

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

NUMBER

231

Interview with

Herbert Straus

July 7, 1974

Place of Interview: El Paso, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Terms of Use: Open

Approved: Herbert L. Straus

Date: 7 July 1974

COPYRIGHT © 1974 THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF NORTH TEXAS STATE  
UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF DENTON

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording or by any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Oral History Collection, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas, 76203.

Oral History Collection

Herbert Straus

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: El Paso, Texas

Date: July 7, 1974

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Chaplain Herbert Straus for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on July 7, 1974, in El Paso, Texas. I am interviewing Chaplain Straus in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was at Pearl Harbor during the Japanese attack there on December 7, 1941.

Chaplain Straus, to begin this interview, why don't you just very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, tell me when you were born and where you were born, your education--things of that nature. Just be very brief and general.

Chap. Straus: I was born on September 6, 1895, in Denver, Colorado. I stayed in the schools in Denver until 1911, when I went to the Haver Union College in Ohio. In 1916, I

took my first pulpit--Lima, Ohio--and then several other pulpits, until finally in 1931, I took the pulpit in San Diego, California, and while I was there I was accepted into the Navy as a chaplain.

Marcello: Why did you decide to enter the Navy?

Straus: Well, I guess it was because it was San Diego and the Navy was definitely predominant there (chuckle).

Marcello: As a chaplain entering the service, did you have to undergo any sort of special training or . . .

Straus: Not at that time. No, they did not have the chaplain's classes as they have at the present time.

Marcello: As a chaplain, did you ever have the opportunity to serve on a ship with the fleet?

Straus: No, I did not. Remember that at that time I was the only Jewish chaplain in the Navy, and as such I went wherever they wanted. I was always on base but could go out to the ships and take part in their activities.

Marcello: Now I think you have a rather interesting story concerning your close association with the Navy, and especially with regard to the robes that you had to wear and this sort of thing. Why don't you talk a little bit about that? I think it's an interesting story.

Straus: Okay. As I said, I was the only Jewish chaplain in the Navy, and when I asked the admiral there at San Diego

what device I should put on the sleeve of my uniform, he said a cross. I said, "No, thank you. I'll resign right now." I said I couldn't do much work as a Jew wearing a cross. So finally after a second dispatch was sent to Washington, the Chief of Chaplains came back and authorized the use of the shepherd's crook, and on several occasions when I spoke aboard various ships, I was introduced as the only crook in the Navy. I wore that, I think, until January of 1942, after the attack.

Marcello: And what insignia or device replaced the shepherd's crook after that time?

Straus: The same as the Army--the tablets of the ten commandments and the six-cornered star. The only difference there being that the Army uses it in silver and the Navy in gold.

Marcello: What special problems would a Jewish chaplain run into in the Navy back in the 1930's? Would you have some problems that would be peculiar to your particular faith as opposed to those that a Protestant or a Catholic chaplain might have?

Straus: Possibly so. First of all, due to the sparsity of the Jewish population, it wasn't always easy to find

enough men, let's say, for a Jewish service. So in the Navy I decreed that it wasn't necessary to have what your orthodox or conservative call a minion or ten men, but that we could hold a service even if there was only two or three, which I did many times.

Then there were some orthodox men in the service, which meant that they would only eat certain types of food. I broke that down pretty well, except I remember we had one doctor that was aboard ship out of Pearl, and he still maintained his orthodox view and only ate certain foods. So while he was out at sea, he mainly ate eggs.

Marcello: I was going to say that somebody who adhered to the orthodox practices concerning food would generally have a pretty limited diet in the service.

Straus: Very limited because the real orthodox are held in bay by the utensils that are used, by the dishes and cups that are used, so during the war that was all relieved by a general order from the Jewish Central Organization.

Marcello: When did you first arrive in Pearl Harbor?

Straus: In January of '41.

Marcello: So you were there in January of 1941. In other words, you were there for almost a year before the attack actually took place.

Straus: That's right.

Marcello: Why were you moved from the States over to Pearl Harbor? Was there any particular reason for that move, or was it . . .

