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Interview with  
LEONARD WEBB  
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Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello  
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Oral History Collection

Leonard Webb

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

Place of Interview: Cape Girardeau, Missouri

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Leonard Webb for the University of North Texas Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on September 16, 1988, in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. I'm interviewing Mr. Webb in order to get his reminiscences and experiences while he was at Pearl Harbor during the Japanese attack there on December 7, 1941. More specifically, Mr. Webb was assigned to Staff Headquarters, 14th Naval District, there at Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Webb, 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. Webb: I was born on May 2, 1920, in East Saint Louis, Illinois. My mother died shortly after birth. My dad was a railroad conductor. My grandmother in Cape Girardeau had to take me to raise. I joined

the Navy at seventeen, immediately after graduating from high school in 1937

Marcello: Why did you decide to enter the Navy in 1937?

Webb: Well, actually, I guess it was the glory and romance. This was in the midst of the Great Depression. I had a decent job at the time. In fact, I was making about \$35 a week, and I joined the Navy for \$21 a month. It certainly wasn't a financial opportunity (chuckle). That's basically it, I think, that plus the fact that I had no real close family ties. I was kind of raised an orphan.

Marcello: Why did you select the Navy as opposed to one of the other branches?

Webb: Oh, in all probability it gets back to that old romance of the sea again. Of course, I knew several fellows that I had grown up with during my childhood who were in the Navy.

Marcello: How difficult or easy was it to get into the Navy at that time that you entered in 1937?

Webb: Well, at the time that I went in the Navy, the recruiter said that there was roughly a million men on the waiting list to get in. It was tough. They not only hit you with an I.Q. test, but a stiff physical examination; and if they found anything wrong, physically or mentally, you didn't get in. There was a waiting list (chuckle), in other words, to get in, and I think that was a sign

of the economic times that brought that on.

Marcello: Economics is a standard reason that most of the men give for entering the service at that time.

Webb: I would imagine.

Marcello: The Navy didn't pay a whole lot, but there was a certain amount of security there.

Webb: Right, right.

Marcello: Where did you take your boot camp?

Webb: 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?

Webb: I suppose it was normal at that time. It was tough. We had the good cop, bad cop routine. Of course, I was too young to realize what was going on. We had a chief torpedoman who was the company commander, and he was probably the meanest human I have ever encountered in my life (chuckle). Then we had the good cop, a chief signalman by the name of Traynor. He was the guy you could go cry to (chuckle). You probably don't want to know the name of the chief torpedoman (chuckle). We'd get sued.

Marcello: I guess boot camp lasted the full twelve weeks at that time, did it not?

Webb: Four months.

Marcello: Four months.

Webb: Four months, minimum of ten-hour days on the grinder. We got the old proverbial short haircut. For the first thirty days you were quarantined; you couldn't get off the base even.

Marcello: Where did you go from boot camp?

Webb: From boot camp I went to the battleship Mississippi. She was a first-line battleship at that time and one of the most modern they had at a total cost of \$35 million. That would barely build a rowboat nowadays (chuckle). But she was the most expensive ship in the fleet.

Marcello: And how long did you remain aboard the Mississippi?

Webb: I was aboard the Mississippi for about three-and-a-half years, over three years.

Marcello: And did you go from there, then, more or less to Pearl Harbor?

Webb: Yes, and I think there might be a reason there that you'd like to know why I went to Pearl Harbor (chuckle).

Marcello: Okay, describe it.

Webb: I worked for the commanding officer. I was one of the commanding officer's writers on the Mississippi, a man who had quite a bit of reknown in World War II. He was a captain at the time, and it happened to be Raymond A. Spruance, who had the battle fleet in the Pacific after the war started and did the first big job on the Japanese at Midway. Being a yeoman, I opened the captain's mail, and I saw some new ship movements.

Battleship Division 3, which was composed of the Mississippi, the Idaho, and the New Mexico, were going to the East Coast, and there wasn't any doubt about why they were going. They were going to find the Bismarck, the German battleship. I did not want to find the (chuckle) Bismarck. An opportunity came up to be transferred to the 14th Naval District. I opened that mail, too, and since I was the right rating...I probably was the only man on the ship that knew the opening was there. I went to Pearl Harbor to get some easy duty. I outmaneuvered myself (chuckle).

Marcello: Describe the process by which you had become a yeoman aboard the Mississippi.

Webb: I think it went back to the O'Rourke General Classification Test and what-have-you that they gave you in boot camp before you got out. I made a very good score on the O'Rourke. I wanted to be an electrician's mate, by the way, or a machinist's mate. But I got aboard ship and they...this "join the Navy and see the world, you can do that under rare conditions, but it turned out they needed a striker in the captain's office; and here I had a good score, and I could type. That did it. I explained to them that I wanted to be an electrician's mate, and they said, "Yes, report to the captain's office. So this is how I became a yeoman (chuckle).

Marcello: During this period of time, like you pointed out, you worked for the person who was later to become Admiral Spruance.

Webb: Right, right. He was one of the commanders. We had two other ship's commanders there during that time, but Raymond Spruance was the one I remember distinctly.

Marcello: Describe what sort of a man Spruance was, so far as you can remember in your position as a yeoman.

Webb: He was a cold and an aloof man. He was all-business. He was Navy 100 percent, and he lived "by the book. He was not a great disciplinarian, but then he didn't have to be. His manner would let you know that you would do exactly what the Navy expected of you, and the whole crew did exactly that. He didn't raise hell in particular, but he was the type of a person whose personality was demanding. There wasn't a man on that ship that didn't know he would do his job to the best of his ability because there is no doubt in his mind that Raymond Spruance was going to require just that. In other words, he was a man who could get the best out of you and maintain discipline without making any big noise. His manner, his mode of operation, demanded this. He was a good commanding officer; he was a fine Naval officer.

Marcello: I think what you say more or less confirms what others have had to say about him. There is a biography of



Spruance with the subtitle, "The Quiet Warrior.

Webb: Oh, in other words, I am confirmed (chuckle). Well, I saw the man every day at least once, sometimes many times, and there was no levity whatsoever about him. I only saw him smile one time in over two years, and that was a deadly serious effort with him.

Marcello: You mentioned that you went in the Navy at the age of seventeen. Would you have come in under the so-called minority cruise program?

Webb: Yes, sir, that's correct. I was to get out the day before I was twenty-one. But, of course, in the meantime a paperhanger by the name of Schickelgruber [Hitler] had started a war in Europe, and it looked like it was foolish to get out. You knew darn well you were going to be called back, in the draft or otherwise, so I extended my enlistment in order to get this duty at Pearl Harbor, which at that time was considered overseas duty.

