

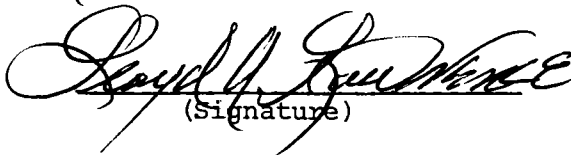
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Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Interviewer: H. R. Summers, Jr.

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Oral History Collection

Lloyd Lawrence

Interviewer: H. R. Summers, Jr. Date March 25, 1989

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Mr. Summers: This is Herbert R. Summers interviewing for the University of North Texas Oral History Collection. The date today is March 25, 1989, and I'm at the home of Mr. Lloyd A. Lawrence, a survivor of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The purpose of this interview is to get the reminiscences, experiences, and impressions of Mr. Lawrence while aboard the battleship the USS Maryland before, during, and after the Japanese attack of December 7, 1941.

Okay, Mr. Lawrence, would you give us a short biographical sketch up to the time you joined the Navy--when you were born, your educational information, and so on and so forth?

Mr. Lawrence: I was born on November 28, 1916, in Lincoln, Nebraska, and spent the majority of my youth on a farm in western Nebraska.

I joined the Navy on December 12, 1934, and

went to San Diego for training. After the training was completed, I was sent to the battleship Idaho for duty and spent five years on the Idaho.

Then I became a member of the staff--Commander, Battleship Division Three, which rotated between the Idaho, the Mississippi, and the New Mexico. A message was sent to the flag requesting that I be sent to the Maryland for duty, and this was in the month of February of 1940. I went to the Maryland in 1940 and was aboard the Maryland during the attack on December 7, 1941.

Summers: Why did you join the Navy in the first place?

Lawrence: It was during the Depression, and there wasn't much choice for a person without a college education at that time. So I felt that if I went into the Navy for a period of four years and saved money, I could save enough money to go to college. At the end of four years, I didn't have quite enough money, so I extended for two years; and at the end of the two years--that was a total of six years year in the Navy--I had sufficient funds to pay my way through college.

At that time, when I was ready to be discharged, I went to the quarter-deck of the Maryland and was told by the executive officer that I was to report to my draft board within seventy-two hours, and I said, "Why would I want to report to the draft board when I just finished six years in the Navy?" He said, "It's the law of the

land." So I then decided to reenlist aboard the Maryland, and consequently I was on the Maryland for the remainder of my battleship career.

Summers: What was the position for which you were trained?

Lawrence: I was trained as a signalman and went up through the enlisted promotions group. I was a first class signalman on the Maryland, on the bridge, during the attack.

Summers: What was the training like for you becoming a signalman?

Lawrence: The training in the Navy was simply a boot camp training to determine the stamina of the individual by hard marching and being prepared for the rigors of duty on board a battleship.

Summers: Were there any specific things that you had to know to be a signalman, like, the use of the flags and that type of stuff?

Lawrence: Yes, you had to learn how to read Morse code by light; you needed to know how to send semaphore by using the semaphore flags; and you had to be able read twenty-four-inch searchlights as well.

Summers: Okay, I'd like to ask you a few questions about life at Pearl Harbor and also on board the ship. First of all, life aboard the ship.

Lawrence: It was rather restricted; I mean, there wasn't much chance of going ashore in Honolulu at that time because it was not a resort area. If you went ashore there

wasn't much to do. So most of the time we spent aboard ship studying and preparing for events.

Summer: What was the food like?

Lawrence: The food was excellent, and it was routine. It was usually the same. Every Wednesday morning, for instance, you had baked beans, and every Saturday morning you had baked beans. It was routine to the extent that you generally knew what your menu was going to be for the whole week because it didn't change much week after week.

Summers: You feel like the food was better in the Navy than it was in the other services?

Lawrence: Well, I can't really say about the other services, but according to conversation that has taken place that I've listened to, the people in the Army and Marine Corps, if they were not on board ship, felt we had better food than they did.

Summers: Now what were your sleeping quarters like on the ship?

Lawrence: When you first went aboard ship as a recruit, you slept in a hammock. I slept in a hammock for approximately four years, and then I became a petty officer, and I had an Army cot that they put out on the deck and slept on that.

Summers: Was it fairly comfortable?

Lawrence: To me it was, yes.

Summers: Which did you like best--the cot or the hammock?

Lawrence: The hammock (chuckle)!

Summers: Why was that?

