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Interview with
HERBERT YOUNG
October 1, 1989

Place of Interview: Richardson, Texas

Interviewer: Ronald E. Marcello

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(Signature)

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Oral History Collection

Herbert Young

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Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Herbert Young for the University of North Texas Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on October 1, 1989, in Richardson, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Young in order to get his reminiscences and experiences while he was aboard the destroyer USS Worden during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Mr. Young, to begin this interview, just very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself. Tell me where you were born and when you were born.

Mr. Young: I was born in Forest Hill, Louisiana. I was raised there and joined the Navy when I was sixteen, on April 14. I was a farm boy, and at that particular time there was very little work there, so I joined the Navy to survive the Depression.

Dr. Marcello: That's a reason that a lot of people of your generation give for entering the service at that time.

Mr. Young: Most of them did. I wanted to get away. I was only

sixteen, like I said. My brother had gone in already, and my other brother was in the Army, and I was lonesome (laughter).

Marcello: In what year were you born?

Young: I was born in 1924, on November 4.

Marcello: And you entered the Navy when?

Young: On April 15, 1941.

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

Young: Well, as I just said, my brother, Richard, was in the Navy, and I was lonesome. And I always respected the Navy. It was the farthest away from us. It wasn't like the Army--that old drab brown that they had. So I wanted to join the Navy.

Marcello: How long was the term of enlistment when you went in?

Young: Well, they had a minority cruise at that particular time. It was sort of odd. My mother really didn't want me to go in, but I had a good friend, an old man who was about seventy, Mr. Chamberlain. I never will forget him. I had to get a statement from someone that I was seventeen years old in order to join, and my mother wasn't just about to give me one of those (chuckle). So I hornswoggled Mr. Chamberlain into signing my statement that I was a year older than I really was. (Chuckle) That's how I did it.

Marcello: Where did you take your boot camp?

Young: In San Diego.

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

Young: I imagine it was just normal. Well, my shoulders peeled from the heat and that bright sun. You'd think that being from Louisiana and being a farm boy, I'd already be used to that, but it's a dry heat out there. I peeled. My nose peeled; my shoulders peeled. That was the most eventful thing. And those shots! Man, they were out of this world! I never will forget those (chuckle).

Marcello: How long did boot camp last when you went there?

Young: It was three months.

Marcello: Three months?

Young: Yes.

Marcello: So they had not yet cut back on boot camp as they were to do later on.

Young: No, they hadn't.

Marcello: Okay, describe the process, then, by which you eventually got assigned aboard the USS Worden.

Young: Well, as I told you, my brother, Richard, was on the Worden. After I got out of boot camp, I went to a radio signal school because I had always wanted to be an electrician, and that was the nearest thing to electrician that I could be. So I signed up for this

radio signal school, hoping that I'd get to be an electrician, but I ended up being a signalman instead--there at that school. I found that I didn't care for that, so I turned in a petition to be removed and to be put aboard the Worden. So my request was accepted, and I was sent to the destroyer base in San Diego. A week later, I was put on the Worden.

Marcello: For the record, you mentioned that your brother was already on the Worden. What was his name, because we will talk about him later on?

Young: Okay, Richard--R. O. Young.

Marcello: When you went aboard the destroyer Worden, what sort of functions did you initially have there?

Young: Well, I was a seaman second class, so my primary duty was scrubbing the deck. Almost immediately, I got assigned to mess cook duty.

Marcello: And what did mess cooking consist of aboard the Worden?

Young: At that particular time, you had to set the tables, and you had to put out the silverware, and you had to take the trays of food to them. Later on, they had to pick up their own food, but you had to give them their silverware and their water and their coffee. You kept the coffee pot and the cups full and this sort of thing. You was sort of, well, I'd say, a slave--that's what I felt like.

Marcello: Now was the Worden feeding family-style at that time, or

was it cafeteria-style?

Young: When I first went aboard, it was family-style. Later on, it got to be cafeteria, where you picked it up at the window and went down the deck and took your seat in the mess hall.

Marcello: I do know that in some cases mess cooking could be profitable in that, come payday, the people at the table would throw in some tips.

Young: Well, you got extra pay for being a mess cook in the first place, and then you did get a tip of a nickel or dime--a nickel was a lot of money in those days (chuckle). You would get a nickel or dime from some of the more experienced sailors--the chiefs and whatnot. You was really lucky if you got to serve the chiefs. The officers had the regular crew--the black boys--serve them.

Marcello: How would you describe the morale aboard the Worden at the time you went aboard in 1941? Was it a happy ship?

Young: It was. But my first impression, when I walked down this lonely dock by myself, with my sea bag--if you've ever seen a sailor with a sea bag and a sleeping bag on top, and it's all real properly adjusted--and saw the Worden, I thought, "Good grief! What a mess that thing is!" It was all brown-looking and gray, and the water was...it just scared the dickens out of me. But as I got aboard, everything looked shiny, and everybody

seemed happy. People walked up and introduced themselves to me. It was just like one, big, happy family.

Marcello: How old a ship was the Worden?

Young: Well, the keel was laid in 1932, and it was commissioned in 1935. It was put into operation in 1938, I believe it was.

Marcello: So it was not a real old destroyer, then, and it was not a four-stacker.

Young: No, it was one of the first two-stackers, though.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit more about some things that may have contributed to the high morale aboard the ship. What was the food like?

Young: Well, it was good. But my first day at sea wasn't too good. It was a calm sea, and it was on Friday, and steamed fish never was one of my favorite dishes (chuckle). As you go down into the mess hall, and with the smell of that steamed fish coming up to me, that wasn't a very good meal (chuckle). But, as a whole the meals were very good, I would say.

Marcello: I'm assuming that, as is the case on most destroyers, your living quarters were rather close or cramped aboard the Worden?

Young: Yes, they were. Our quarters were underneath the bathroom or toilet. The head was up on the top deck, and we were underneath it. We had portholes, and that's

the only air we had. We had no fans or anything of this nature. There was no air-conditioning; it was unheard of at that time. There were not even fans, because they needed all the power to operate the ship. So we would open these portholes. Occasionally we'd get a bath, though. We had our lockers underneath the bottom bunk. The bottom bunk was always for the biggest man, because the biggest man always gets the best (chuckle). Shoemaker had the bottom bunk, and my brother Richard had the next one, and I slept on the top. Each morning I had to get up first and lift my mattress up and chain it to the wall, and then my brother would do the same, and then Shoemaker, before we could ever start getting dressed. That was the process you had to go through. All three beds had to be folded up in order to get to your lockers.

Marcello: After you got out of mess cooking, then what sort of functions were you performing aboard the Worden?

Young: I didn't actually get out of mess cooking. I went right from mess cooking to a ship's cook, so I more or less just moved up from serving them. After the war had started, there was no longer time for mess cooks to serve the men on the deck, in the mess hall, so the mess cooks were used to serve coffee around the ship on the watches. That was done during the peacetime, also, but we didn't have many watches then. They would pick up

their meals at the window. I became a ship's cook striker, is what we were called--an apprentice ship's cook, is what you could say I was.