Marcello: As you look back on that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy, that period up to the attack at Pearl, how would you describe the morale? In other words, were you glad that you joined the Navy?

Webb: Oh, yes. The national pastime, if you'll pardon the expression, in the Navy at that time was "bitching. Everybody was "bitching, and really you had nothing to complain about. You had clean clothes; you had a clean

bed; you had good food. But being an incoming mail yeoman for a while, even at that early age I noticed that people "bitched" because the mail didn't come in, and then they "bitched" because they read it and they didn't like what was in it after it got there (chuckle). In other words, I don't think the grouching was at all serious. People growled because it was a way of life. I'm sure it was that way in all the service branches. You didn't have anything to growl about, but growl anyway. The only thing that really, I think, would be a basis for growling is this business of going on a six-week cruise in 1939 and never getting back. Over four years later, I got back to the States, so that was a long six weeks. But those things were required by the Navy at the time. You'd go on a cruise, and you didn't get back in six weeks. You might get back a couple of years later or whatever they thought at the time. International politics demanded of the Navy that you might be gone a long time.

Marcello: So when was it, then, that you actually got to Pearl Harbor?

Webb: In the first part of 1941. I've forgotten what month, but it was in the spring of 1941.

Marcello: Describe what your assignment was once you got there.

Webb: Actually, I was assigned to the Fleet Hydrographic Office in downtown Honolulu, and I had never seen the

place in my life. I was used to being shipboard where everything was 100 percent accurate on all records and all people. But evidently these billets in the 14th Naval District, they were allowed so many men and so many ratings at a certain location, which had nothing to do with where you were going to actually work. I was assigned to the Fleet Hydrographic Office. I never even saw the place. I was put in Naval Operations, Overseas Transportation, at Staff Headquarters in Pearl Harbor, not Honolulu.

We had a good life. Everything was a bit lackadaisical at the time. You could go to work in the morning in civilian clothes, and this was unheard of in the fleet. Now, of course, sometime during the morning you needed to put your uniform on. We worked four-and-a-half days a week, we got off on Wednesday afternoon. Man, I had heard about Paradise, and Hawaii was indeed that for me because a few months later I was at least a second class petty officer at the time. At that time, if you were second class or above, the Navy paid transportation for your family and your household effects. So a few months later my wife and young son, baby son, came out, and we got a new Navy apartment just out the Navy Yard gate.

Marcello: Let me back up a minute and get some background on this. When was it that you got married?

Webb: I got married on September 30, 1939. In a couple of weeks it will be forty-nine years.

Marcello: So that was about two years into the Navy that you got married.

Webb: Right, at the ripe old age of nineteen (chuckle).

Marcello: Was this a hometown girl?

Webb: Oh, yes, a hometown girl.

Marcello: Did that require some considerable working out, that is, to get married that time while in the Navy?

Webb: The Navy had no objections. It wasn't like people being stationed overseas now in a foreign country and you have to get permission from the commanding officer and all this bit. No, it was a matter of logistics more than anything else. When she left Missouri, it was a question of how she was going to be able to get to San Pedro, California, where the battle fleet was stationed at the time, while I was still there. She made it by about a week, and then I went to sea again. So that basically was the problem.

Marcello: What kind of provisions did the Navy make at that time for dependents in the Hawaiian Islands?

Webb: Actually, there was no base housing--none whatsoever--except they did build this new Navy housing. In itself, now that wasn't bad. They gave me \$45 a month as a rental allowance, and it was renting me a new Navy apartment at \$18 a month. Now that's good arithmetic,

so I couldn't complain about that at all. And at that time, since I was not assigned to a base where there was quarters for me or where there was food furnished--I'm talking about mess--they paid me \$45 a month for subsistence allowance. That's a total of \$90 for rent and food, and that was big money in those days. In fact, that was more than my base pay. So like I say, until those Japanese friends came in, I had a real good go.

Marcello: Let's get back to.

Webb: Incidentally, the Navy house is still there. I saw it at the 45th Anniversary two years ago. It's still sitting there.

Marcello: Let's go back and talk about your workweek. You mentioned that you worked four-and-a-half days a week.

Webb: Right.

Marcello: And you mentioned that you had Wednesday afternoons off.

Webb: Right. Wednesday afternoons, Saturdays, and Sundays, which leads up to another thing which maybe you're not ready for yet. At the time of that attack, in the Navy Yard I got to Staff Headquarters--another yeoman and myself--and there was no one there. In other words, nobody had a battle station. Naturally, we kind of floated around loose, if you know what I mean (chuckle).

Marcello: Yes, we'll talk about that a little bit later on. Let me ask you this. How was it that you got over to Staff

Headquarters of the 14th Naval District?

Webb: Evidently, they examined my service records. I was sent to the receiving ship in the 14th Naval District, and I think I was a second class yeoman at the time. They looked at the records, and there was a billet open in Naval Operations, Overseas Transportation for a second class yeoman. They didn't care that the assignment was at the Fleet Hydrographic Office. They put me in Staff Headquarters. Both of them were a part of the flag complement, anyway.

Marcello: And what kind of work were you doing there at Fleet Headquarters?

Webb: Basically transportation for dependents on Navy transports and what-have-you, and, in particular, transportation of commissioned officer personnel. In other words, when you've got a Navy four-striper who's heading for Washington, D.C., you need to make some arrangements. So basically that's what we were really doing. We swapped rides with the Army Air Force, and we got them out if they were high-ranking. Nobody wanted seven, eight, ten days on a slow ship. For the high-ranking ones, we'd get them a ride on Army Air Force or on Navy aircraft that were going back to the States. There was a big difference between twenty hours of flying and ten days on a slow ship. Anybody from lieutenant commander on down, he just had to take the

old Navy transport (chuckle). In other words, I had quite a rapport with the Army Air Force transportation personnel because of this. We gave them a ride, and they gave us a ride.

Marcello: As one gets closer and closer to December 7, and as conditions between the United States and Japan were getting worse, were there any changes in the kinds of tasks and duties that you were performing there at Staff Headquarters?

Webb: No, basically I don't think it changed an awful lot. As I say, the first duty of anybody in the Navy is military duty--in other words, fighting. We had no battle stations. I'm talking about the flag complement now. We had no battle stations. We just did the old day-to-day paper shuffling that goes on in the Navy.