Lawrence: Because it was much more comfortable. The hammock usually rolled and pitched with the ship, while the cot, if it was on deck, would move, and you'd slide around in the cot much more than you would in the hammock. You'd remain stationary in the hammock.

Summers: What kind of shipboard training did you have?

Lawrence: Well, of course, we had general quarters training; we had fire and rescue training. We had various watch, quarter, and station bills, so we always knew exactly where we were supposed to be during any particular exercise.

Summers: How do you feel the morale was among yourself and the shipmates in the prewar United States Navy?

Lawrence: In the first five or six years that I was in the Navy, the morale was very high among the enlisted men.

Summers: What were some of the problems of advancing in rank during the prewar years?

Lawrence: Well, of course, you had to have a certain amount of time in the service before you were eligible to take the examination for promotion. If you prepared yourself with good study habits, you didn't have too much of a problem in advancing, except that the number of promotions were limited within the fleet. You had to, number one, have the time in rank to take the

examination; and then if you took the examination, you had to make a very high mark if you expected to be promoted.

Summers: Was the competition very heavy for positions?

Lawrence: I didn't find it so, and probably it was because I studied...let me say one thing. I didn't have a chance to get an education as a young man; and when I went aboard ship, I had a thirst for knowledge, and I spent a great deal of my free time studying. As I recall, I took the first examination for advancement and rating, and I was promoted. I took the second examination six months later and was promoted. I never failed to get promoted if I was eligible to take the examination.

Summer: How often could you get promoted? Was it a long time in between ratings?

Lawrence: The first one was an automatic promotion between apprentice seaman and seaman second class. That was given automatically if your conduct was good. The second one to seaman first class was a period of six months. Then it took an additional six months of waiting period before you could take the examination for third class petty officer. Then it was a year between third class and second class petty officer, and then it was a year again before you could take the examination from second class petty officer to first class petty officer.

Summers: What was the pay like in the prewar Navy?

Lawrence: It began with \$21 a month as an apprentice seaman. When I was a seaman second class, I got \$36 a month; and when I became a third class petty officer, I was given \$66 a month. When I made second class petty officer, I made \$84 a month; and when I made first class petty officer, I was given \$96 a month.

Summers: Was that quite a bit of money?

Lawrence: At that time, during the Depression, yes, it was. It was quite a bit.

Summers: A job in civilian life would have, of course, been probably much less than that in many cases.

Lawrence: Well, I would say yes.

Summers: If you had a job at all.

Lawrence: If you had a job at all, yes.

Summers: Okay, I'd like to ask you a few questions about the nature of the USS Maryland. How old was the Maryland when you served aboard her?

Lawrence: She was commissioned, if I recall correctly, in 1926. I went aboard her in 1940, so that would make her fourteen years old.

Summers: So she was relatively old, but there were many a lot older, isn't that true?

Lawrence: Many ships were older. The Maryland was very seaworthy.

Summers: What was the armament aboard the Maryland?

Lawrence: She, of course, had eight 16-inch guns, and she had

adequate steel armament around the superstructure of the ship, and on the sides they had what is known as blisters that extended out eighteen inches completely around the ship.

Summers: What was the deck of the Maryland made of?

Lawrence: Wood.

Summers: Wood. Okay, what kind of wood? Do you recall?

Lawrence: No, offhand I don't, but I suspect it was...it was caulked--I know that--and it was probably two inches thick.

Summers: I think the Iowa class had teak decks, but I don't know exactly what the Maryland would have had.

Lawrence: I have no idea. I've never been aboard the Iowa.

Summers: Did you ever get to take part in the cleaning of the decks when you were on board?

Lawrence: Daily. When I first went aboard the Idaho, I was in the deck force and had to holystone the deck every morning. The way this was done, the seamen like myself would line up across a section, and the boatswain's mate who was in charge of the cleaning detail would spread water and then throw sand on the wood. We would holystone the deck. Yes, I was very much involved until I went into the signal force. When I went into the signal force, I was only responsible for the cleanliness of the bridge.

Summers: Was that a difficult job to holystone the decks?

Lawrence: It wasn't to me because I had come from very, very hard

work on the farm, so it was relatively easy. I recall many times that I would be holystoning the deck, and the seaman beside me would be complaining that it was difficult. But to me it was a piece of cake.

Summers: Easier than farm work?

Lawrence: Very much so.

Summers: While you were aboard the Maryland, was the Maryland the flagship?