Marcello: When did the Worden go to Pearl Harbor and more or less stay there on a permanent basis or operate out of there on a permanent basis?

Young: Well, that was normally their base--there in San Diego. When I got aboard her on September 15, I believe it was--these dates, I'm not quite sure of--I believe it pulled out on September 17 and headed for Pearl Harbor. It took us five days to get there.

Marcello: So you were out there approximately four or five months before the attack actually took place.

Young: Oh, yes. We had plenty of target practice and this sort of thing.

Marcello: Once the Worden gets out there, describe for me what its daily routine would be like. What was its function once it got out to Pearl Harbor?

Young: Well, before we got to Pearl Harbor, as Diamond Head came in to view just to where you could see it--even the airplanes today do it; when we went back for the reunion, we saw that--they started playing this Hawaiian music, that steel guitar music. They played it several times on the ship. It's more like a home, really, or a job where you have your radio playing. They had it on all of the loudspeakers. As we pulled into the bay,

there was no other ships going in but us. Everybody was waving to everybody--you're glad to see old shipmates and this sort of thing. Our daily duties were just moping the decks and chipping the paint and painting the decks and this sort of thing. If you've ever been around in the Army or Navy or any of that, they'll keep you busy doing something, that's for sure (chuckle).

Something that struck me funny was all the hammocks. As we got down around Hawaii, the first class petty officers got to sleep up on top deck. Up on the topside, you had fresh air; down underneath was stinky and no fresh air coming in, no nothing. As far as what we had to do, it was normal duty just like I said--chipping paint and this sort of thing.

Marcello: Okay, now we have the Worden at Pearl Harbor. What sort of routine or operations does it undergo as a part of its daily training once it gets there?

Young: Well, as I told you, I was a ship's cook, so my job was pretty well in line. Once I got one meal cooked, there was another one coming up; or I was peeling potatoes or something. Before I actually became a striker--while I was still a seaman second--we were splicing cable and rope and this sort of thing--the normal time between cooking. You had a lot of spare time to read books and this sort of thing because, really, there was nothing else to do aboard ship but read.

Marcello: What was the Worden, itself, doing once it got to Pearl Harbor? In other words, was it engaged in any anti-submarine patrols outside the harbor, or did it go out with the battleships and so on? Exactly, what kind of maneuvers and patrolling did it undergo?

Young: We took several...I guess you could call them convoys. We escorted several ships. Shortly before I went aboard her--before she came to San Diego--they had just come back from the Philippines and had run out of fuel. They had to rig sails and sail back to Hawaii under sail. My brother was telling me about that.

Our duties were...we would go out for three- or four-day patrols and then come back in and set for three or four days and then repeat it. We'd take turns at doing this--patrolling the area at that particular island. We would go out for gunnery practice, and, oh, a couple of times we won the Navy "E" and this sort of thing.

While we were at sea, we would have swimming parties over the side, and we had shark watches. I recall one of the swimming parties that took place. I really never learned how to swim like a professional. I was more or less halfway between a dog paddle and trying to swim. I tried one of these swimming parties. Of course, you know, the closest land is two miles straight down (chuckle), so I didn't get too far away from this

Jacob's ladder. Just about the time I gave out of breath and I thought I'd better get over there and get hold of that Jacob's ladder, a wave caught the ship and just rolled it up. Here I am, trying to climb the side of this ship to get the Jacob's ladder and I couldn't get it (laughter).

Marcello: A little bit of panic there.

Young: Yes, just a little bit (chuckle).

Marcello: You mentioned that the Worden would engage in gunnery practice when it went out there, and I'm sure this also included antiaircraft practice and so on. I'm assuming that the antiaircraft armament aboard the Worden after Pearl Harbor was a lot different than what it was before Pearl Harbor.

Young: No, we never got our armament changed until we came back to Vallejo. It primarily stayed the same to the best of my knowledge--I'll put it that way. We were in the dry dock in Pearl Harbor for a short time for gunnery repairs, but I don't recall them removing any of our guns at that particular time.

Marcello: But I'm sure that before Pearl Harbor, you didn't have the 20- or the 40-millimeters, did you?

Young: No, no, no. This came quite a bit later, when we came back to Vallejo, like I said. That antiaircraft practice that you were talking about, (chuckle) we had a sock we would shoot at. You've probably heard of a

sock. The biggest problem was that the pilot would fly over and say, "Get that damned gun off of me!" (laughter) They had a drone that they would fly over occasionally, and we had six ships lined up there shooting at that dern thing. It went through, and then it turned around, and she came back through, and nobody hit it (chuckle).

Marcello: What ships would you normally be operating with when you went out on these exercises?

Young: Our sister ships--not the Dobbin. The Dobbin never left port, that I know of. It was strictly a supply ship. We would go out with the battleships, and we would go out with the cruisers. All the armored vessels would go out and have firing practice together. When we would have sea-to-sea practice, we would have a tugboat towing a target for us. Sometimes the tugboat got shot at (laughter).

Marcello: As one gets closer and closer to December 7, and as conditions between the United States and Japan continued to get worse, could you in your position detect any changes at all in the routine of the Worden?

Young: No, not really. But I could feel it in my bones. I don't know how, but my wife was reminding me the other day about me writing my mother a letter telling her that we were going to have to fight the Japanese. As far as the routine was concerned, no, there weren't any

changes. In fact, I have had several fellows agree with me. When they really get down to the ol' nit-picky of it, when the bombs started dropping, they were still in bed. We were not expecting it at all.

Marcello: One of the fellows off the Dobbin told me that on numerous occasions, when those destroyers tied up next to his ship in those days and weeks immediately prior to December 7, they would have to have their supply of depth charges replenished. The scuttlebutt was that they had been dropping those depth charges either at real or imagined submarines out there. Do you remember whether or not the Worden participated in any activities of this nature?

Young: They were doing a lot of that. We really couldn't tell you whether it was subs or not. At least I couldn't-- I'll speak for myself--tell you whether they were practicing or whether they were doing it on purpose.

Marcello: But they were dropping depth charges?

Young: They were dropping depth charges, but what they were for I could not tell you. We had two different types. Now they could have been just trying them out. We had one type you shot off the side, and then we had the type that rolled off the back. Like, our torpedoes, we fired those several times off the ship, and then we'd go out and pick them up after they had run their course. We'd see whether we had hit the target, and then they'd

lower the boat over the side and go pick them up.

Marcello: Where was your general quarters station?

Young: Number one gun.

Marcello: And your function there was to do what?

Young: I was a hot powderman (chuckle). But during Pearl Harbor, I wasn't. There wasn't that many men aboard ship. I was the hot powderman.

Marcello: For the benefit of those who listen to this tape or read the transcript later on, what is the function of the hot powderman?

Young: Well, as a gun fires its shell, the canister that the powder comes in...on a 5-inch/.38 it's a brass canister, and as it is ejected, it comes flying out of the back end of the gun. If someone isn't there to catch it, it will go sailing across and hit someone. That is what I was supposed to do, was catch that thing when it started out that gun.