Marcello: Did you ever hear any scuttlebutt while you were in this position relative to what was going on with the fleet or anything of that nature?

Webb: Yes, yes, I think it was fairly prevalent. I'm talking about personnel around the flag now, where information would be a sensitive thing. We would, indeed, someday be in war with Japan. I don't have to tell you that the way it started was a complete surprise.

Marcello: People were perhaps expecting war with Japan, but you didn't hear much talk about the possibility of somebody hitting Pearl Harbor.

Webb; Nobody was stupid enough to hit Pearl Harbor (chuckle). I mean, no Navy in the world would take that on--we thought! Of course, we didn't think an aircraft could sink a battleship, either. We had a lot of misinformation (chuckle) in those days.

Marcello: Normally speaking, when you got off duty and went home, what would you and your wife do for entertainment and so on? What sort of a social life did you and your wife have there with a young child?

Webb: The whole neighborhood was Navy, and you drank beer with the neighbors at lawn parties or what-have-you. Speaking of which, there was a lawn, so it was kind of like living at home. We had a lawn to put out and water and take care of it. In other words, they gave you a new home--a new apartment, I will say--but that's as far as the Navy went. So we did a little gardening and this, that, and the other. I had an old 1929 Model-A Ford, so on weekends we'd drive all the way around the island. For an old country boy, it was kind of an ideal life, really. The social life would be, I suppose, what it would be like around any normal Navy base. At that time there was Bloch Arena, and there would be smokers there, Navy fights and what-have-you. They'd have movies, and the admission was nominal--I don't know--something like fifteen cents, a quarter, something like that. Of course, we had grocery shopping. We'd shop



downtown Honolulu or go down to the sub base where the commissary was and buy cheap groceries. It was just almost a civilian home life. In fact, I felt like I was in the civilian Navy after coming out of three hard years in the fleet.

Marcello: I suppose that you had to find cheap forms of entertainment, given the limited pay you were receiving. I mean, you were doing okay, but you still weren't probably receiving enough pay to live extravagantly or anything like that.

Webb: I think we could if we hadn't been so conservative. A short time before the Japanese hit, I had made first class at the time. That was a base pay of \$84 a month, plus there was some longevity for being in the second enlistment; and here's this \$45 food allowance and \$45 rental allowance. Then they finally came up with a clothing allowance. Before that time the Navy gave you your first set of clothes, and you bought them all on your own from then on. I made a remark to her, "Gee whiz, we're making almost \$200 a month. We're going to be making more money than we'll know what to do with. Incidentally, that wasn't a joke; that was dead serious. So, no, we weren't hurting financially. Gasoline cost a little bit. You had to pay thirty-two cents a gallon for gasoline when it was thirteen cents in the States. We were doing real well.

Marcello: Describe what kind of quarters the Navy provided for you. What was your housing like?

Webb: Well, this particular unit had four apartments in it. I suppose they'd call that a fourplex now. It was new and it had a large living room and a small dining room, a kitchen. The kitchen was complete, by the way, with range, refrigerator, and what-have-you. It had a hot water heater on the back porch. Upstairs there was one large large bedroom--it was a good-sized bedroom--and a bath. Of course, for she and I and the baby, this was all we needed. They did have two-bedroom apartments, too, but these things were assigned on the basis of need, and, of course, the first ones were assigned on the basis of "cumshaw" (who did you know). That's why I got one of the first ones (chuckle). I mean, old Navy politics, you know.

Marcello: This brings us into that weekend of December 7, 1941, and we want to go into this in as much detail as you can remember. Do you recall what your routine was on that Saturday of December 6, 1941?

Webb: Oh, I don't know. I think I did some yard work. I believe the wife and I went shopping, and we came home fairly early in the evening, and I'm reading the Honolulu Star-Bulletin. The Japanese are real upset because we have cut off their oil supply because of their aggression in the Far East. I read the front page,

and it sounded like a latter day prophet. I told the wife, "It's going to be a short while until we're in all-out war, because the diplomats were talking nasty at the time. I said, "We're going to have a war with those people. Little did I know it was going to happen the next morning. In fact, it was pure conjecture on my part because I really didn't know anything. The sad fact is that it did happen the next morning.

Marcello: Do you recall what time you turned in that night?

Webb: Oh, I believe it was probably 11:00, 11:30--something about like that.

Marcello: Did you do any entertaining that evening?

Webb: That particular evening, as I recall, we had a couple over who lived in the same housing complex and sat there and discussed the usual old Navy scuttlebutt--you know, drink a few beers and tell a lot of lies (chuckle). I think they went home around 11:00 or 11:30, and we went to bed.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us into that morning of December 7, 1941, and what I want to ask you at this point before we get to talk about that is, where was your housing relative to the Staff Headquarters?

Webb: Probably about the same distance as it would be to what I prefer to call the battle line, the battleships--maybe a half-mile in a straight line. We lived about a block or block-and-a-half outside the main gate of the

Navy Yard.

Marcello: All right, so pick up the story, then, on that Sunday morning of December 7

Webb: My introduction to World War II?

Marcello: That's correct.

Webb: I was laying in bed. I think about 7:30 I might have have awakened, but I was in that netherland in between-- not awake, not asleep. My wife had gotten up to see about the baby; he was squawking as usual. She had gotten up to see about him, and I remember hearing a dull explosion.

My wife came over to the bed and said, "Hey, there's a big fire in the Navy Yard!" Well, I informed her that I wasn't a fireman (chuckle), but I raised up on one elbow. Our bedroom was upstairs, and I looked out the window, and there was, indeed, a fire in the Navy Yard. About that time three planes came over at about utility pole height, and I saw red tails on them, and I questioned the parentage of these pilots. I assumed they were off the Enterprise because Japanese planes and ours did at that time look quite a bit alike, particularly the SBDs. Like I say, I was questioning their parentage. Who would have the gall to buzz Navy housing before 8:00 on Sunday morning?

About that time...right down the street from us was a multi-story brick building they called the "Receiving

Ship, a misnomer (chuckle). As I said, it was not a ship. It was building, but that was the title. It was multi-story--I don't know--of four, five six stories. These planes banked sharply to the left, and when they banked that's when I found out we were in war. I saw those red circles on the bottom of the wings. I heard I broke all records in putting on trousers and shoes. At any rate they were coming in behind this multi-story "Receiving Ship" or building. When they got to the building and they banked to the right, wouldn't you know that the whole battle line is lined up out there! They couldn't miss. If they dropped a torpedo, it had to hit them, and that was there root of attack.

