scraping this damned asphalt off the launching ramps. It would build up, and it had to be taken off with a shovel and put in some kind of container and hauled out of there. That's what the outside detail was. That was a dirty task, and it was punishment without court-martial or anything. I had the opportunity to volunteer...the educational officer lost a guy--he was transferred or something--and I volunteered for the job. So I got a job in the educational office helping him.

Marcello: Doing what?

Ryan: Issuing the practical factors exam, which was a pre-exam before the final written exam or test for advancement in the rank. I was in that office until December of 1943.

Marcello: And then were did you go from there?

Ryan: I went to college as an officer candidate. All I had to do was pass the officer's physical, since I had my test scores from way back in boot camp. I passed the physical, and in December of 1943 I got home for Christmas. I entered college in March. I asked for colleges on the East Coast, thinking I'd outsmart the Navy and they'd send me to some on the West Coast. I wound up 125 miles from home in Fulton, Missouri, where

Churchill later made his Iron Curtain speech.

Marcello: And what was the name of the college?

Ryan: Westminster college.

Marcello: And when you got out of officer's candidate school, where did you go from there?

Ryan: I washed out, so I went back to a receiving station in Shumaker. I don't know where it was, somewhere in the wastelands of California. It took about a six-hour bus ride to get from camp to San Francisco. There were three carriers out in the harbor. This is when the war was going good, you know, and they were hitting carriers with kamikazes pretty regularly. I said, "Oh, I hope I don't catch one of those. (chuckle) I didn't. I was assigned to the North Island Naval Air Station.

Marcello: Is that where you finished the war?

Ryan: That's where I finished the war, yes, in August of 1945. I celebrated in San Diego. I had the duty that day. I had the watch. (Chuckle) The only place to get a drink was Padre's Field, baseball field. (Chuckle) They were selling beer. All the taverns, all the bars, had closed and boarded up their windows.

Marcello: Okay, well, I think that's probably a pretty good place to end this interview, Mr. Ryan. I want to thank you very much for having spoken with me. You've said some interesting things and some things that have given me a different slant on what happened on Ford Island. Of

course, we're always looking for new things, so thank you very much for your time.

Ryan: Well, you're welcome. Thank you for doing it.