Marcello: I'm assuming that you had some sort of asbestos gloves or whatever to put on your hands.

Young: Yes, because they were real hot.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about your liberty routine aboard the Worden. How did the liberty routine work? How was it set up?

Young: Before Pearl Harbor?

Marcello: Yes, before Pearl Harbor.

Young: We had a port-and-starboard liberty. My brother and I

got to go ashore together. We had one good liberty that was really interesting to both of us, and our family still remembers it, if you are interested in that.

Marcello: Sure.

Young: Shoemaker, Richard, and myself went to Honolulu to do our Christmas shopping for our families. This was before Pearl Harbor. My brother and I had one niece, the oldest, and she was sort of our favorite. Then there was her brother, younger sister; and then my brother had one son; and then we had one baby brother that was the same age--a change of life baby--as those. There was about four or five children that we were buying presents for--boys and girls. Well, being the youngsters that we were, I wasn't old enough to buy wine or alcoholic beverages. Richard wouldn't do it because he was a little bit on the religious side. But Shoemaker would do almost anything, so he bought the wine for us. We went up to the YMCA, and we rented us a room; and we took all of our presents, and we spread them out, and we proceeded to wrap them. Well, I don't know what did happen, but I guess it was that wine that got to us. Lillian, my oldest niece, instead of getting the doll that she was supposed to have gotten, got a car. Stanley, instead of getting the car, he got a doll (chuckle). You get the picture. In other words, when they got the presents--what they ended up doing--they

had to spread them all out like we had and then try to figure out what we meant for who (laughter). That was quite a memorable deal there.

On our other liberties, we would sometimes go to Waikiki Beach. I was considerably younger, like I said, and my brother was in the States when we first got to Hawaii in September of 1941. So I had a friend that was in boot camp with me that was born and raised in Honolulu, so I went to see him. We went to Roosevelt High School, and since I was only sixteen, those boys and girls there were about the same age as I was. I participated in some of their activities--their dances and whatnot--at Roosevelt High School.

Marcello: Of what significance were Hotel and Canal Streets to the sailors during those days?

Young: That was the main drag to them.

Marcello: And what could one find on Hotel and Canal Streets? Just about anything you wanted?

Young: Houses of prostitution (laughter). Houses of prostitution is what they were. There were three of them right in a row--bing, bing, bing.

Marcello: Do you remember the names of the places?

Young: No, I don't.

Marcello: I guess there were all kinds of establishments on those streets to take the sailors' money, were there not--everything from the houses of prostitution to the curio

shops to the tattoo parlors and sort of thing?

Young: Yes, they had all kinds of tattoo parlors. In fact, there's one thing that is stuck in my mind. On the corner of King and Canal Streets, I think it is, they had a young girl standing on the corner with a...I don't know whether you've seen the hot tamale buggies they have around here. Well, she had this full of hot dogs. She was standing on the corner yelling, "Hot doggie, doggie, doggie, doggie!" (Chuckle) She was there every day with those hot dogs. Across from her was a man. Of course, she had better business than he did--all the sailors would go see her. They had these photo shops where you take a picture with the topless girl.

In fact, when we went back recently, Marguerite, my wife, asked if this girl--where we were having the luau--would pose with me for a picture. So she said, "Sure." We didn't know at that particular time that she was one of the employees--I thought that she just wandered through there. She pulled off this blouse or whatever she had, and she had a halter on underneath it. I turned to her, and I said, "You're not quite the way they posed with me in 1941." And she said, "How's that?" And I said, "It was topless!" (laughter)

Marcello: Did the Worden normally tie up over with the Dobbin and the other destroyers when it came in?

Young: Yes.

Marcello: So therefore you would have to take a liberty launch to get from your ship to the beach.

Young: Yes. The Dobbin normally furnished the liberty boat. You haven't asked me...as I told you, I was sixteen. They found out that I was sixteen shortly before the bombing of Pearl Harbor. I don't know how they found out. The captain called me up in front of the executive officer and two other officers. He called me up to his cabin. If you can imagine, at sixteen years old, what you would have felt like in front of all this "brass." Well, what happened was that Herbert Young, when we were in boot camp, had exactly the same name I did. We were in boot camp together. He got sent to China, and I got sent aboard the Worden. My records went with him, and his records came with me. Well, his mother had written to the Navy Department and told them how old he was, and, incidentally, he was underage, also. He had had a sister that had tried to commit suicide. He was from Tennessee. So I had no idea that they had the wrong records, because when they whipped that on me about being sixteen, I said, "Yes, sir. I'm sixteen." I admitted that I was sixteen, and then he told me about my sister committing suicide or trying to commit suicide. I said, "No, sir. I don't know that." So he went on, and finally it came out. He kept trying to find out if I was from Tennessee, and I kept saying,

"No, I'm from Louisiana. No, I'm from Louisiana." So finally he accepted that. He said, "Well, we have a problem. We are going to have to discharge you and send you back home." This had to be around October 1--it was very shortly after I went aboard. He sat there and he thought for a minute, and he said, "Well, if you would consent to having some guardian, I could let you stay, but I'll be taking a chance. Don't you mess up."

Marcello: Now all this is because you were underage--sixteen.

Young: Yes, yes, I was still sixteen, but I would have been seventeen in November. Naturally, I'd accept anything after going through boot camp. I thought, "Man, oh man!" So I said, "Yes, sir, I'll be glad to!" So he assigned three first class to watch over me. Everytime I got liberty, a first class petty officer went ashore with me because I couldn't go into any beer joints, liquor stores, or houses of prostitution. That was no way! So they would park me on the street. I would sit out on the street while they went into the beer joint and got loaded (chuckle), or to the houses of prostitution. Wherever they wanted to go, that's where we went. That's how I spent most of my liberties until I got free of them guardians that I had (chuckle).

Marcello: That's an interesting story, and I'm glad you mentioned that for the record.

Young: That was strictly illegal. The captain wasn't supposed to do it; I wasn't supposed to do it. But it happened.

Marcello: This brings us into that weekend of December 7, 1941, Mr. Young, and, of course, we want to go into this in as much detail as you can remember. When did the Worden come in that weekend? Do you recall? Did it come in on Friday?

Young: We were there two or three days before. It didn't really matter what position you were alongside the Dobbin, and I assume the only reason we parked alongside the Dobbin was to keep from dropping anchor. They didn't have that many buoys in there, and everytime you dropped that anchor it was quite a job. You had to wash the chain off to keep it from rusting, and you had to paint it to keep it from corroding and all this. As we came in, whoever was first, I assume, would tie up next to the one that was already there.

Marcello: And where did you tie up? Do you recall what the order of tying up was?