Lawrence: The Maryland became the flagship of Commander, Battleships shortly before the attack on Pearl Harbor. Normally, the commander of battleships would be aboard the...oh, heavens, I've forgotten the name of the ship now. I think the reason he came to the Maryland--Admiral Anderson came to the Maryland--with his staff shortly before the attack on Pearl was because the West Virginia, which was in Pearl Harbor at the time, was scheduled to go into dry dock in Bremerton, Washington.

Summers: What was the nature of antiaircraft protection prior to the Japanese attack?

Lawrence: As so far as I can recall--I wasn't in a gunnery department--it seems to me they had adequate antiaircraft guns on the ship, spread from bow to stern. They were called 40-millimeters and 20-millimeters.

Summers: As the signalman on the admiral's flagship, did this require more of you than it would normally?

Lawrence: Well, it was considered an honorable position to be with

the flag, and normally those that were with the flag were above average in their ability to receive signals and send signals.

Summers: What type of night fighting training did you receive prior to the beginning of the war?

Lawrence: None that I recall.

Summers: So you did no night fighting training at all, but you could signal at night.

Lawrence: Oh, yes, yes. As far as the signaling is concerned, you had twenty-four-inch searchlights, you had yardarm blinkers, and you had blinker guns at dark which you used on darkened ship. Yes, it was adequate for night signaling, but fighting, no.

Summers: Do you have any idea why they did not train to fight at night?

Lawrence: No. As far as the fighting force of the ship was concerned, I wasn't involved. Mine was mostly communications.

Summers: Describe how it felt when you were in the line of battle--maneuvers and things of that sort.

Lawrence: Well, of course, during peacetime and being at sea with the battle line, the signalmen had to be constantly alert to flag hoists, the changes of direction of the battle line, and that's about it. It was much the same in peacetime as it would be in wartime, as far as maneuvering the battle force is concerned. But the

signalmen had to know what the flags meant--all of the flags--and they had to be able to send at night, send semaphore, and that sort of thing.

Summers: Was it an impressive sight to see the battleships all lined up?

Lawrence: It was a very admirable sight. A person felt that there was tremendous strength in fourteen battleships in line.

Summers: It did not seem that it would be possible for something to sink one of those so easily, did it?

Lawrence: It didn't seem possible to sink them at all.

Summers: Okay, I'd like to ask you a few question about social life at Pearl Harbor prior the war. I think you've already addressed that to a certain extent. First of all, liberty. What was the nature of liberty?

Lawrence: Well, of course, the ships would always maintain adequate force on board the ship to cover any circumstance. Generally, you had one-fourth the crew on liberty and three-fourths on the ship.

Summers: So that would be called like the port-and-starboard.

Lawrence: Yes, port-and-starboard. Then the port and starboard sections would be split in two, so you'd get one liberty out of four.

Summers: So there were two parts on the port side and two parts on the starboard. As you said, one-fourth would be on liberty, and three-fourths would be on board.

Lawrence: Right.

Summer: What time did they have to come back in from liberty?

Lawrence: If we were in Pearl Harbor, they had to be back aboard ship by midnight.

Summers: Okay, what type of activities did the sailors take part in? You had said earlier that there was not a lot for them to do there.

Lawrence: Not much. If they would go ashore during the day, they might organize a softball game or a touch football game or something of that kind or maybe even a baseball game. The liberty was rather restricted in Pearl Harbor, much moreso than it was when the ships were at peacetime in Long Beach, California.

Summers: Okay, there were some areas in Hawaii that catered to sailors, though, like, on Hotel and Canal Streets.

Lawrence: Oh, yes, they made it known where sailors were accepted and could have a good time--sure.

Summers: When men came off liberty, what kind of shape were they generally in?

Lawrence: Well, most of them had their equilibrium, and some of them did not. Some of them were helped back aboard.

Summers: Do you think that this affected any of their abilities the next day?

Lawrence: Not to an extent that would keep them from performing their duties, because they realized that they would be in tremendous trouble if they did.

Summers: There have been some suggestions that the Japanese had

attacked on Sunday morning because they thought the American sailors might have hangovers, and it might keep them from performing their duties. Do you think there was any truth to that at all?

Lawrence: No, I really don't. The reason I don't is that I think that the primary concern was that we were known as a religious navy, and we would be in church on board ship and not at our battle stations. Also, they felt that those who weren't religious would be relaxing in their bunks, reading or whatever, on Sunday morning.

Summers: Okay, I'd like to ask you a few questions about your attitude toward the Japanese prior to the attack. For instance, in bull sessions with other sailors, did you ever talk about the possibilities of war with Japan?