Straus: I guess to send me over into the Pacific. That's the only thing.

Marcello: And, of course, by this time the bulk of the battle fleet actually had been moved over to Pearl Harbor, had it not?

Straus: Oh, yes. And another thing is this: I was still the only Jewish chaplain in the Pacific.

Marcello: Where specifically were you assigned when you got to Pearl Harbor?

Straus: To headquarters as assistant district chaplain, 14th Naval District, I think.

Marcello: What were the Hawaiian Islands like in those pre-Pearl Harbor days? I would assume that it was considered to be pretty good duty, was it not?

Straus: It was, yes. It was very, very nice. As a matter of fact, I lived out in Waikiki because they had no

headquarters for me at Pearl. I lived just, oh, I think, one block from the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. So there was plenty going on (chuckle).

Marcello: What particular avenue would your social life take here in the Hawaiian Islands? Now you were an officer, of course, and I understand the social life for officers in those days before Pearl Harbor was a rather formal affair in the evenings, was it not?

Straus: I didn't take much part in that. I had my daughter over there with me--Selma--and whenever there was anything, she would act as my hostess. She was there until a couple of weeks after December 7. I don't think we took much part in the social activities. I didn't have much time for it. I had to cover too much territory.

Marcello: What were some of the particular tasks you would have as a Jewish chaplain there in the Hawaiian Islands and the surrounding territory?

Straus: Well, let's change that question a little bit. I was a chaplain, and whether you were Jewish, Protestant, or Catholic, you had to work with all of them. I know, for example, one morning about one or two o'clock I was called to the hospital at Pearl because a young



fellow had tried to dive into the ocean out there and had broken his neck and he was dying. I went out there and found out he was a Catholic, so I gave him his last unction, last rites. I was bawled out for it later, but that's a chaplain's duties. I don't care what . . . you have to serve all the men.

Marcello: And I would assume you were not only confined to the Hawaiian Islands. I would assume that you would make periodic trips to such places as Midway or Guam or places of this nature.

Straus: I went to Midway twice every month, and over there the 2nd Marine Aircraft Group was a very active part of my work. As a matter of fact, I was asked by the CO of that group to go on a flight to fight the Japanese Fleet. My admiral refused me the permission, so I didn't go. But that same officer, in writing a book, Last Man Off Wake, mentions me in there as doing some sort of work. I don't remember just what it is.

But Midway was a very active duty post. I remember holding a Seder service for the Passover over there, and I had my flight crew as my guests, but we had all the blinds pulled down and a very enclosed service.

Let me tell you another little story that I haven't mentioned. My office was the first place on Pearl that was blacked out that night.

Marcello: That is, the night of December 7, 1941?

Straus: That's right, yes. During the day of December 7, I had set up in the headquarters building tables with yeomen and so on, and survivors came there and signed in so that we would know that they were survivors. That night, the executive officer of the Arizona sat down at my desk working over his records of personnel, and I have never seen a more woebegone, saddened man in my life.

Marcello: I'm sure that was a very terrible experience for him to have to go through that paperwork.

Straus: And find 1,100 of his men that never got out from the base of that ship. They were down there, and they still are there.

Marcello: At the time that you got to Pearl Harbor--and as you mentioned, you got there in January, 1941--did you foresee the possibility of war between the United States and Japan?

Straus: I don't think so. I don't think so. Of course, we were in the process of developing the islands, not

just at Pearl Harbor but also at Kaneohe and other places in the Navy. And so it was happening with the Army out at Schofield, the Air Corps at Hickam base. Hickam and Pearl Harbor only had a fence in between the two bases.

Marcello: It was just a chain-link fence, wasn't it?

Straus: That's all.

Marcello: I would assume that when most people thought about the possibility of the United States entering the war, most eyes were turned toward Europe rather than toward the Far East.

Straus: I can't answer that because I don't remember. Let's realize that I'm not quite as young as you are (chuckle), but I know we were in preparedness.