Young: Well, there has always been a controversy over that. I maintain we were the second ship from the Dobbin, and the Hull or the Dewey was the first. Yesterday, after talking to some of the men, I came to the conclusion that I was wrong in thinking that it was the Dewey. Now there is going to a lot of disagreement on that subject, but that was the way I saw it. The ship that was

between us and the Dobbin when we started to get underway, they pulled out before we did. I thought it rather odd because here we sat, right out in the middle with us tied alongside of the next ship, which I assumed was the Dewey on our port side and then the MacDonough on the outside of her and then the Phelps was in the line up. The Hull was next to the Dobbin, the Worden was next, and the Dewey, and then the MacDonough, and then the Phelps. The Phelps was the one that got underway first. If the Hull was next to the Dobbin, she got underway next, and that left us three grouped together just floating (chuckle). Then we got underway about 9:30.

Marcello: Once you tied up with that cluster of ships there at the Dobbin, were there any kinds of repairs that the Worden was going to undergo? In other words, was any of its machinery torn down in any way at that point?

Young: Not that I know of. The normal duties were going on. The day before, not Sunday morning, but Saturday, we were cleaning the guns and that sort of thing--just something to keep busy more or less. The Dewey had a busted boiler, but we had no problems. It took us about an hour-and-a-half or an hour to get steam up to get underway.

Marcello: What did you do that Saturday of December 6, 1941? Do you remember what your personal routine was?

Young: Well, as I told you, I was a ship's cook, and I (chuckle) preparing the food. In port like that, as a rule the chief stays ashore. He's a higher-up. He had that privilege. He probably had his family or whatever there. And the first class, he never does anything but tell the second class; the second class tells the third; the third tells the seamen. That's the string of command. As I was a striker, it was my duty to do the work. I was up at 4:00 or 5:00 cooking the breakfast and whatnot for the crew, and they got up at daybreak.

Marcello: Let's move into that morning of December 7, and, of course, we want to go into this in as much detail as you can remember. First of all, was there anything eventful that happened that night--Saturday night--that you recall, or was it a routine Saturday night?

Young: No, the only thing I can recall was that it was a moonlit night. It was a beautiful night! It was nice and cool out on the decks. As I told you before, we had no air-conditioning or fans, so most of the time was spent on topside to where you could get fresh air. It was a beautiful night, and the guys were sitting around playing cards or shooting dice or whatever they could get away with without getting caught.

Marcello: So you did stay aboard that day and that night?

Young: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, I hadn't been ashore in ...for some reason they hadn't given liberty, I don't believe,

outside of going to church.

Marcello: Generally, when somebody had liberty, what time did it expire?

Young: Eight o'clock is when they left, and they had to be back in by 4:30, I believe.

Marcello: So if you left at 8:00 in the morning, you had to be back at 4:30 in the afternoon?

Young: Yes. The boat left about 7:00 or 7:30 for shore. If you wanted to make the party boat, you had to keep those hours.

Marcello: And you had to be back that early, then, in the afternoon--by 4:30.

Young: Yes, yes.

Marcello: This leads us into that Sunday morning. Give me your routine from the time you woke up until the attack started, and then we'll talk about what happened next.

Young: Well, I'm not one of those heroes that you probably are thinking of. When I got up that Sunday morning...as I told you, I was a ship's cook, and my duty was to go start preparing food. We had oatmeal that morning for breakfast and apples and toast and fried eggs--that was all. I normally fried the eggs the way they wanted them. If they wanted them sunny-side, I did it; if they wanted them over-easy, I did it. Sunday morning was sort of a special day for everybody, so they got up whenever they felt like it. That was about the

procedure. Up until the time it started, I had finished feeding everyone that wanted to eat. The church party had already left--they leave around 7:00--and that was about twenty that had gone to church. The rest of them were sleeping in. I was sitting on the bulwark, a piece of metal that runs on each side of the ship about four feet high. Well, I was sitting on that to see if anybody came to the kitchen to get something to eat. I was sitting there because it was cooler out there, too. I was also sitting on the starboard side of the ship. So that was where I was when the first plane came over from Pearl City toward Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: Describe what you saw.

Young: Well, at that particular time it was a normal procedure that because the Navy pilots needed practice, too, they had a habit of every once in a while of coming over and dropping flour sacks--little bags of flour--on the ships. As the first plane came over--they came over in formation--I could see it coming across over the Dewey and the rest of the ships over on the other side. I was where I could see over them as they came in.

Marcello: So you're watching this nonchalantly as it was routine?

Young: Yes, I'm sitting there eating an apple. I had my pocketknife. I lost that pocketknife, and I don't know whether I ate that whole apple or what happened to it (chuckle). As it came over, when it dropped its first

bomb, I thought nothing about it. I thought it was one of the pilots. Then when it blew up, I came off that bulwark, and I ran down to our quarters. By the time I got back to the where our sleeping quarters was, several bombs had dropped by that time. I ran back down to our sleeping quarters and told my brother to get the hell out of there, that something was going on and I didn't know what. So he jumped out of bed--about the time I woke him up, a bomb hit--and started helping me wake them up to get them out of there. We were at war. He knew it was Japanese, but I didn't. I didn't know what they were. I told him that they had that big red circle on the bottom of them. I had never saw anything like it. He went down and said, "Hey, the Japs are bombing us! The Japs are bombing us!" (Chuckle) He took a lot more active part than I did at that point.

Marcello: What was the reaction of the crew when you were waking these people up?

Young: "Oh, bullshit!" (Laughter) "Oh, go on and leave me alone! I'm sleeping!" Some said, "This is Sunday! Don't you know that someone wants to sleep in on Sunday?" Really, nobody had any idea. But when the bombs started--they could hear them--they started piling out of that bed.

Marcello: In the meantime, has General Quarters sounded?

Young: It was sounding all along. That, to me, was the

problem. Before Pearl Harbor we had practiced every morning--every morning they would practice--so when you hear it so often, and you go up and sit on that gun at 4:00 in the morning and wait for sunrise and train your gun on something that is supposed to be out there and there's nothing there, well, it's just routine. And routine to me is the worst thing in the world you can have. Practice, yes, you've got to have practice to learn how to use your equipment; but if it's done constantly, there needs to be something to prevent boredom.

Marcello: You lose your edge, in other words.

Young: Yes, that was the whole thing. But once we came alive, we were really ready to fight. We could have been dead before we woke up.

Marcello: Okay, so General Quarters is now sounding. What do you do?

Young: After I get them up--get everybody out of their beds that I could wake up--I was the smallest one, so I didn't argue with them too much because they were all a lot larger than I--I went back up to my gun, which was gun one, and waited for the rest of the members to show up.

Marcello: How were you dressed at that point? What did you have on?

Young: Well, I had on my dungarees and my T-shirt. See, you

couldn't go in the galley without clothes on. This was a "must." In fact, you couldn't come into the mess hall without clothes on. The Navy is very strict about being dressed.

Marcello: How long did it take for the rest of the crew to get to that gun?

Young: Well, they were probably manned really fast. Some of them went to their stations in their shorts and T-shirts. But the orders had not been given to commence firing at that time. You're talking about later on.

Marcello: Did you have most of a full crew at the gun fairly shortly though?

Young: No, we only had five men on the gun.

Marcello: And normally how many would be on that gun?

Young: Twelve, I believe, at the least.

Marcello: I'm assuming that your first class petty officers and so on would have been able to stay ashore overnight and that sort of thing, could they not?