Lawrence: Often!

Summers: Did you feel like a war was imminent?

Lawrence: I did indeed.

Summers: How closely did you keep up with world affairs?

Lawrence: Well, of course, being in Honolulu, we had radios on board ship. We had newspapers, and we would read the newspapers, listen to the radio, and discuss it amongst ourselves. The possibility of war did exist, very much so.

Summers: Had you observed any operations of the Japanese Navy prior to the beginning of World War II?

Lawrence: No, none.

Summers: What did you personally think of the Japanese in their fighting abilities?

Lawrence: Well, of course, I felt that they would be overcome by the American fighting abilities. For one thing, I think the training that the Americans received was much more extensive than that of the Japanese. As a matter of fact, I don't think that the Japanese had a large military force, that is, personnel-wise, until just several months before the war, when they conscripted 500,000 men.

Summers: Do you think that the Japanese Navy was respected at all by the American Navy?

Lawrence: I'm sure they felt that they had a fighting ability, yes.

Summers: As the war approached, did your routine change any? Any different training, special alerts, that type of thing?

Lawrence: Well, of course, we spent a great deal of time at general quarters preparing for battle. Just knowing that the possibility of war existed, they put us on a wartime footing on board ship.

Summers: Was there a large influx of reserves right prior to the beginning?

Lawrence: Not at the beginning of the war, no. Most of the sailors and officers aboard ship were officers from the Academy and enlisted men who made a career of the Navy.

Summers: Were there any reserves on board at all?

Lawrence: Not that I know of. There may have been a few, but I wasn't aware of them.

Summers: Did the Maryland have radar? Do you know?

Lawrence: No, I don't think so.

Summers: Did any of the American ships that you are aware of have radar at that time?

Lawrence: Not to my knowledge.

Summers: Did you consider Pearl Harbor to be immune from attack? And if so, why?

Lawrence: Well, I wasn't really particularly concerned. I had the feeling that if war was declared on the United States, we would certainly send all the ships to sea and be prepared to fight with them if that's what they were looking for. But, no, I didn't feel that Pearl Harbor was going to be attacked. I knew the possibility existed, but I didn't...of course, I had no knowledge of it.

Summers: Of course, neither did your commanders there, either, I don't think.

Lawrence: No.

Summers: Of course, they had received a war alert.

Lawrence: They had a message which was considered a war warning, but I think that, as Americans generally go, they were just trusting that no one would attack the United States without a declaration of war.

Summers: Did you expect the Japanese to attack elsewhere? And if

so, where?

Lawrence: Probably in the East Indies and in the Philippines and Guam and those places. They were much more logistically proper for Japan in those areas than they were the distance between Japan and Pearl Harbor.

Summers: So you felt that it was a logistical problem that would be very difficult for the Japanese to overcome.

Lawrence: Very much so.

Summers: There was a fairly large Japanese population in Hawaii before the attack.

Lawrence: Yes, there was.

Summers: Did you have any feelings about them?

Lawrence: I didn't have any association with them--none whatsoever.

Summers: Did you have impressions of them or feelings toward them, either likes or dislikes?

Lawrence: Rather neutral.

Summers: How was the security at Pearl Harbor prior to the war?

Lawrence: I really don't know what security measures were taken. I was never made privilege to any of the classified materials, so I really couldn't say.

Summers: Do you think it would have been difficult for a civilian to get on the base prior to the attack?

Lawrence: They had the routine awareness, yes, at the entrance to Pearl Harbor.

Summers: Describe in as much detail as possible all that you can

remember as to what you did on December 6, 1941--the day before the attack.

Lawrence: I was eligible for liberty, and I went ashore. I met a friend of mine, and we spent the evening together enjoying nightclubs. When we returned to Pearl Harbor and I was to go back to the ship, the last motor launch had left the landing, so I went to his quarters. He was on a yard oiler, and I went to his ship and slept on the yard oiler. I got up in time to get back to the landing to catch the 6:00 motor launch because I had the duty as the senior petty officer on the bridge beginning at 8:00. I had to get back to the ship and have breakfast and take a shower and put on a clean uniform and go up on the bridge.

Summers: So there was a problem, then, about not having made it back to the ship by midnight?

Lawrence: No, not for me because I was a first class petty officer. Those restrictions were mostly for seamen. I believe they authorized second and first class and chiefs, which were enlisted men, to stay over if they so desired. Some of the men were married, and their families were there, so they'd stay over, too.