I'll tell you another interesting little story. During the night following December 7, any number of the young sailors came to me and asked me if I could get a telegram home to their families. I said, "Yes, I'll try." So about five o'clock in the morning of December 8, I started to go into Honolulu with all of these telegrams. From the entrance or exit of Pearl Harbor to the entrance or exit of Hickam Field, you go right straight down that road. About five o'clock

in the morning, I was going down that road and just got beyond Hickam when "boom!" I didn't know what had happened, but there was a big flash in front of me, and my car was picked up and turned back 180 degrees back towards Pearl Harbor. I threw on my brakes, nothing more happened, so I turned back around, went into Honolulu, and took care of all these telegrams.

Marcello: You didn't know what happened to your car at this point?

Straus: No. That noon at lunch, I happened to mention the incident, and one of the officers I was eating with said, "Oh, that was you, was it?" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "We had a plane flying over there, and it accidentally dropped a bomb, and as it exploded, it exploded in a V, and we saw a car going into it." They said, "How lucky can you be?" I wasn't injured or anything else (chuckle).

Marcello: Getting back to Pearl Harbor again, Chaplain Straus, did you feel relatively secure there, and was this a general feeling among most of your associates?

Straus: You mean on December 7?

Marcello: Oh, even before December 7. If war did come with Japan, Pearl was still considered to be a relatively secure base, was it not?

Straus: That's right, that's right. But it wasn't.

Marcello: Obviously, we know that now. But I think that when most people thought of war with the Japanese, again, they were looking toward the Philippines or maybe someplace in Southeast Asia, such as the East Indies.

Straus: Well, very frankly, had the Japs handled themselves better, more wisely, they would have gotten a lot farther than what they did. The Philippines would have fallen very easily, and once the Philippines had fallen, Oahu would have fallen.

Marcello: In other words, you think that had they followed up the aerial attack with an invasion that they could have easily overrun the islands.

Straus: If they had taken the Philippines first.

Marcello: When you conjured up the image of a typical Japanese in your mind, what sort of a person did you usually think of in those pre-Pearl Harbor days?

Straus: Let me put it to you this way: we had a lot of Japs on the islands, and with very few exceptions I think that they were just normal and perfectly fair to the United States.

Oh, while you bring that up, I can give you another little story. On the morning of December 7, oh,

about eleven o'clock, a man came to visit me in my office--this was after things had quieted down a little bit--and he told me of an incident. Right near Pearl Harbor was a little town called Aiea, and every Sunday morning he would go over there from his farm to gas up his car. He went over there this morning, and the place was all closed up, even though he got over there very early, about seven o'clock. So in looking into it, I found out that one reason that it was closed is that that particular group of Japs had previous notice, and they were up in the hills with radios that could be set to contact the Japanese Army or Air Force.

Marcello: It seems to me I've heard of this little village before and the fact that there was some espionage activities going on in it. The fact is, there was even a name mentioned, and I can't think of the name of the person now who . . . one of the owners of the shops there who was Japanese.

Straus: Well, the shops there in Aiea were practically all controlled by Japs.

Marcello: Among your fellow officers, did you ever hear very much talk about the possibility of these Japanese being

potential saboteurs or fifth columnists if we got into a war against Japan?

Straus: No, no. There wasn't much conversation that way.

Marcello: As one got closer and closer to that fateful day of December 7, 1941, did the nature of your activities change any? Now obviously, with regard to the fleet and the Army and so on, there were more maneuvers, alerts, and things of this nature. Would the duties of a chaplain have changed very much as relations between the United States and Japan worsened?

Straus: I don't think so because naturally we were kept on a constant go, working all units, even working with men up in the hills on sentry duty and so on. I don't think there was . . . we were too busy to make much of a change.

Marcello: I have another question that I need to ask you concerning some of the activities in those pre-Pearl Harbor days, and it's one that perhaps you might be able to help me with. In general, a great many people assume that Saturday nights in Honolulu were nights of raucous behavior and debauchery and what have you on the part of the servicemen stationed there. How would you answer this?