Young: What do you mean?

Marcello: Well, they could get overnight liberty, could they not?

Young: Yes.

Marcello: And they would have not been back.

Young: Yes, but Howard happened to be there. He was the only gunner's mate there. Howard was his name. He was the first class gunner's mate. But he was there for some reason. I don't know whether he was port or starboard,

but that particular day he was there.

Marcello: Okay, so you have a portion of your gun crew there, and you are standing by. Under those circumstances, with only a portion of the gun crew there, could you still operate that gun? Was it still capable of being operated?

Young: Oh, yes! It was a little slower operation. There'd be a hot shellman, but we didn't need him because there wasn't enough people there to get hurt at that particular time. We did operate with only five people--and efficiently. Our ammunition was not on the ship; it was on the Dobbin, so this is where the supply ship came in. We had to pass ammunition across the Dewey--or the MacDonough or the Hull, whichever one was between us and the Dobbin--and then to each one of the guns. All of our ammunition was gone.

Marcello: Was it standard procedure to unload that ammunition periodically when you tied up next to the Dobbin?

Young: No, but we had...well, I guess it was, too, because for safety reasons. We had been out on target practice that week before that. So we had stacked up--we five--enough ammunition between the bulkhead and the gun to start firing as soon as the order was given to fire.

Marcello: About how long did it take, first of all, to get the ammunition from the Dobbin over to your ship so that you

could commence firing? Now, again, this is time and everything is happening very quickly and very rapidly, so we're asking you for estimates.

Young: Well, amazingly, I would say it only took thirty minutes to get all of the ammunition we needed at the particular time, because everyone seemed to know exactly what to do. It was strange how fast you move in an emergency like, considering the distance you had to travel from amidships all the way up to the bow, which was several feet. It was like passing the ol' bucket in the fire days. Well, this is the same method that we used, but the same men that was on the Hull, between us and the Dobbin, stayed there, and then we branched out both ways. Every gun crew would get the ammunition--every other one would go a different direction. We all got our ammunition and were ready to go.

Marcello: So when you were standing by, you were still, nevertheless, handling ammunition and so on, also, as it was being passed around.

Young: More or less, yes, up until the time we started firing. Well, before we started actually firing, we were underway by this time, and the captain gave the order to strip the ship for action. That's where I got hurt (chuckle).

Marcello: Okay, so when the attack initially starts, you go to your battle station; you have to wait until the

ammunition is passed. In the meantime, what do you see taking place away from the ship? What do you observe during that period?

Young: Well, you don't have too much time to look when a piece of ninety-pound shell is hitting you in the belly or a sixty-pound can of powder is hitting you; you are grabbing it. But when you look up, all you see is smoke from the battleships. We had a direct line toward the battleships, and that's what they really were after.

Marcello: And what do you see over there?

Young: Well, all you see is flame and smoke and people running over on Ford Island. Really, to stop and look, a person would have had to been out of his mind even to think about looking, because you'd get killed that way in a hurry. Everything was happening all around you all at one time, and the only time I really got to sit and watch was when I was eating that apple (chuckle). Anything else in between...I saw a lot of it. I glimpse up there and I see this; I glimpse over here and I see this--the Curtiss and her ships, the California, the Arizona, and the Oklahoma. I saw them all. I saw all the bombs dropping when it all started. When we were actually working, I had very little time to do any looking.

Marcello: So you may have actually heard the explosions that destroyed the Arizona, but you may not have known at the

time that it was the Arizona?

Young: Oh, no, I would never say that I saw the bomb that went down the smokestack or the one that sunk the Oklahoma. No, I saw them all fall (chuckle).

Marcello: So you don't specifically remember, then, when the Arizona blew up?

Young: Yes.

Marcello: Describe that.

Young: Well, it was just one big ball of fire. That's about the only thing I remember. What is there to describe when a bomb hits and a ship or ammunition is blowing up? It just all went at one time. There's no words for it. I mean, I couldn't put it into words for you--what I saw or how I felt. It's when your hair crawls up the back of your neck and your rear end tightens up. It's just sort of a weird feeling, I guess.

Marcello: I want to pick up on something you mentioned a moment ago. I gather from what you said that once General Quarters sounds aboard the Worden, professionalism and Navy training takes over. There really isn't a whole lot of chaos and so on at that point--everyone knows what they have to do. Am I correct in saying that?

Young: Yes. But when General Quarters was being sounded, like I said, we were supposed have a drill General Quarters and a regular General Quarters. However, that was a drill General Quarters that they put on. I imagine it

was on a clock system to where it went off every morning at 4:00 (chuckle), and that's what happened. No, until we got them out of bed and got them up, then they started acting as a sailor should act. But anyone that tells you they were prepared is "full of it" all the way up to their eyeballs (chuckle). I will tell anybody that. If I had to whip the whole Navy, I'd tell them that. We were not prepared!

Marcello: In picking up on another thing that you said a moment ago, you indicated that the Worden eventually did get underway. From the time that the first bombs dropped until the Worden got underway, how much time had elapsed?

Young: Well, I imagine it was close to an hour-and-a-half from the time it started. It was about 9:30.

Marcello: How long does it take for a destroyer normally to get up enough steam to get underway under normal conditions?

Young: About four hours. Normally, they take eight hours. They build up the steam the morning before or the night before, and in the morning we are ready to take off. They build it up gradually; they don't do it all at one time. Here, we "poured the coal on" and let her go (chuckle).

Marcello: Okay, so you mentioned that the Worden does get up steam, but in the meantime, now, has your gun gotten into action?

Young: We had fired before we got underway. Yes, we had definitely started firing.

Marcello: Describe this action from what you remember of it.

Young: Well, the planes were rather low. Our main problem was that they were too low. The Curtiss and her cluster of ships was facing us, and the plane would come down in between us, and they were too low for us to fire because we would hit the Curtiss and her group. These Japs would (chuckle)...and we really thought that we could throw our shoe at them and hit them--they were that close. There would be string of them coming--one behind the other--between us and the Curtiss, and then they'd come back through machine-gunning. As they were machine-gunning us, I'd run out...to show you how prepared we were and how much we really thought that there was a war going on, I'd run out and yell, "Hey, look, look, look, look, look!" (Laughter) The bullets were bouncing off the deck.

Marcello: I assume that these were torpedo plane that you were observing.

Young: I imagine they were, yes. After reading the history on how those torpedo planes was rigged up, I imagine they were the torpedo planes. Of course, they used bombers, too, on us.

Marcello: You mentioned that they were coming in so low that you could actually distinguish the pilots.

Young: Oh, yes!

Marcello: Describe what you saw.

Young: (Chuckle) Like I told you, you could see their ol' shiny teeth and their big grins, and, well, it just tore you up to be able to see them that close. We only had two machine guns--two .50-calibers--one of them mounted underneath the bridge on each side. They had to be brought--this is another thing--from the storeroom and mounted on their mount outside before they could start firing. We had a few problems in that category, too. Some bridges got shot up because they were mounted underneath the bridge, and as a plane went over--we had no stops on our machine guns at that particular time--if the gunner wasn't watching what he was doing, which one of them didn't, he blowed a few holes in the bridge (laughter).