Summers: Do you think most of the men were not married?

Lawrence: Most of them were not married.

Summers: Now let's turn to the day of the attack. Where were you on the morning of December 7? You've already referred

to the fact that you had to get up early and locate your way back to the ship.

Lawrence: Yes. As I was strolling back to the landing from the my friend's ship where I stayed, I noticed all the fuel tanks, and the thought occurred to me at that time that if an attack did occur and if they wanted to create havoc, they would blow up those fuel tanks and burn out a major part of Pearl Harbor. As we know now, that didn't happen, and that was because they probably wanted to keep from blowing up the fuel tanks so that they could use the fuel when they captured the island.

As I said, I went up on the bridge and took over command as petty officer-of-the-day. The watch had been relieved, and we were making preparations for morning colors, which is a procedure for all of the ships in port--raising the United States ensign at precisely at 8:00. All the bands of the ships that had bands were playing the "Star Spangled Banner." As I was standing on the port signal platform, which is a semaphore platform used by signalmen for sending semaphore and extends out to the very edge of the ship, I wanted to be sure our ship would follow the motions of the senior officer present and make colors at the precise moment at 8:00.

As I was standing there talking to a signalman striker, I noticed an airplane diving straight down on

Pearl Harbor. I said to this signalman striker, "If he doesn't pull out, he's going into the water!" As he pulled out, he was about 1,500 feet above the water, and I saw the big red suns under the wings. I thought immediately, "My God! An attack by the Japanese!" I felt that there had been no declaration of war, and if they would do this I needed to get the gas masks to the bridge because I felt sure they'd drop gas on us. The gas masks were in the lower conning tower, which is approximately thirty feet below the signal bridge. You'd go out on a catwalk and then go down the ladder to the lower conning tower. We had our gas masks stored down there with our names on them.

Summers: What type of aircraft was it that you saw attacking?

Lawrence: Fighter. It was a Zero.

Summers: Okay.

Lawrence: He came down, and, of course, when he pulled out and I saw the big red sun, he was strafing, too, with machine guns. Then I passed the gas masks up to the signal striker, and he screamed at me that he'd been hit with a piece of shrapnel. I went up and looked at his arm, and it was bleeding, so I told him to get down in the lower conning tower and throw the gas masks up to me and I'd throw them upon the bridge.

Summers: Did you feel kind of exposed up there on the bridge like that?

Lawrence: Yes, very much. The Oklahoma, which was tied up to our port side with her starboard side, was turning over at that time. There couldn't have been more than ten minutes that elapsed from when she was sitting there normally.

Summers: Did you observe the torpedo bombers drop the torpedoes that hit the Oklahoma?

Lawrence: No, I was busy passing those gas masks up on the bridge. I didn't see the torpedoes hit her, but I certainly heard them. The Oklahoma was turning over, and the men were trying to keep from going down. The Oklahoma was capsizing to her port, having been hit by torpedoes, and it was an awesome sight to see a 35,000-ton battleship turning over right in front of your eyes. The men were walking across the bottom of the ship trying to get away from the ship and get to the Maryland. Some of them were trying to climb up the hawsers that had snapped, and they were falling between the Maryland and the Oklahoma. In the meantime, fighters were coming in and strafing at the men with machine guns and, of course, at anybody else that exposed.

Then the thought occurred to me that once we got the gas masks on the bridge, we had to make certain that everybody was at their battle stations because the bridge wasn't the only battle station. We had an after battle signal station, and I was the senior petty

officer in the after battle signal station, but I was up on the bridge. A first class signalman by the name of Friedman was back there taking my place, so we had to figure out a way to get back there. Of course, he didn't want to come up and be exposed, and I don't blame him for that. So through our communication with battle telephones, I told him that I would like him to come to my battle station. He said, "We'll figure out a way."

So while this was going on, I noticed the Neosho, a fleet oiler, and she was only a few yards ahead of the Maryland and the Oklahoma. She was fully loaded with high-test aviation fuel. I thought, "My heavens, if the Japs hit her with a torpedo and she explodes, all of the men on the ships will be seared and burned alive from the gasoline flying all over the area!" Of course, the harbor would also be on fire." Fortunately, they didn't even touch her, so that was a Godsend for us.

Summers: How close was the Neosho to the Maryland?

Lawrence: I would say it was twenty yards ahead of the Maryland.

Summers: Can you remember how the battleships were placed?