Straus: No, no. I recall one other little part that might come to an answer there. The Army and Navy YMCA gave me their auditorium for . . . oh, what did we call it? Well, anyhow, every Saturday night about eight o'clock, we had an evening of entertainment. The entire entertainment was put on by the men themselves. I would emcee it. Different names would be given to me here and there that somebody wanted to come up.

There was a couple of twins--Operly twins. I just heard from one of them recently from California. Anyhow, I would call them up on the stage, and they'd put on their act. One time these two Operly twins got one on each side of me and shined my shoulder boards just to make fun. But they would sing. They were an old vaudeville troupe.

We'd have some special acts like having a man lay down on a board of spikes, and the conclusion of that program was the Hawaiian Hula Troupe. They'd always call two or three men from the audience up there to try to teach them the hula. But that was Saturday night, and we never got through until twelve or one o'clock, and there would be 400 or 500 men there and their wives.



Marcello: Well, this was a point that I think needed clarification, and I think that it's one that's needed to set the historical record straight, that yes, there would be some people that would get drunk and disorderly and this sort of thing, but the vast majority of the military men stationed at Pearl simply did not go through this particular phase or whatever you want to call it.

Straus: Yes. If they did get drunk, they got drunk on their own base, so we didn't have much trouble there with that.

Marcello: Okay, this more or less brings us up to the events immediately prior to Pearl Harbor, and what I'd like you to do at this point is describe in as much detail as you can remember what your activities were on December 6, 1941, and then from there we'll follow it into December 7, 1941, when all hell broke loose. Let's start with December 6, 1941, and as best you can, give me your routine on that particular day.

Straus: Oh, what a question! First of all, December 6 was a Sabbath, and that morning I held services. Where I held them, I don't know because I'd go all over the island at different times on different weekends

to hold services. I did that for the Navy and the Army and the Air Corps because I was still the only Jewish chaplain in the Pacific--Army, Navy, Air Corps. Then in the afternoon I traveled to some other point, met with the men. It's possible that that evening I would have a supper at one of the bases with a group of men. Nothing unusual. I turned in about ten or eleven o'clock, I guess, and I slept fairly well.

Marcello: Now when you turned in that night, you went back to your cottage at Waikiki Beach?

Straus: That's right. Then I got a telephone call very early that morning, and I jumped in my car, left my daughter there.

Marcello: What did the man on the telephone say?

Straus: Just "Get out to Pearl Harbor!" That was all.

Marcello: Was he excited, panicky, or how would you describe his voice?

Straus: Not panicky. Excited, but not panicky. The interesting thing there is that evidently at the places where I had to stop going through signal lights, either four or five . . . four, I guess, servicemen jumped into my car without my knowing it, and they

didn't get out until I got to the gate at Pearl Harbor. Then they got out, and I went on to my office.

Marcello: What did you see when you got into Pearl Harbor, that is, when you got inside? Was the attack still going on and all this?

Straus: Oh, yes.

Marcello: Describe exactly what you saw as you entered Pearl Harbor.

Straus: Well, you don't see much there at all because the attack was out at the waterfront mainly, which was on the other side, and your Arizona and several other ships had already been hit. So you didn't see much until you got to the office and went out into the field itself.

Marcello: So you went directly from your cottage to your office at Pearl.

Straus: That's right.

Marcello: Okay, what happened from that point?

Straus: God knows! Don't ask me that because it got so intense that I couldn't remember what went on. All I know is that I got busy.

Marcello: Did you get busy right there in your office, or were you going other places?

Straus: Oh, no, I went out completely.

Marcello: What was your primary concern? What did you feel was your primary function?

Straus: Well, the primary concern is what I mentioned to you before. I set up a hospital there on the base, and we kept the men there until we could put them into the regular Pearl Harbor hospital.

Marcello: Where was this hospital established, this temporary hospital?

Straus: At the receiving headquarters in a new barracks. It was incomplete--no water, no beds. I had to send out and get all of that stuff, get a doctor and get a nurse. As I say, this young Marine came to me, and he helped me an awful lot.

Marcello: You might describe this particular incident concerning this young Marine.