At any rate, the wife and I grabbed the kid and ran downstairs, confused; I mean, this would be normal, I suppose, particularly with 7 7's bouncing off your roof and coming through the wall. They were strafing all the way. There was a concrete stoop, a sort of concrete roof, over the front door. It was small, maybe four-by-six feet, four-by-four, whatever. Under those exciting circumstances, with shrapnel and gunfire, machine gun fire, bomb fragments, and the whole bit, it was literally falling like rain. You could see it bouncing on the ground. I kept her and the baby and myself, of course, under this concrete porch, and we were trying to get our wits together. Incidentally, has anyone ever

given you any humor about this thing?

Marcello: I want to hear it if it's part of the story.

Webb: This is sick humor, and it wasn't funny at the time. In fact, I would say it was years later that I could even get a wry grin out of this. We're standing under this concrete stoop, and in a house that was at a ninety-degree angle to ours, which was a duplex, there was a giant of a man who lived in there, he and his wife. He was chief radioman. I won't mention his name because if he was still alive this would embarrass him. But the first thing you know this giant of a man came running out his front door and he stood there, he eyed the Japanese planes, and he said, "My word!" And he dashed back through his front door. There was something wrong with this action, and it took me several seconds to figure out what was wrong. He had come through the screen door and back through the screen door without opening it (chuckle). I think these things get to you. At the time it was not funny. I've laughed a number of times about it since.

At any rate, in this same fourplex, we had a fellow there by the name of Jack Peavler, who was a boatswain's mate, and he skippered one of the tugs in the Yard. So around the house comes the Peavler family Oldsmobile, all fenders rattling. It came to a screeching halt, and Jack's wife and their Chihuahua dog were in the car. He

yelled at me to bring my wife and baby over there, that we had to get them the hell out of that place. And he was right about that. This was a dangerous place to be. So I'm hustling my wife and kid over to their car. They had friends in Honolulu, which is where they were going to get from the center of the gunfire. When almost to the car, my wife says, "The baby doesn't have any diapers! Get some!" Here is some more humor. Bear in mind that this is Armageddon, the end of the world, and my wife has me chasing diapers! Well, this gets back to discipline--the old Navy discipline. I don't know if it made any difference whether my wife or a full Navy admiral had said it, but I went back for diapers! But it struck me at the time, "What am I doing, hustling diapers?" And, like I said, this was Armageddon. At any rate, (chuckle) the wife, the boy, and the diapers got in the car, and it went chugging off toward Honolulu. I breathed a big sigh of relief and said, "Come on, Jack, let's get to the Navy Yard!" Now that's a hard thing to decipher. This was during the first strike--height of the first strike.

Marcello: Are you sure exactly where your wife and child are going?

Webb: No. I did not know the people. But they mentioned to me, which didn't even register but I had heard it before, that these friends of theirs...I don't know if

they were service personnel or not. They lived in Honolulu. Well, anything was better than Pearl Harbor. Honolulu is eight miles away.

At any rate Jack and I did a hurried "good-by, like, "I'll see you. We weren't really sure if that was true or not. We got into the Navy Yard, and I went to Staff Headquarters. Now I'm sure somebody was on duty at Staff Headquarters, but my particular office was removed from the command duty office.

Marcello: In the meantime, did you have any problems getting from the housing to Staff Headquarters?

Webb: Not really. There was a lot of apprehension with this stuff, as I say, falling like rain.

Marcello: Are you driving?

Webb: No, no, faster than driving! We are running (chuckle)!

Marcello: Okay.

Webb: At any rate, we got to Staff Headquarters, and this other yeoman, by the name of Allen, and I were the first two there. I do know--I found out later, of course--that there was a watch officer, a lieutenant commander by the name of Kaminski. He got the word about the Ward sinking a Japanese sub, and you have to...I'm not blaming the man. You have to go back to the old Navy discipline, the idea that anybody with a half-stripe more than you had had you under his thumb. He could squash you out. Kaminski failed to report this to the



commandant of the 14th Naval District. Like I say, I'm not questioning the man. I may have done the very same thing. I'm not going to wake up an admiral until I know (chuckle) this is for sure, and I'm sure that must have been his reasoning.

At any rate, Allen and I are there, and these planes are strafing and bombing--you name it. I mean, it was a real turkey shoot, and there wasn't any doubt in my mind at least that they were going to land. So we decided maybe we better get some guns. Well, the armory was about two blocks away, and we beat it for the armory through all this shrapnel and what-have-you.

We got over there, and there was a civilian armorer. I'm not knocking civilians, but what the hell he was doing in the Navy armory running the show, I don't know. But we got in there and explained to the man that we needed guns. He told us we'd have to have to have a chit. Now this is Navy regulations--you got to have a chit. Well, no amount of talk or explaining to him about what was going on was going to change his mind. So we went outside and found ourselves a young Navy ensign. Now he was still fuzzy-faced, and we actually physically assisted him in signing his name on this chit. We went back into the armory, and the man gave us an old World War I tin hat, Colt .45, holster, web belt (all completely disassembled), three empty clips.

"Where's the ammunition?" "I don't know. The armorer didn't know where ammunition was.

At any rate, we headed back toward Staff Headquarters, and I heard the Marines firing--the first Marine Defense Battalion. They never change. Those guys, if they're not ready, they get ready--fast! We headed for the Marine barracks to try to get some ammunition and ran into a Marine gunnery sergeant I knew, and he had a sidecar on a motorcycle full of ammo. We motioned to the guns, and he threw us a couple of cartons of Colt .45 ammunition.

We're under this big banyan tree. Those things are immense; they can cover half a block. We were under this banyan tree trying to load clips with seven thumbs on each hand--I almost mean that literally--right by the Marine parade ground. And here come the Jap Zero in, just like in the movies--little puffs of dust right across the parade ground and heading directly for us. We flattened out--me on one side of the tree he on the other side of the main trunk. We didn't only flatten out; we went grassroots. I'm sure I got down to the roots (laughter). We were laying there, and these machine guns went on incessantly.

Finally, even in my dazed state, I realized I'm hearing machine guns, but I don't see the plane anymore. The plane was long gone, and the machine guns we were

hearing was behind the lattice work fence. The Marines had set up a .50-caliber back there, and they were still firing at planes coming over. So I'm feeling real sheepish--scared or upset or whatever. I'm sheepish. Here I am, hugging the ground and no plane. So I crawl on around this tree, and I didn't have to be sheepish anymore. I still will accuse him to this day of trying to dig a hole with that tin hat. He (laughter) was really digging. He probably wasn't, but it looked that way.