Marcello: So the amount of firing that you could do on that number one gun was limited due to the tactics of the Japanese planes and their location and so on.

Young: Yes. Then we had a direction that we couldn't fire because of Honolulu. After we had fired a few rounds and they reported that they were bombing Honolulu, we began to realize that somebody was shooting in the wrong direction. It was one of the ships farther out. It was ours--one of the cruisers. It was probably one of the cruisers because I don't believe our guns had that

range. Nevertheless, when they got in that position where Honolulu was, we quit firing at that point. We didn't try to get them anymore. Our area was limited, also, by the ships that were on each side of us. We could come down only so far. The Dobbin was on our starboard side, and she was up above us quite a ways, so we would have blowed her up (chuckle).

Marcello: How many rounds do you think you fired before you got underway?

Young: Gee, I wouldn't know.

Marcello: Would it be less than fifty?

Young: Oh, no, it was more like a 150 or something of this magnitude. It was quite a few.

Marcello: Did you hit anything that you know of?

Young: One of our gunners got one of the planes. Yes, we got credited with one. I like the story that we got thirteen Americans and three Japs (chuckle). We had some American planes get off of the ground. When we started firing, anything that moved we shot at. Most of them we didn't hit. I don't know whether that was due to the inaccuracy of the equipment we were using or the people using them, but from the stories I've read our equipment wasn't really all that good at the particular time. I do know that our torpedoes were not that good.

Marcello: Yes. You mentioned that the ship gets underway in about an hour-and-a-half after the attack starts. Describe

what happens at that point. What do you do?

Young: Well, as we got underway, the captain gave the order then to strip the ship for action.

Marcello: Which meant what?

Young: Anything that was burnable or explodable--all the paint, excess rope or line, or anything of this nature--we were to throw it over the side--get rid of it. We wanted a clear space to fight in. In fact, while we were firing, during the attack, we rolled over a couple of rounds of live ammunition. If you've ever seen the powder that they used, they looked like little capsules. They are all over the deck, and you are walking on them, and you're crushing them. Anyone who'd have smoked a cigarette or thrown a match, it would have blew us up (chuckle). We didn't smoke; we didn't have time to even think of smoking at that particular time. The ammunition, well, was just rolling all over the deck all around us.

Marcello: Okay, so now the Worden is underway. What happens at that point? The attack, I guess, is pretty much over by then, is it not?

Young: The attack is over, yes. We did all of our fighting while we were tied up alongside the Dobbin. As we started out around the Dobbin and after we got clear of the Dobbin, on our left-hand side we were facing the Curtiss and all of her ships. None of those got

damaged, that I know of, but as we turned and went around Ford Island, you could see the dry dock and the Shaw. I believe that was the name of the ship that was turned over in the dry dock there.

Marcello: That was the Cassin or the Downes that was turned over. The Shaw was the one that blew up--exploded.

Young: The Cassin, yes. Well, that was right in our view. Over on our right was the battleships. We just had a picture of all of it. It gives you an eerie feeling. Here we was supposed to have been "the mightiest Navy in the world," and in a matter of an hour the Japanese had destroyed us. A country that wasn't as big as the state of Texas had just wiped us off the map.

Marcello: What did you see over there at Battleship Row when you went past it?

Young: Well, as we passed Battleship Row, there was one man that I saw in particular. I imagine it was the Arizona. I don't know how they were tied up. They were all battleships to me that were tied in that group. The battleship was sinking. There was a man standing in the middle of it fighting a fire as we went by. There was no way he'd get out of it. The flames were fifteen or twenty feet high, and he was standing out there in the middle of it--fighting it, trying to get out of it--and there was no way he could get out of it. That's the most horrible thing I saw--men jumping over the side

that were still afire and this sort of thing.

Marcello: Did you see the Nevada at all during this procedure?

Young: Oh, yes! That was a kick in the butt! As we came out, the Nevada was way away from the other battleships. It looked like there was a small stream--I'd been on the stream before on party boats and whatnot--and it was maybe ten or fifteen feet wide; and here the Nevada looked like she was trying to go up that stream (laughter). What she had done was that she had been hit and was trying to get out of the way of the other ships so that they could get out of there. If she had sunk in the middle, we would have all been in there to stay, but she didn't. She went up this little stream, and we all got by her (chuckle). Oh, yes, as I said, I saw it all (chuckle). It was all right there in front of me just like a picture.

Marcello: Did you perchance see the Nevada when it was trying to get out and when the Japanese were hammering it?

Young: Yes, yes, it was all part of it. It was all right there.

Marcello: Can you describe what you saw as the Nevada was moving out and the Japanese were all over it?

Young: Well, have you ever been in a wasp's nest?

Marcello: No (laughter).

Young: (Laughter) Can you imagine going into a wasp's nest?

Marcello: Yes.

Young: Well, there was about five planes all at one time. They

seemed to just concentrate on the Nevada--to just pick on that one ship. If you pick on a wasp's nest, they'll come right for you--the whole bunch. That's just what it looked like that they did to her. She was the last one and the only one that was going to make it, and they all just concentrated their power on her. She was pretty well underway. She was getting out with it, but she didn't make it.

Marcello: I'm assuming that during the attack the Worden, itself, as well as those other destroyers, were not under any direct attack.

Young: We were, yes. We had one bomb dropped that missed us and hit our...that where I made the statement that they had hit our buoy. The Dobbin is tied up to a buoy, and we're tied up to the Dobbin. This buoy is our central location. This bomb had hit our buoy at our tail-end.

Marcello: Okay, describe this incident because this is something that we talked about off the record.

Young: Well, this...

Marcello: I don't think you are going to get court-martialed for it at this late date.

Young: Well, I still prefer them not to think of me as a deserter or anything of this nature. The fighting had come to a lull, and this plane--one of the last ones in the group--had come over. The guns were all manned, and we were doing our duty, but this bomb had dropped. I

looked around, and I saw no planes in sight nowhere, and this one had just passed over. My brother was on gun four, which is above the toilet in the fantail, so I ran back down the starboard side just as hard as I could go. He was up on the gun. I couldn't see him at first, so I jumped up on the torpedo tubes, and I saw him. Then I ran back up to my station. Nobody missed me (chuckle).

Marcello: I was going to ask you if anybody was yelling after you as you left your position.

Young: No, nobody missed me. Nobody knew I was gone. It was very important that I was up there on the gun. As I said, there was only five of us on there, so it was very important that everybody was there.

Marcello: The Worden is now underway, and I'm assuming you're trying to get out of the harbor. What you're going to do once you get out there is anybody's guess (chuckle), but, anyway, what happens at that point?

Young: Well, at that particular point, I had been injured from that can of paint when he told us to strip the ship for action.

Marcello: I don't believe you mentioned this on tape.

Young: No, I haven't told you that story. That's another part of it.

Marcello: Okay. Okay. It seems to me that this is a part of your story.