Straus: Oh, alright. He was working outdoors with me at the time the attack was taking place, and at one time I called to him to come to me, and he started and I yelled, "Come on the double!" As he started on the double, he tripped and went sprawling. He came over to me and says, "Chaplain, thank you." I said, "Thank me for what?" He said, "You just saved my life." I

said, "What are you talking about?" So he picked up the heel of his shoe and showed me two bullet heads in the heel of his shoe that would have gone straight through him if he had been standing up.

Have we got time enough for another little story that might be of interest?

Marcello: We have plenty of time and plenty of tape.

Straus: One of the things that I started over at Pearl was trans-Pacific telephonic marriages. I was the one that originated them, and they were all only on account of the young men who were over at Pearl having gotten some young lady pregnant, in trouble, back on the mainland. They wanted to do the right thing; they wanted to get married. So I communicated with the attorney-generals of all states asking whether we could perform this ceremony. It would be legal. I got answers "yes" from all except one, and in that state I used the adoption--legal adoption.

But the first one that was performed was a young fellow over there whose girl was in San Francisco or in California. The minister in the States performed the ceremony, and the family was present, and the young lady was present. I was on the phone with the young

Navy man, and I was introduced as a witness. So the ceremony was held, the questions were asked, and then at the end of the ceremony the chaplains usually asked me to give a little benediction, which I did. The interesting thing--we have a picture of this--the first couple sent me a picture of themselves from New England, and they'd had their second child. The admiral there at Pearl got quite a number of letters from Honolulu objecting to the ceremony. So he called me in. He said, "Are you doing this?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Give me your reasons." And I told him it was to protect unborn children. The admiral turned around to me, "Chaplain, keep it up."

Marcello: Which admiral was this? Was this Kimmel?

Straus: Oh, no, no. Kimmel was Pacific. I think it was Admiral Jacobs, 14th Naval District. You see, Kimmel was fleet, and he was succeeded by Nimitz. That was a wonderful man, that fellow Nimitz. Oh, God!

Marcello: Did you have very much of a relationship or did you have very close contact with Admiral Kimmel when you were at Pearl Harbor?

Straus: Yes, yes.

Marcello: Give me your impressions of Admiral Kimmel.

Straus: A very fine man, and a lot of the charges against him are darned foolishness! As a matter of fact, you could say that I was on his staff. Being the only Jewish chaplain out there--and they had the chaplains on his staff--I was chosen even though I was with the 14th Naval District. Admiral Kimmel has received a lot of blame that was not his. I'll back him up.

Marcello: In other words, what you're saying is that a scape-goat had to be found, and Kimmel was the logical choice.

Straus: That's right. For the Navy . . .

Marcello: And General Short for the Army.

Straus: . . . and General Short for the Army. I knew Short very well, also.

Marcello: What sort of personalities were they, that is, Short and Kimmel?

Straus: I can only answer that in one way, and that is very military. I didn't get to know their personal lives at all.

Marcello: Getting back to Pearl Harbor again, you were apparently all around that particular area during the attack itself. How would you generally describe the conduct of

the men during the attack? Was it one of professionalism, or did you see a little bit of everything? Did you see professionalism? Did you see fear, panic, cowardice? What did you see during the attack?

Straus: You can use the word professionalism there if you want--no fear, no panic. But I think the better term is human, trying to protect themselves and their fellow man.

I'll give you one little story there. That night I had to go someplace on the island or within Pearl Harbor, and I had taken a flashlight and used a piece of carbon paper to black it out. So I was going toward some . . . I forget what office it was, what building, when a sentry called out, "Halt! Come forward and be recognized!" So all I did was to take my flashlight and throw it on my face and walk up to him. He said, "Chaplain, go ahead." No, there was no fear or . . . what was the other term you used?

Marcello: Panic, cowardice, anything of this nature.

Straus: No, there was no panic. I don't think so. I think the men handled themselves beautifully.

Marcello: What were some of the other interesting incidents that you personally experienced while the attack was underway



and during the aftermath? Let me just go back here just a minute. You mentioned that you had been establishing this temporary hospital until the facilities could be established at the regular hospital there at Pearl. How long was it before the regular hospital was in operation?