Lawrence: Yes. Away from the harbor entrance, the first ship was the Nevada. The next ship was the Arizona with the Vestal alongside. The next ships were the West Virginia and the Tennessee. The West Virginia protected the Tennessee the way the Oklahoma protected the Maryland. Then the next ships were the Oklahoma and the Maryland.

Ahead of the Maryland was the Neosho, which was loaded with high-test aviation fuel. Then ahead of the Neosho was the California. The Pennsylvania was in dry dock with the Cassin and Downes, the two destroyers, ahead of her. The Shaw, another destroyer, was on a raised dock. Consequently, during the attack, the Shaw blew up, and the Cassin and the Downes were totally mutilated with bombs, and the Pennsylvania received some hits.

But, anyway, when I got back on the bridge and everybody had their gas masks...we did have some protection from the armor plate that extended five-and-a-half feet high around the entire bridge, so as far as strafing is concerned, we did have protection from the machine gun bullets. Of course, from bombs we didn't have any protection.

Summers: Was there a lot of machine gun fire around where you were?

Lawrence: Yes, there was quite a bit of machine gun fire from bow to stern on all the ships--from fighters.

Summers: You said that shrapnel hit.

Lawrence: It hit the signalman striker in the arm.

Summers: Okay, where did the shrapnel come from? Was it from a bomb that hit the Maryland?

Lawrence: I believe that it was part of the bomb that hit the forward part of the Maryland.

Summers: Okay, I understand there was an inspection on the

weekend of December 7. Do you recall that at all?

Lawrence: An inspection on December 7?

Summers: On the weekend of December 7.

Lawrence: Well, there may have been one on December 6.

Summers: I just wondered what the watertight integrity of the ships were because of the inspection.

Lawrence: I really can't say what the watertight integrity was of the ships. Chances are there wasn't too much as evidenced by the Oklahoma turning over, by the California counterflooding and going straight down, and by the West Virginia counterflooding and setting straight down in the water.

Summers: So if there was an inspection that weekend, that actually would have caused the ships to capsize and sink much quicker, wouldn't they?

Lawrence: Well, it would if they were not in that watertight integrity, yes.

Summers: What was your reaction when you heard General Quarters? Do you remember what you thought at that time?

Lawrence: I would say that General Quarters was sounded throughout the fleet. Every ship sounded their own, and I would say that it followed very closely to the first dropping of bombs.

Summers: So you actually saw the airplanes prior to the calling of General Quarters.

Lawrence: Yes. We weren't at general quarters when I saw the

airplane.

Summers: Was the move to battle stations orderly?

Lawrence: Yes.

Summers: Was there any panic?

Lawrence: It seemed very orderly throughout the ship.

Summers: Was there any panic at all?

Lawrence: None that I can recall.

Summers: What do you attribute that to?

Lawrence: Well, of course, training. Most of the men were trained so that irregardless of the circumstances, when General Quarters were sounded, they knew exactly what procedures they had to take in order to get to their station.

Summers: Did you feel like, then, that the American sailors reacted in a very professional manner in response to the attack?

Lawrence: Very much so. As a matter of fact, if they had an access to guns, whether it was a .45 or a rifle or anything, they would try to take some kind of protection by shooting at the airplanes in that manner.

Summers: What was the nature of the damages on the Maryland?

Lawrence: So far as I can recall, we had one near miss off the bow which penetrated the bow of the ship. I don't recall the extent of the damage. Then we had one hit the turret in the forward part of the ship, and one hit the forecastle. I do recall that one of the ensigns--I don't know his name--was in the foremast at fire

control, and he was killed by a strafing machine gun.

Summers: Do you know exactly what the casualties were in the Maryland that day?

Lawrence: I think we had six or seven.

Summers: Did you observe any of the casualties?

Lawrence: Yes, the ensign was lowered to the bridge by ropes. He was dead, yes.

Summers: Okay, were most of the casualties caused by shrapnel? Machine gun fire?

Lawrence: I would say most on the Maryland were caused by machine gun fire--the people that were exposed to it.

Summers: Now you said you saw the Oklahoma turn over.

Lawrence: Right, capsize.

Summers: And the Arizona blew up, of course.

Lawrence: Right.

Summers: What was your reaction to that?

Lawrence: Well, it was a thunderous roar. It wasn't so much a loud noise as it was a shock. I don't know. You could probably equate it to an earthquake. It was just tremendous.

Summers: Did you see the explosion when it happened?

Lawrence: Oh, yes.

Summers: What did it look like?