At any rate, we finally got the guns loaded, and I have to report that I didn't hit a single Jap plane with that Colt .45. The end of the barrel wouldn't stay still. It was going in all directions.

So we got back over to staff headquarters, and by that time Admiral Bloch and his chief of staff, J.B. Earle, had shown up, and there were several other officers. J. B. looked at me and said, "Webb, where did you get the guns?" "Over at the armory, Sir. "Get some more. So I volunteered (chuckle). I went back to the armory, and things turned out a little better this time. The same armorer was at the counter, and he starts off on the old routine about "you got to have a chit. Well, I nervously showed him my loaded .45. The clip was out, and he could see it. I put it back in, and this is the chit. We got six guns with no further

argument; I mean, he changed Navy regulations almost immediately.

So we went back over to Staff Headquarters, and it's embarrassing, really. Those seven thumbs were still predominant on each hand. Here is all the Navy high brass watching me trying to load clips, and I'm not doing a real efficient job. At any rate, we finally got them loaded. I don't know why, but you do feel better when authority is armed. When the admiral and chief of staff had a .45 on, this is very minimal defense against the Japanese fleet, but you felt better.

Marcello: In the meantime, what are they doing?

Webb: This is the one thing that stays with me. It was almost heart-rending. I never saw any fear in the face of these two men. They was old-timers. I don't know. I would say at that time to me these were ancient, ancient men. They were probably in their late fifties, but, hell, I'm a twenty-one-year-old kid (chuckle). But I watched the agony on their faces. They were pacing side-by-side on this second floor concrete lanai watching the destruction of their lifetime, watching the destruction of the American fleet. This is their pride and their joy, and the frustration and the agony on those two men's faces I will remember as long as I live. There wasn't anything they could do. Their whole life was going down the tubes out here, and they were

defenseless--nothing they could do. I may have read this into my mind, but I believe I can still see it. I've never seen two more frustrated humans in my life. They were really agonizing over their fate. Like I say, their life's work was going down the tubes, and they were helpless. To me it was one of the saddest things I saw.

Marcello: I never have exactly understood the jurisdiction here, and maybe you can help me out with this. Of course, you have the Pacific Fleet there, and commander to the Pacific Fleet is Admiral Kimmel.

Webb: Right.

Marcello: Where does Bloch fit in? Is the 14th Naval District an administrative organization?

Webb: Actually, if you were to boil it down to the way I understood it at the time, once that fleet is in port, the commandant of the 14th Naval District and General Short are the two who have the responsibility of defense of this fleet--once they're in port. Now that doesn't mean, of course, that the fleet could only fire back on orders of Admiral Bloch. But he had problems--many problems. Everything was going to the East Coast at that time. The country was oriented to the war in Europe. We lost carrier after carrier, ship after ship --I'm talking cruisers and destroyers--to the Atlantic Fleet. I just mentioned to you awhile ago that

Battleship Division 3 were the last big ones to go. In fact, we only had two carriers out there at the time, and this is probably the reason we never even found the Japanese fleet. Of course, they were damned lucky, too! Of course, they thought nobody would cross the North Pacific in December; you don't do that. But not a single ship ever spotted them--not one. Now this is even after SubDiv12 tracked that Japanese home fleet to the north of Australia. Of course, on picket duty like that, they lost them. There was no way a submarine can keep up with the fleet. They knew the Japanese fleet was going someplace, but Pearl Harbor was the last place they felt they'd go. Possibly a strike at Alaska or someplace like this, but not Pearl Harbor. They did a job on us, and they did a good job.

Marcello: In the meantime, while all of this activity is going on fast and furious, do you have time to think about your wife and child?

Webb: Oh, yes, yes! It seemed to me like my apprehensions and my worries were twice what it would be for somebody else. I'm worried to death about this wife and this child because, as I say, there wasn't any doubt in my feeble mind that the Japanese would invade. I will say to this day that a battalion of Japanese Marines would have taken the place. I really believe that. It was complete disorientation. Of course, after you

crippled the ships and this, that, and the other, they could have taken the place. Maybe not a battalion but a division of them would have taken the place, that's for sure.

Later on in the day--it seemed like an eternal period before the air strikes stopped--why, Navy efficiency came back to the forefront again, and an organization was immediately started, trying to get communications between not only the Navy but the ships, the outlying Army, Air Force, and what-have-you. Really, we didn't have the equipment for it. We had telephones. I went on duty that morning about 8:00, and I was relieved...I was trying to remember. I can't remember the exact time, but it was either seventy-four or seventy-six hours later that I was relieved of duty. I don't think I was much good the last half of that because you're dead by then.

Marcello: In the meantime, you've had no contact with your wife?

Webb: No, no, I didn't see her for--oh, I don't know--I guess a better part of a week. Well, in fact, there wasn't any way we could get together. Telephone calls, outgoing calls, would be restricted even had I remembered these people's name even if they had a phone. They allowed no civilians back into the naval defense area, and, of course, they allowed no (chuckle) sailors out of there, either.

Marcello: In the meantime, in the aftermath of the attack, in the days following, what kind of morale or atmosphere could you detect there at Staff Headquarters?

Webb: I guess if you were to hang terminology on it, it was complete astonishment, disbelief: "This can't be!" In other words, these people have taken on one of the strongest military installations in the world, and they have literally crippled us. They did a job...I could tell, even at that time, that they could have done a much better job. I will never understand why they did not bomb, particularly with incendiaries, all these multi-hundred, thousand-, even million-gallon fuel tanks surrounding this harbor. Had they done that they would have wiped out everything in Pearl Harbor, but as far as I know they never even fired on them. I think those people probably are the kind of military people who do exactly as planned, no variance. I think probably that's why the Japanese admiral withdrew that fleet. They had no expectations of the wild success they had. He could have literally wiped us out if he'd hung around for another three or four strikes, but he did what the battle plan was and they retired.

Another thing, getting back to a little humor in this situation, late in the morning or early in the afternoon, I was manning the phones in the chief of staff's office in our elementary-type of communication



we were trying to set up. I got a phone call, and this is Major So-and-so at an airfield. I was trying to recall. It was Bellows Field. It wasn't Navy language, so I knew it wasn't some sailor. "We have a submarine tied to a tree. "Tied" is the word; this is the operative word here. Not secured, moored, or lined or anything, but "tied" to a tree. And he was excited. A little bit of profanity: "You Goddamned sailor, get somebody over here to disarm these torpedoes!" "What torpedoes, sir?" "It's got torpedoes sticking out of the front end of it. I thought, "Oh, man, this guy is way out!"