Straus: Well, we established a new temporary hospital up on Aiea Heights, and that night we took all of those patients up there. So it was done very quickly.

When that hospital was finally built and was being dedicated, Admiral Nimitz was in charge. I had known Admiral Nimitz from 1931 when he was in command at the destroyer base at San Diego. I hadn't seen him in years, and when we came in together for the dedication, he was talking to somebody, and he walked over and put his hands on my shoulders, "Chaplain Straus, how are you?" I turned around to him, "Admiral Nimitz, I'm wonderful but how did you remember?" After all those years, to look up and recognize me, I thought that was marvelous.

But another story . . . I don't know whether I told it or not, but we started a burial ground up there on Aiea. Did we discuss that?

Marcello: No, we sure didn't.

Straus: Well, every afternoon at 1500 hours--three o'clock--we would hold a mass funeral service up there in a tremendous trench that had been dug out by a bulldozer.

Marcello: In other words, this service would be held for those who died in the aftermath of the attack. Is this correct?

Straus: Some during the attack and some in the aftermath. But amongst them were a lot of men who were unknown. Their records were either destroyed or their dog tags were lost, and so three of us chaplains would walk down into the gulley--one Protestant, one Catholic, and myself. We'd each give our own service, and then we'd have the volley and the taps. But that happened every afternoon for six months.

Marcello: In other words, you had men dying as a result of the Pearl Harbor attack and so on all during that period.

Straus: Oh, yes. And for example, a ship would come in. I remember one ship came in that had taken a torpedo, and they had locked the communicating door to the ship so the water couldn't come in, but there were either seven or eight men that were caught in there. When they got back to Pearl, we went in there. There was

nothing left but their skeletons because the fish got in there, and we buried those skeletons with no name tags or anything. But there were any number of different ways where we would get those bodies.

Marcello: Even during the attack on Pearl Harbor itself, as serious as it was, I'm sure there were certain funny things that occurred from time to time that you witnessed. Before we started this interview, for example, you mentioned the bottle of whiskey that you accidentally found in your hip pocket.

Straus: (laughter) As I said, I started that little hospital in that building. We had about forty-odd patients, and I got a doctor and a nurse to help out, and while all this was going on, let's say about eleven o'clock that morning, the doctor said to me, "Chaplain, I wonder if we could get a bottle of liquor. It might help some of these boys." Unconsciously, I put my hand back on my hip, and there was a bottle. Somebody had stuck it in my pocket during the morning. Who it was or when it was, I have no recollection. He said, "Good! Then we've got some."

Marcello: Can you think of any other funny things that may have happened during the attack?

Straus: That's pretty hard to think of, funny things. Off-hand, I don't think I can.

Marcello: Okay. You mentioned awhile ago that you established this temporary hospital, and I think it would be important to get into the record just exactly how you went about establishing this hospital. I assume that you assumed charge of setting it up.

Straus: Yes, I did.

Marcello: Describe how you went about setting it up and how soon did you go about setting it up after you got to Pearl Harbor?

Straus: Oh, let's say, within an hour or an hour and a half after I got there. I was getting word that there were wounded around there and no place to take them because the main hospital at Pearl was completely loaded. So with no authorization at all, I took over this new building and--I don't know--I got several men to help me with it. I sent them out, and we got some beds and linens . . .

Marcello: Where did you get these men? Did you just pull them off the . . .

Straus: I just pulled them off the field. Remember that I said that I set up the information desk in the reception room at the receiving barracks, and so there were

crowds of men in there. We fed them that day, also. But I went and got myself a half a dozen men--who they were, how I got them, I don't know--but I sent them out and they got cots. Where they got them, I didn't ask. Bedding linen. I sent somebody over to the hospital, and we got a doctor and a nurse over there.

I'll never forget one young fellow that they brought in. He had several bullets in the belly. I sat down on his legs until the doctor came in and gave him a shot. He wanted to get back out there.

Marcello: Approximately how many men did you have in this temporary hospital? You would have to estimate this, of course.