Lawrence: Well, the ship was sitting there, and all of a sudden it erupted, and there is this big fire ball. Then consequently the harbor caught on fire.

Summers: Could you have believed before that that something like that could have happened to a ship like that?

Lawrence: Never! Never!

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

Lawrence: I was finally able to get Friedman to come through the lower part of the ship and come up on the bridge and take his battle station. Then I left the bridge and went down into the after battle signal station, which is an emergency communications station where the commanding officer, if he's in the lower conning tower and connected to us with battle phones, which he is, can give us orders to make flag hoists from the after battle signal station to the after yardarm just as though we were in information in the fleet (that is, if the bridge were blown away). So then I went to the after battle signal station and remained there during the remainder of the attack, which could have been an hour or so.

Summer: Did you stay at your station the rest of the day?

Lawrence: We stayed at battle stations until about 3:00 in the afternoon, when it was felt that there wasn't anymore possibility of attack. Of course, there was a lot of rumors about the Japanese landing in Honolulu. Of course, this didn't happen. As we now know, Nagumo, the admiral of the Japanese fleet...all his ships were intact, and he didn't know where the American carriers were. He was scared to death that some of his ships

would be sunk by the planes from the American carriers, so he hightailed it back to Japan.

Summers: As the attack was going on, was the antiaircraft fire from the Maryland fairly extensive?

Lawrence: We didn't have any. We didn't have any antiaircraft fire because none of the shells were up to the 40-millimeter guns. They were down in the magazines. I say we didn't have any. It was probably the last half-hour of the attack before we got any ammunition to the guns to fire them.

Summers: Okay, what was the problem with getting the ammunition? Was it a power problem?

Lawrence: It was that, and it was a number of things. I can't elaborate on exactly what it was, but when the attack began and during the first thirty or forty minutes of the attack, there wasn't any fire.

Summers: So you couldn't answer at all.

Lawrence: No.

Summers: What happened during the first and second waves of the attack?

Lawrence: Well, of course, during the first attack there was the torpedo planes and fighters. Then the horizontal bombers came in for the second wave, but they couldn't see the battleships because the Arizona blew up and all of her oil was on the surface of the harbor. The whole harbor was on fire, which created tremendous smoke and

covered the West Virginia, the Tennessee, the Maryland, the turned-over Oklahoma, and the California. So the horizontal bombers couldn't find us in all that smoke, and that was God-saving grace, I guess.

Summers: Can you describe the second attack?

Lawrence: No, because I was in the after battle signal station and couldn't see anything.

Summers: Okay (chuckle). Why could you not see from that vantage?

Lawrence: The reason being that it's total armor plate around the whole area. We had flag bags back there. There are no signal lights. You have a hatch to go in, and that's it. You have one porthole, but, of course, the smoke was so intense you couldn't see anything. We didn't know exactly what was happening in the after battle signal station.

Summers: Do you know if your ship shot down any Japanese aircraft in any of the attacks?

Lawrence: It's hard for me to say because of rumors.

Summers: Right.

Lawrence: They might think they got an airplane, but I'm not sure that they did.

Summers: During the attack and during the time you were at general quarters, did you receive any food?

Lawrence: After 1:00, I think, we were able to get some sandwiches and some drinks.

Summers: How about the problem with restroom facilities.

Lawrence: Of course, the ship was at watertight integrity, and in order to get to the bathroom you'd have to break watertight integrity if you really had to go. But most of the people just tried to contain themselves until the attack was completely over. It was one of the things you didn't really think of.

Summers: So there was not really a problem.

Lawrence: Not to my knowledge.

Summers: Describe Pearl Harbor after that second attack. What did it look like?

Lawrence: Total chaos. There were rescue efforts going on all over the place. Men were covered with oil, and, of course, they had emergency people trying to assist the badly wounded on Ford Island and that sort of thing.

But then what really was observed by me was when the attack was completely over and I was back on the bridge several days later. You could see the motor boats and motor launches circulating around through Pearl Harbor picking up bodies and things like that. I recall that on the Oklahoma they were trying to rescue the men that were trapped inside the capsized hull, and they would go from bow to stern with hammers and wrenches and what-have-you and make noise on the hull of the ship and then listen to see if there was any response from underneath. One thing that I remember very clearly was that when

they got to the tailor shop of the Oklahoma, six Marines were rescued from there. Of course, when they got response from the Marines, they had to be sure that if they used the blow torch and made a hole in the hull of the ship that there wouldn't be an explosion. So it took a little time before they could safely rescue them, but they did rescue them. There were other rescue efforts going on throughout the harbor, of course. You saw some of it, but you couldn't see all of it.