Young: This is not a hero's story.

Marcello: That's okay.

Young: I told you that the captain gave the orders to strip the ship for action, and I told you what we were supposed to do. Well, my job was to go down to the paint locker, which is right in the bow of the ship. I threw the paint from the bottom of the ship up to Jones; Jones threw it to Shoemaker; Shoemaker threw to Howard; and Howard, the first class, threw it over the side.

Marcello: These are gallon cans?

Young: Gallons or five-gallons, whatever, yes. I got down to the last one, and I guess Shoemaker thought that was all of them. I went back in the corner to get this one, and I brought it over, and I threw it up. Jones caught it, but when it got to Shoemaker, he didn't catch it! Well, I was sort of halfway looking up, and that paint can caught right across here (gesture).

Marcello: Right across the head.

Young: Yes. Well, I had nine stitches taken in my head. I went down to sickbay--this was as we were pulling out; I didn't stop during the time we were pulling out--and he stitched my head up. He said, "I don't think I ought to put that on the record." He said, "At least you could get shot." (Chuckle) You see, they have a ruling. If you shed any blood, you get a purple heart. I said, "No, I guess not."

Marcello: You didn't get a purple heart for being hit with a paint

can (chuckle).

Young: Oh, no (chuckle).

Marcello: In other words, without looking, you threw the paint can up, thinking he was going to catch it; and he didn't catch it, so obviously it came back down?

Young: Right. It came back down, yes. So when I went in to get the stitches, to show you how confused we were, he didn't put it on the record. When I went back to get the stitches out, he said, "Where in the hell did you get them?" I mean, you really didn't tie any of it together. It was all over and done with before you knew what happened, just like being slapped down and looking around: "Who did that?" (chuckle)

Marcello: So what did the Worden then do once it cleared the harbor and got out to sea?

Young: We joined the Phelps and the other ships and started looking for the Japanese. Well, on our way out we dropped some depth charges. We probably hit enough fish to feed the whole fleet around there for a while. There were soundings picked up, and we did drop depth charges on our way out. It's hard to say--and they tell us we won't ever know--if we got any of those two-man subs or not or whether they were larger. We picked them up on our sonar system. Of course, all kinds of metal was being picked up at that time.

Marcello: They evidently have quite a few conventional submarines

operating around the islands and in position even before the attack took place. You easily could have detected some of those.

Young: We picked up a lot of soundings, and we did drop a lot of depth charges, but no significant proof came up that we had gotten them.

Marcello: There was no confirmation.

Young: No, no confirmation. You have to have proof that you hit them before you can claim a kill.

Marcello: While all this is taking place, are you still standing by at your gun?

Young: Oh, yes, every person has his place to be, and you have to be there.

Marcello: General quarters is still in effect.

Young: Oh, yes, it stayed on for four or five days. You slept on your gun--you stayed. You didn't move.

Marcello: How long did the Worden stay out?

Young: We came back, I believe, on December 18. We came back in then.

Marcello: So you were out for well over a week, then, after the attack.

Young: Yes.

Marcello: That evening of December 7, what was the scuttlebutt going around? What rumors were going around?

Young: That the Japanese were landing in California, and that Wake Island had fell and Guam had fell.

Marcello: Did you believe most of those rumors?

Young: Yes, we had no reason not to. After we saw what they had done to us in Pearl Harbor, there was no reason to doubt that they had ruined us, that we were on our own. We felt we either had to whip them or we'd go down fighting. We figured we would go down, that there was no way out of it.

Marcello: I'm assuming that in addition to standing by your gun, were you also taking care of some of your duties as a cook or not?

Young: No, we had sandwiches. When I relieved during a slack period, I went down and made sandwiches for the crew. I wasn't the only cook, you have to understand. I just made enough for our gun crew. The first class cook was in the magazine, but he made sandwiches. He had to work that time (chuckle).

Marcello: By the way, when the Worden got underway that day and got out to sea, I'm assuming that it did not have a full crew, because there had been people on liberty and so on that would have probably had difficult time getting back to the ship.

Young: Right. I believe the Dewey brought some of them out to us, and the rest of them we picked up when we came back in from when we spent time out looking for the submarines.

Marcello: When you came back into Pearl on December 18, describe

what you saw in the harbor even a week-and-a-half later.

Young: It's a sickening sight, I'll tell you. You would have thought, or I thought, "Gee, they ought to have that mess cleaned up!" It was the Utah...and as we pulled around Ford Island, you could see all of the battleships--one of them rolled over, one of them setting straight down. The smoke was still coming out of all of them; they were still burning long after that. It was just devastating. You just knew, "Well, there's no hope. No need to pull back in that harbor again." There was nothing there to refuel us or anything else. But they straightened it out very shortly. In fact, it was amazing how fast they did get it straight.

Marcello: At this time, how would you describe your emotions? Would it be accurate to say that it was mainly anger at this point?

Young: Sick anger, I would say. It was sort of a sick feeling. I imagine it would be just like losing close ones--your mother or father--because all your shipmates, all the men that you have gone ashore with, all these people that you have fought with and this sort of thing, they were dead--they were no longer there. Well, it was just like you'd lost your home and all your family at one spot as you pulled down through there.

Marcello: Just from a physical standpoint, is it not true that Pearl Harbor was fairly clean as harbors of that nature

go before the war?

Young: Oh, yes, the Navy was always--our Navy anyway; maybe I'm a little prejudiced--sort of "spic and span." The destroyers got away with a lot more than the cruisers or bigger ships. The destroyer was a small vessel. On the bigger ships they had to wear their whites all the time and everything. You would never see oil or anything on the water. I mean, swimming in Pearl Harbor would be just like swimming in your own swimming pool. That's how clean it was. We swam right there in the harbor a lot of times before Pearl Harbor. We would dive right off the ship. We'd wash our clothes in the water. It was clean. You could see the fish swimming down under the ship. That's how clear it was. No, there was no dirt until after the attack. They messed everything up.

Marcello: How long did you stay with the Worden?

Young: I stayed with her until she went down.

Marcello: And this occurred...?

Young: Well, that was January 12, 1943.

Marcello: And where was it that the Worden went down?

Young: She went down in the Aleutian Islands. We thought that was a heck of a disappointment, after fighting the battles in the South Pacific and the Solomon Islands, Coral Sea, and all over. She had to go all the way up there where we had to freeze to sink. That was a big disappointment for us, for her to sink in the first

place. We thought there was no way she could sink, that we could protect her against anything (chuckle).

Marcello: What were some of the actions that the Worden participated in after Pearl? You mentioned the Solomon Islands, and you mentioned the Coral Sea.

Young: Well, we were in all of those South Pacific campaigns--Truk, Bougainville, Rabaul, the Coral Sea Battle, and Midway. We participated in one way or another, either pulling ships in, fighting in them, or whatever. The kamikazes were coming and going and this sort of thing. You were constantly doing something. It wasn't like in the Army where you meet your enemy face-to-face today and fight it right out then. In our case, a day or two later you'd run into a group of them or they'd run into you or whatever, and you'd slug it out--that sort of action.