I kept trying to bleed more information out of him, and the chief of staff said, "What do you got there, Webb?" I said (with my hand over the mouthpiece, of course), "I have an Army Air Force major here, sir, that I think must have been shot in the head earlier this morning. "Why?" I said, "He's got a Japanese submarine tied to a tree. The "Old Man, with all these terrific problems he's got, said, "He does sound like he's been hurt.

At any rate, I uncovered the mouthpiece on the telephone and gave the major a three-digit number to call the submarine base. Actually, I'm brushing this guy off. I'm thinking submarine, and this can't be. If one of ours would have wanted to go, it would have taken

the tree and all and left. You don't tie a submarine to a palm tree (chuckle). At any rate, I gave him the submarine base number and assured him he'd get help if he called there, which he said he would with some more unkind remarks about the Navy (laughter).

At any rate, I was embarrassed sometime later, several days later. I don't remember how much later. I was up close to the main gate, and here comes a big tractor-trailer, flatbed trailer, and guess what--it had a two-man submarine on it that they had picked up over at Bellows Field. The man wasn't out of his head. He had a submarine tied to a tree (chuckle). That's some more of that humor, but it wasn't too funny at the time. It takes a long time to even get a grin up over this.

Marcello: I suspect there were probably some people back in staff headquarters who were seeing their Navy careers possibly going up in smoke.

Webb: That could have been one of the things that was a problem with them, but not an immediate problem. I think the immediate anguish that I witnessed was this business of a lifelong career going down the tubes in the sense of the fleet being destroyed. Bloch had no problem at all explaining later during the investigations as to why this Japanese fleet wasn't discovered. He had maybe 10 percent of the number of Navy PBYS and PBMs--that's these old flying boats--to

patrol the area that he should have had. Naturally, you would patrol the most obvious area. The one coming in from the North Pacific was not even remotely a possible area because--of course, I was with the fleet long enough to know that without digging into anything in particular--you cannot keep smaller ships at sea without refueling. So that means that they are loaded down with old, heavy, slow-moving tankers. A couple of these carriers could have made the round trip without refueling. If they had a battleship or so with them that one could have done it, or a heavy cruiser. But when you reduce this down to destroyers and that type of ship, they have to be refueled. In two or three days maximum, they've got to have fuel. And you don't trust the North Pacific that time of year. I've been there in the wintertime. It's cold, it's rough, it's stormy. This is no place even to refuel. So Bloch's idea of patrolling the obvious areas of attack, there was nothing wrong with that military strategy whatsoever. They put a shuck job on us, real good con job (chuckle). They did the unexpected.

Marcello: What kind of work were you doing there at Staff Headquarters in the days immediately following the attack?

Webb: After that I was transferred to...as a writer to the chief of staff, later on I got ordered into combat

intelligence.

Marcello: And who was the chief of staff at that time?

Webb: J. B. Earle.

Marcello: J. B. Earle.

Webb: Yes. That's why I say I don't think that Bloch or Earle or anybody in authority in the 14th Naval District, or as they laughingly said, "The Western Sea Frontier, had nothing to explain. Bloch had three or four old four-piper "cans, World War I stuff. The Ward was the one that sank that Jap sub out there--the first one. He didn't have a fleet to patrol the area. In his aircraft he was way short. Maybe I overstated it awhile ago when I said maybe 10 percent. He couldn't possibly have had over a third of the aircraft he needed to do this because we're talking about thousands upon thousands of square miles to patrol. He didn't have the aircraft to do it. He patrolled where he could and what might possibly be a source of danger.

Marcello: I want to ask you this. This is going back a little bit. You mentioned, of course, that you were over there where the Marine detachment was, under the banyan tree and all that sort of thing. Describe the kind of resistance that the Marines were putting up there.

Webb: It was all small arms--machine guns, rifles (the old M-1 and what-have-you), Colt .45s. I trust they were a better shot than I. But those boys were out there.

This was within twenty to thirty minutes from the time the attack started, so they had been there. I'd bet on it, surely, that it wasn't five minutes until they were out and had set up and were shooting.

Marcello: Did they have an organized skirmish line set up, or was it simply men scattered around and firing?

Webb: I think it was just damned good Marine training. I mean, they went out and did what they had to do. I know there's all these old stories about this enmity between the Marines and the Navy, but it's untrue. I've always been a great admirer of that organization. If we ever had a fighting organization, it's been the Marine Corps. I'm talking about the guys who were ready and "gung-ho" and would go for it. They don't know anything else (chuckle). This has been drilled into them. This machine gun that was set up behind the lattice work fence wasn't what you'd call a typical machine gun nest. No sandbags, no anything. Those guys had dragged it out and set it up and were shooting at the Japs. This is what they were doing.

Marcello: Did you have a chance to observe what those Japanese pilots looked like? You mentioned that those planes were flying at telephone pole height.

Webb: I did. While we were standing under this concrete stoop over that front door, another fighter plane came in and came directly down Center Drive. Now this is the main

street of Navy housing which led right into the main gate.

Marcello: Center Drive?

Webb: Center Drive. They came right down the main drag--low, utility pole height. I'll always remember the biggest, shiniest, whitest set of teeth I have ever seen. It was a Jap torpedo bomber. That pilot was looking over at me, and he couldn't have been seventy-five feet away and barely maintaining air speed. That guy looked over at me and grinned, and that's the biggest set of choppers I've ever seen on a human being. The other guy--two men in the plane--was looking over there and laughing. Of course, as they were making their approach, the fleet wasn't yet in their range, but they were strafing everything in sight--Navy housing and what-have-you. To the human ethics that we have, there was no excuse for that. These were women and kids out there. The wife...I didn't know the old lady real well, myself, but she was acquainted with the lady up the street several blocks whose name was Fitzgerald. He was an aviation machinist's mate stationed at Ford Island. His mother, good Catholic that she was, was going to Mass. She was an ancient lady. My God, she was in her fifties (chuckle)! They shot her through both legs with a .31-caliber machine gun. She was going to Mass, and she is laying out there. It was obvious she would never walk

again; her legs were torn up. These are the kind of things you really don't want to remember, but that's the inhumanity of the war. I don't know whether they were actually shooting at her or not, but they certainly hit her.

Marcello: Describe your reunion with your wife and child.

Webb: I guess it was about the greatest sight I've ever seen.

Marcello: How did the initial contact come about?