Summers: Did you actually observe any men coming out of the Oklahoma as they were being cut out?

Lawrence: Yes, I was on the bridge when they did that.

Summers: How did you feel when you saw that?

Lawrence: (Chuckle) I felt relieved that they were out, but it was pathetic. If you didn't have a feeling of sorrow for the guys...they'd been in there so long without food or water and not knowing whether they were going to be rescued. As far as their mental state, I don't know what it was, but it was a feeling of relief when they brought them out.

Summers: Were you on duty that night at Pearl Harbor?

Lawrence: Yes.

Summers: What was it like that night?

Lawrence: That night we had some planes--our own planes--return to Pearl Harbor, and they failed to give the proper recognition signal, and so consequently one of the ships

opened fire, and then all of the other ships followed. To the best of my knowledge, they were shot down, but as far as I can recall, the pilots of the planes were rescued when they came down into Pearl Harbor.

Summers: Was there any fear of sabotage that night?

Lawrence: Always! Always there was fear of sabotage because even that night the rumors were that the Japanese were landing on Honolulu.

Summers: Was there any fear of Japanese submarines at that time?

Lawrence: There was a Japanese submarine in the harbor. He'd followed a ship in, and, of course, they blew him to smithereens. There was no fear after that because I think they closed the gate and made certain no more of them came in.

Summers: You had said that there had been rumors of Japanese landings on the other side of the island and things of that sort.

Lawrence: Yes.

Summers: Were there any other rumors that you recall?

Lawrence: No, those were the ones that we were really concerned about.

Summers: What were your feelings toward the Japanese right after the battle?

Lawrence: Extreme hatred...

Summers: How do you feel about the Japanese today?

Lawrence: ...which hasn't subsided very much since then!

Summers: So you still feel the same way about them?

Lawrence: Well, probably not as much because most of the Japanese that were involved in the attack are dead. The current Japanese weren't even alive then. But having been at Pearl Harbor and having seen the destruction of human beings and the terror the way I did, it's hardly ever possible to get to admire them.

Summers: Why do you think the Japanese were successful in their attack on Pearl Harbor?

Lawrence: Well, I would imagine mainly because, as I said previously, the American people have always been very trustworthy and feeling that no one, no nation on earth, would attack the United States without declaring war on them. That to me is one of the reasons that their attack was successful, is because we have always been a trustworthy nation. We would never attack Japan without declaring war on them. They, of course, had attacked Russia before declaring war on them, so there was a lot of innuendoes that it might happen--even in Pearl Harbor, that they might attack Pearl Harbor, and Alaska and Guam and the Philippines and the East Indies. So it was almost unbelievable to be standing there on the bridge and see that plane with those big red suns under the wings and no declaration of war.

Summers: Who do you think was responsible on our side?

Lawrence: It was probably a combination of circumstances that made

the attack possible. I would hope that in the future we would keep America so strong that no one, no nation on earth, would ever do anything like that again.

Summers: The careers of Admiral Kimmel and General Short were, of course, destroyed by the attack on Pearl Harbor. Do you think that that was justified?

Lawrence: No, I don't. Admiral Kimmel and General Short were in command, and I feel personally--this is my own opinion--that they just took the brunt of the attack. And I don't think it was fair.

Summers: There have been some suggestions that politicians in Washington were responsible for the Japanese being successful in the attack. Do you feel like they were?

Lawrence: Well, I wouldn't want to pinpoint it to any one individual, but I would say it was a combination of faults of people in this country that, like myself, felt that the nation was so trustworthy that it just was not possible. It's a situation where a nation as religious and as good as our nation made us believe that any nation that wanted to go to war with us would declare war before they would do anything like they did at Pearl Harbor.

I think a lesson is to be learned from Pearl Harbor that could protect this nation for hundreds and hundreds of years. The Pearl Harbor Survivors Association has a motto, "Keep America Strong," and I think that if we

remain strong, which I feel we are now, no nation on earth is going to be foolhardy enough to pull a sneak attack on us. The possibility exists even today, but I don't think any nation would like to reap the retribution that would be heaped on them if they did anything like that again.

Summers: Well, I think that's a good place to stop the interview right there. I would like to express my appreciation to you, Mr. Lawrence...

Lawrence: You are very welcome.

Summers: ...for the university and for myself. I thank you very much.

Lawrence: You bet!