Marcello: What were the circumstances under which the Worden went down off the Aleutians?

Young: Oh, that wasn't such an exciting thing. It was not heroic by any means. She hit a rock. We went into Kamchatka. We took stormtroopers in--fifty Army personnel--to land on Kamchatka Island, which was supposed to have been Jap infested. We landed them and had turned around and started out, and on our way out we hit a reef. It came up between our boiler room and our engine room. The Worden didn't have a partition between

those two rooms, so it flooded both compartments at the same time. When we first hit the rock, the Dewey, our sister ship, tried to pull us off. We had a six-inch hawser from their ship over to ours, and it parted. The second one, they cut it. When they started trying to pull, it started pulling them around into the reef, so they cut the hawser. As we set there on the rock, it just set there, and everytime it would go down again, it would go farther. As it went farther and farther and farther...the order was given three times to abandon ship before they finally abandoned it. It started before daylight, right after the soldiers had landed, that we hit the rock, and he gave the order to abandon ship. Then the Dewey came on, tied up, tried to pull us off; the line parted, and she went around to stern and tried again. And that's when she cut the rope (chuckle).

Marcello: So that was a rather inglorious way for the Worden to end its career, considering everything that it had gone through.

Young: Well, it was. As a ship's cook, my duty was at that particular time to prepare landing party food. We had to have something to eat if we had to go on this Jap infested island because we had no way of preparing food once we got there. So I was making sandwiches--not only me, but there was the rest of the cooks. We were making sandwiches for the whole crew. We made big stacks of

them. We would wrap them up and put them on the lifeboats and life rafts. Unfortunately, all the life rafts except one went down, and one of our lifeboats sunk.

Marcello: For the most part, when you abandoned ship, were you picked up by the Dewey?

Young: No, I wasn't picked up by the Dewey. There was very few picked up by the Dewey. The Middleton was the ship that picked me up. I was one of the last ones that left the ship. I walked up onto the boat davit, and the curve in the boat davit is where I dived into the water--from the starboard side. She rolled to the starboard, and I dived into the water at that point. I got about fifty yards away, I guess, before I turned around and looked back. She'd broke in half! As she came to, this good friend of mine--Robert William Kaiser was his name--was caught in between the ship as she closed back up. It cut him right in half. That was the end of him. I kept swimming. There was a life raft out there, and it was about that far under the water (gesture) because there was so many men on it.

Marcello: It was about a foot-and-a-half under the water.

Young: Yes, about that. I figured there was no place for me on that life raft, so I just kept swimming. They tried to get me to hang on to it, and I'd move away. Two of the men on the ship--in fact, I met those two that was on

the life raft--jumped off and joined me. They said, "Well, we might as well let it get back up where it belongs," so they joined me in the swim. We drifted apart. I went one way, and they went another.

As I ran out of breath and was getting farther away, I managed to grab a dehydrated spud crate--potato crate. They have two cans of potatoes in them. They are about twenty-four inches by about twelve inches and two of them to a crate. So I hooked my hands over them, one on each end, and put my chin up on the box. That's the way I froze, right like that. (Chuckle) When they picked me up...the landing barge that was landing the troops was searching for survivors, and I was way out in the open and heading for the open sea at that particular time. They spotted me and came to pick me up. As they came by, the wave hit my box and knocked it away from me, and down I went. One of the boys on the landing craft jumped over the side and pulled me back up to the surface. They lowered the front end and scooped me, water and all, up into it (chuckle).

Marcello: How long were you in the water?

Young: An hour.

Marcello: Just very briefly, then, recount your activities between there and the end of the war.

Young: Well, the sinking of the Worden wasn't complete at that particular point. If you look on your map, you might

find Forest Hill, Louisiana, on it. One of the fellows that picked me up was from Forest Hill, Louisiana. I was covered with oil. I guess that's really the only thing that saved me, was the oil. He looked down at me, and he said, "Aren't you Herbert Young?" He sort of wiped the oil off of my face, and he says, "Yeah, you're Herbert! Do you know me?" Well, I couldn't talk, but he said, "I'm Milford!" He got one of these little one-shot bottles of brandy, and he pried my lips open, and he poured the first one in there, and he said, "Hell, that ain't enough! I'll give you another one!" I was just a kid. I'd never drank anything stronger than coffee. Well, I did have the wine. He poured another one down me, and I believe that's really the only thing that saved me--him pouring that brandy in me.

They lifted me out of the landing barge onto the Middleton in a stretcher. Well, the Middleton abandoned ship eight hours after that, as you probably know. We were transferred from there to the fruit grower's ship that the Army had taken over. It was a troop transport ship at that time. We were brought back to Anchorage, Alaska. From there we went back to Seattle--Bremerton Ship Yard--and then we got a thirty-day leave. In that time that I was on the thirty-day leave, I just peeled like a snake. All my hide came off, and by the time I went back to New Orleans, where I had to report in, I

was looking pretty good by then.

Well, we had this dark tan from being in the South Pacific so long. In fact, my dad told my future wife when we got married that I was way too black for her (chuckle). In New Orleans, even after all that peeling, I was dark. I met my future wife when we put the ship--the Murray--in commission in Orange, Texas. While we were in Orange, Texas, my uncle lived in Port Arthur, so I went to visit them, and that's where I met my wife.

We left Orange, Texas, and went to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and had our shake down. From there we went to Trinidad, and from Trinidad we went up to Norfolk, and I went to school for a radar technician. From there we went up to Boston Harbor, and from there we went back down through the Panama Canal and back to the Pacific and joined the fleet again (chuckle).

We did a little more fighting. I got hurt during the invasion of Tarawa and was put aboard the hospital ship Relief and then transferred back to the Murray. I stayed on there a short period of time. I couldn't do any good for them because the muscle in my arm was cut, so they transferred me back to the States, where I went to Treasure Island and from there to Oak Knoll Hospital. They thought they had it repaired. In fact, they did. I felt pretty good.

They sent me back to Treasure Island to pick up

another ship. I put the General E.T. Collins in commission, and then they decided they needed the other ship put in commission. They transferred me from that one right after it was put into commission onto the Admiral R.E. Koontz. That was where they made a mistake. We went to sea. Mogmog little island we went to. We dropped a load of troops--it was a troopship. The ship had given a lurch, and in the lurch I grabbed the ladder, and it broke all those muscles loose again. I had to go back in the hospital, and this time they discharged me, in 1945, which is thirty days after the war was over.

Marcello: How was it that you injured your arm originally?

Young: By one of the landing craft that came alongside to bring supplies. It caught me between the depth charges and the boat and just severed it. It caught me right across here (gesture).

Marcello: Okay, well, I think that's probably a pretty good place to end this interview, Mr. Young. I want to thank you very much for your comments. You said a lot of interesting and, I think, important things about Pearl Harbor and thereafter.

Young: As I told you, I was not a hero. I was a live coward (laughter). I'm glad you asked me for the interview. I looked for someone that would take the interview and not for profitable purposes. That was my intention. Thanks.