Webb: I went home--left the Navy Yard. This was after they quit shooting at anything that moved. You caught watches at night on this telephone watch, communications watch, and I had the 8:00 to 12:00 watch that evening. My relief showed up about 11:45, and I started walking home. We're talking a mile or less.

Marcello: How safe was that?

Webb: It wasn't but I had learned something. I was walking up the middle of the main street in the Navy Yard and whistling a good American tune. When I ran out of breath, I took another deep breath and kept whistling. If you moved around there, you could get killed. With all my whistling, humming, and singing, I want these people to know I'm American.

I got home and got the key and started to open the front door, and guess what? It's open. Mama is home. They had allowed the dependents to come back. When I found out that she was all right and that baby was all

right, I guess that was the greatest thing that happened to me in World War II.

Like I say, there was a lot of things. There was no humor at the time. One of these guns. I will not mention the name of the officer who donned this thing. One of these officers took a .45 that we loaded and put the holster on the belt and got everything ready, put the gun on wrong side out. The flap was on the inside. Unless he wanted to use two hands to draw the gun, he would have had to defy the laws of gravity and stand on his head so the flap would be to the outside (chuckle). These are the kinds of things you saw, and at the time they were not funny. Like I say, later in retrospect you could must a wry grin about these things. But you saw so many boo-boo's (chuckle). Like I say, at the time they were not funny. Later on, there is a little humor there.

Marcello: How long did your wife and child stay on the island after all this took place?

Webb: Well, working in the Overseas Transportation Office, I don't have to tell you that she was one of the first ones that went out. I was still convinced they were coming back. I think most everyone was. Lord knows, I didn't need her and that kid there. I'm trying to remember...I believe it was either toward the...by the time we really got things organized, where we had taken



over civilian liners and, of course, Navy transports and what-have-you, I would say she was out of there by the end of December or the first part of January at the latest.

Marcello: Was there any discussion one way or the other about this, or was it a unanimous decision or opinion that she needed to be out of there?

Webb: Well, as far as I was concerned, it was unanimous (laughter). I was the major stockholder: "Mama's going home!" There were ten days along while Mama was going to the States because Japanese submarines were kind of thick between there and the West Coast, and they went through a couple of submarine attacks. Thank God, they missed. But it sure was one swell relief to get a letter from her and find out she was back on the terra firma of the United States.

Marcello: You mentioned some time after the attack, then, that you switched over to Naval Intelligence. You were transferred.

Webb: This was sometime later. First, I was a writer for the chief of staff. I still have the letter at home from J.J. Rochefort. I noticed in the paper about--oh, golly, I don't know--three or four months ago that he had been posthumously awarded the Silver Star for his part in breaking the Japanese code. You see, after you get into things like that, you find out that there was a

million excuses for this not to happen. You've probably heard about the Magic machine.

Marcello: Yes.

Webb: We didn't have one. The British had one of our machines; there was one for FDR's staff in Washington, D.C.; and the commander of the Atlantic Fleet had one. There was only three. But here we are, on the front line, and we don't have one. Now Rochefort and crew had broken the Japanese code--part of it. With that machine it would have been wide-open. We would have known they were coming and all about it. But the machines are someplace else. Of course, that was somebody else's idea entirely--Admiral King's or somebody else--but that was their idea about where they belonged. I'm strictly second guessing when I tell you they belonged in Pearl Harbor. At least one of them belonged in Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: So did you work, then, in Rochefort's area later on?

Webb: Yes, but I don't remember how long. I'd say it was a year, a year-and-a-half or something like that. He was a funny man.

Marcello: He was an interesting character, wasn't he?

Webb: He was for a fact. He might look like somebody who needed brain surgery, but this guy was brilliant. You asked me if I had observed the members of the fleet and what-have-you that day. Incredulous is about the only

word that I can think of: "It just can't be!" I mean, it couldn't happen, but it did.

Marcello: When was it that you had a chance to take a look at the damage that had been done with a certain amount of objectivity? How shortly after the attack?

Webb: Within the first week.

Marcello: Describe what you saw.

Webb: Is there such a thing as a king-size junkyard? Here are these mighty battleships. The Oklahoma has rolled completely over. I saw the Arizona blow sky-high--broke her back when she went in the air. The Maryland, Tennessee, and California were down in the water. They were sitting on the bottom. Having spent years on these things, it was incredible to me that you could inflict this kind of damage. Yet, when you stop and think, the conditions under which the punishment was inflicted, yes, it could happen. They're sitting ducks. A ship that can't get underway is just a target. That's all it is to it. Plus the fact that most Navy gunnery, particularly anti-aircraft gunnery and what-have-you, is what they call master-controlled. Those controls were knocked out with the first bombs. Everything had gone to local control. And maybe you had a regular gun crew on there, or maybe you had two or three members of a regular gun crew--I'm talking about on the individual battery--and these other guys were pick-ups running

around the ship. And Navy gunnery at that time, by golly, its efficiency all depended on the crew. Of course, with a "pick-me-up" crew, it couldn't have been all that good.

To get back to your original question, it looked like a long, lost cause. I really thought that we'd had it because I am still battleship-oriented. You win a war or lose a war with battleships, and we don't have any. I mean, the Nevada is aground, and the Pennsylvania, as I recall, was in dry dock, and she was shot to smithereens. I didn't pay much attention to the smaller vessels because these were satellites around our battleships. I didn't know how we'd ever survive it, and I'm not real sure...I'm talking about high-ranking officers, people who knew all about Navy tactics and warfare and what-have-you. I don't think they thought anything else because you've been over and over again taught to believe that the battleship is the first line and last line of defense, and your battleships are gone. It turned out later, thank God, that the carriers were at sea and weren't there. It turned into naval air warfare really, is what it really turned out to be. No, I didn't see much hope for us.

By that time, you had gotten over the anxiety, the amazement, the astonishment, and by that time you were cold mad. We would fight until the last man. I didn't

ever have any idea I'd ever get back to the States. We'd fight Japanese until the last man died, and I hoped I was going to be the last one. I mean, we weren't going to give up, but beyond any shadow of doubt I knew that they were going to invade this place, and there was nothing between them and the West Coast. Next step, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland, someplace.

Marcello: When was it that you saw your wife and children again?

Webb: Golly, I guess it was 1944.

Marcello: I should have asked you this earlier, Mr. Webb. What were they doing after they had left the house and had gone with those civilians living in Honolulu? Simply the sitting and waiting, so to speak, standing by?