Straus: Oh, I estimate somewhere around forty or forty-five and they were transferred to the new hospital up at Aiea Heights.

Marcello: In general, what was the nature of the wounds these men were coming in . . .

Straus: Bullet wounds.

Marcello: Mainly bullet wounds?

Straus: Oh, yes. Mainly bullet wounds.

Marcello: And were most of these men who had been caught on shore, or were you getting men off the ships, too?

Straus: I don't know. I was getting men. I didn't ask questions, where they came from.

Marcello: I would assume that if most of them had bullet wounds, they probably were coming from shore because a lot of them on the ships had burns and this sort of things.

Straus: Well, there may have been some burns. I don't know. You're asking me to be more definite than what I can. Some of them, I know, had bullet wounds, and whether there were some burns or whether they came from ships or not, I don't know.

Marcello: I also know that at Pearl Harbor during the attack there was a scarcity of water because some of the water mains had been broken. How did you improvise in this instance? I would assume that in running a hospital you certainly would need water.

Straus: Well, it happened that the receiving station had plenty of water, and so I got these real tall milk cans and filled them with water, and they brought them over to me at the hospital. That was maybe a hundred yards away, I suppose.

Marcello: As you look back on the Pearl Harbor attack in retrospect, how do you feel that the Japanese were able to pull it off? Now here again, I'm asking you to speculate.

Straus: Well, how do I feel that they were able to pull it off? I do not wish to answer. I think if we had been properly informed, we could have been better prepared. Now I'm not putting the blame either where I may think it is or was, but we were not prepared for it. I know Schofield sent up planes even without ammunition aboard. They didn't have a chance. They merely sent them up to get them out of the way.

Marcello: This is maybe an unfair question to ask a chaplain, but I'll ask it anyhow. Did your particular attitude toward the Japanese change as a result of this attack on Pearl Harbor?

Straus: I don't think it could help but have that effect. There were a lot of the Japs that I knew, and I didn't change my attitude towards them. But to the Japanese islands or to the Germans, naturally it changed. You couldn't help that when you see all of these boys killed and wounded, and you know that in one ship there are 1,100 men down there in the bottom of that ship with no chance to get out. I don't think you'd be human if your attitude didn't change.

But I didn't say that all Japs were wrong anymore than I want anybody to say that all Jews are wrong. We

have good ones, and we have bad ones. They had good ones, and they had bad ones. I know we sent a lot of the Japs over there at Pearl over to an island for protective custody on that day, but that doesn't mean that they were all bad.

**Marcello:** One last question, Chaplain Straus. You mentioned earlier that on May 30, 1942, you were asked by Admiral Nimitz to conduct a memorial day service aboard the USS Arizona. You might describe that service a little bit and what sort of emotions it conjured up and this sort of thing.

**Straus:** Plenty of emotions! I was away for a three-day rest, and I got called back by Admiral Nimitz in order to handle this memorial service. Admiral Nimitz prefaced his remarks by telling me there would be no pictures. However, the admiral in charge of Pearl Harbor, District Fourteen, insisted on photographs, some of which I still have.

But we held the service aboard the Arizona. I had two other chaplains with me so that we had all three denominations. We had the bugler, of course, and we had the volley, and I had a lot of flowers that were sent to me by relatives of these boys that were down in the



bottom of this ship. I said there were 1,100 dead. It was a little bit better than that. We held our service with a complete floral display. Oh, it was tremendous! The three chaplains all took a part in the service, and we had our taps and our volley.

Marcello: Who was in attendance at that service? In other words, was it attended by both enlisted men and officers?

Straus: Oh, yes. Anybody could come aboard. Remember that the deck of the ship was only a few feet above the surface of the water itself.

I'll tell you an interesting little story there. I took one of the wreaths that had been sent to me and threw it down a manhole in the center of the ship. Remember that it was flooded and that there was a lot of oil. Believe it or not, when I threw this wreath in--which was one that would float--it sank! Just as if some of the boys rose up and grabbed it by their hands and pulled it down! Don't ask me why or wherefore. But I've held several services quietly aboard the Arizona for different families, a very unwanted experience.