Webb: Basically, that was it, yes. I know she must have been really put out. She visualized the first part of the attack, saw her friend out there shot in the two legs. Later on, I think she realized how serious it was when she started out in our front yard and started picking up shell fragments, bomb fragments, and what-have-you as souvenirs. Upstairs where the baby's crib is, I guess the little boy came within two inches of dying. A Jap 7 7 had come through the wall of the house and embedded itself in an inner wall about two inches over where his head laid in that crib. He got real close to it. I think that's when the real impact of what happened actually hit her. You know, mothers are overly

concerned with children, particularly that first born; and here he is, I mean, and it is obvious when she saw me taking a slug out of the wall. She saw how close her pride and joy had come to dying.

She didn't fight me real big in this evacuation back to the States. The Navy put in a policy almost immediately that everyone, all dependents, went back to the States unless that was their legal domicile. Well, you could make it legal just by signing this statement that it was, but in that kind of a situation people don't start trying to be devious about something. Gee, everybody knows I was born and raised in Missouri--that's my home--so that wasn't a really big question about it. I think she was glad to get out. She absolutely dreaded that trip back--not because of the Japanese but because she was highly susceptible to seasickness. The poor woman to this day can stand on a dock and get seasick just watching the water move. She was miserable when she was at sea.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Webb, that more or less exhausts my list of questions. I want to thank you very much for having participated in our project. You've said some things that have obviously given me an altogether different slant of what took place at Pearl Harbor, different in the sense that I have never heard them before. Of course, we are always looking for this kind of

information.

Webb: Yes, I think probably if you've been talking to people who were aboard ship at the time, you're going to have a more or less confined view of what went on. Being out in the open and seeing the whole thing from a lot of angles, I had a probably a different perspective of it. I mean, the same absolute result took place (chuckle).

Marcello: Well, again, I want to thank you very much for having participated in this.

Webb: All right, sir. You might be able to use this. This is a short written thing that I did for some reason or other. Somebody wanted that, and there probably might be some things in there that we didn't even cover here.

Marcello: Okay, what you're giving me is a more or less a typed version of some of the things that you remember from that day, and what we'll do is we'll probably cut this in half so that we can add it to the transcript of the interview.

Webb: All right.

A P P E N D I X



A shattering explosion accompanied by a hand vigorously shaking my shoulder and my wife's announcement of a big fire in the Navy Yard was my introduction to World War II. Raising up on one elbow and casting a bleary eye out the second story bedroom window over-looking the Navy Yard I fully agreed with her statement and told her that I was not a fireman. I had half way reclined when 3 torpedo bombers zoomed past the window and upon seeing the red tail sections I growled an uncomplimentary remark in reference to the pilots' questionable parentage. I wondered how the ENTERPRISE could harbor 3 idiots stupid enough to buzz navy housing on an early Sunday morning.

Then came the complete surprise awakening when the 3 torpedo bombers banked to clear the multi-story Receiving Station and exposed the rising sun insignia on the bottom side of their wing tips! Although no official timer was present there is no doubt that any existing record for donning trousers and shoes was broken.

Grabbing our 15 month old son from his crib, we raced down stairs and outside the house stopping under the small concrete door canopy for protection from the heavy machine gun fire, bomb and shell fragments now falling like a hail storm. Our street was being peppered by 7.7 mm slugs from strafing Japanese aircraft as they made their approaches for torpedo runs at utility pole height. With a slight banking at the end of the street, their helplessly moored target, the U.S. Pacific Fleet was a target too large to miss.

A neighbor, Mrs. Fitzgerald the mother of an AMMLc, never made it to Mass; she crumpled into a bloody heap at the edge of the lawn, shot through both hips by Japanese strafing.

Boatswain Mate Jack Peavler, from Dexter, Mo., who lived in the adjoining apartment, was loading his wife into the family car and yelled for my wife and son to join her and evacuate the area. While entering the vehicle, my wife stated the baby had no diapers and directed me to get them. I found myself racing back up the stairs to our bedroom when the irony of the situation struck me: Armageddon was upon us and I was hustling diapers!

Jack and I said hurried goodbyes to our families and as the auto lurched in the general direction of Honolulu, we dashed the few hundred feet into the Navy Yard with the hail of falling shrapnel giving impetus to our flight. With a hasty "good-luck," Jack headed for his Yard Tug which he skippered and I made a run for District Staff Headquarters.

Arriving at HQ simultaneously with the legal yeoman named Allen and finding not even a junior staff officer present and without a pre-assigned battle station, we reached a hasty conclusion that guns of some sort were necessary since it was obvious that the Fleet had been put out of commission and a Japanese landing was surely imminent. Crouching low and running all out we made our way to the Armory where we were informed by the civilian armorer that we must have a chit before he could issue weapons to us. No amount of agitated persuasion that a war was happening could shake him from regulations. Back out in the raining fragments again, we physically assisted a young Supply Corps Ensign in signing his name to the required chit. Upon presentation of this magic paper to the armorer we were each given a .45 cal. pistol, holster, WWI tin hat, and 3 empty ammunition clips. In answer to the obvious question, the completely shaken armorer stated that he absolutely didn't know where we could obtain ammo, he only had guns! Some 1,000 yards away, a Marine Gunnery Sergeant solved our dilemma with 2 boxes of 45 cal. cartridges.

After obvious failure to score a telling hit on any of the strafing Japanese Zeros, we returned to Staff HQ where unarmed Admiral C.C. Bloch and Chief of Staff, Captain J.B. Earle helplessly agonized while observing the destruction of the U.S. Pacific Fleet. Upon the order of Captain Earle, we again made our way to the Armory and upon nervous presentation of loaded Colt .45's, the Armorer waived Navy Regulations with little hesitation. We returned to HQ with ½ dozen pistols. Experiencing considerable difficulty, holsters were attached to belts, clips were loaded, and the entire situation seemed much the better after the Admiral and his senior officers were armed. Upon the passing of what seemed to be an eternity, the Japanese aircraft ceased their attack.

Utilizing the insufficient equipment available, we set up a telephone communication system with outlying Army, Marine, and Fleet commands in effort to establish some sort of coordination between still operational units. Manning the phones, receiving reports (some of which included a demand for torpedo disarming assistance to Army Air Force personnel who said they had a Japanese submarine tied to a tree at Bellows Field; an unverified source who reported that he was currently observing Japanese paratroops landing at Waikiki), relaying orders from the Commandant and Staff, I was relieved from watch some 76 hours later.

Leonard Webb  
Ex-CY, USN