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JOSEPH MANNION
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Oral History Collection

Joseph Mannion

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald Marcello Date of Interview: April 26, 1986

Place of Interview: Austin, Texas

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Joseph Mannion for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on April 26, 1986, in Austin, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Mannion in order to get his reminiscences and experiences while he was aboard the battleship USS Nevada during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Mr. Mannion, to begin this interview, just very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, tell me when you were born, where you were born, your education --things of that nature.

Mr. Mannion: I was born on March 3, 1921, in Duquesne, Pennsylvania. I lived there, and I went to parochial schools for eight years. Then I went to Duquesne High School, and after I left Duquesne High School, I joined the Navy.

Dr. Marcello: And when was that?

Mr. Mannion: In 1938.

Dr. Marcello: Why did you decide to join the service in 1938?

Mr. Mannion: Well, that's about all there was to do at that time.

Marcello: In other words, are you saying the economics had a major role with your decision to join?

Mannion: That's right, yes.

Marcello: It's interesting in that a lot of people of your generation give that as the reason for entering the service. We were still in the midst of the Great Depression in 1938.

Mannion: Well, they were still in a bad depression, yes.

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

Mannion: I don't know. I just liked it the best. Between the Marines and the Army, I felt the Navy was the best.

Marcello: How difficult or easy was it to get into the Navy in 1938?

Mannion: Well, it wasn't too easy because I think it took me, oh, about nine months to get in. At that time they had a general classification test which was pretty strict at that time. Then they found I had one bad tooth, and they told me to get it filled. In the interim I guess it took about nine months to get all this done before they called me in. They had a waiting list, I guess, in the hundreds at that time.

Marcello: Where did you take your boot camp?

Mannion: Newport, Rhode Island.

Marcello: How long did boot camp last at that time? Do you remember?

Mannion: Three months, twelve weeks.

Marcello: So you did go through the normal Navy boot camp in that sense.

Mannion: Oh, yes.

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

Mannion: Yes, it was just normal. Of course, it got pretty cold up there in Newport in the wintertime (chuckle). That's about all there was to it.

Marcello: Okay, describe the process by which you picked up the USS Nevada.

Mannion: Well, after I completed training in Newport, I went aboard the USS Sirius. It was a transport which just went from the East to the West Coast. It made stops...well, it started in Boston, went to New York, the Caribbean, Cuba, San Diego, and finally ended up in Bremerton, Washington, where the Nevada was in the Navy yard at the time. I think it was on March 17 that I went aboard the Nevada--1939.

Marcello: Did you request battleships, or were you simply assigned to one?

Mannion: No, you just went to where they sent you (chuckle).

Marcello: What sort of reception did you get when you went aboard the Nevada? After all, you were still essentially a "boot," were you not?

Mannion: Yes. Well, of course, if you have ever been aboard a ship in the yard, everything is pretty well all torn up. They got lines and workmen, and it was just mass confusion, is

what it seemed like to me at the time. You had a pretty good reception, but being just a young kid, you're pretty well confused as to what's going on. We stayed in the Navy yard until around April, and then we went down to Long Beach. Then I think we made a cruise to Hawaii--a midshipman cruise --in 1939 and came back. Then in 1940, we went back to Hawaii. I think in 1940, they kept us out there. They'd send a ship at a time back to the mainland for two weeks rest and recreation and then send them back to Hawaii.

Marcello: When you went aboard the Nevada initially, to which division were you assigned?

Mannion: To the deck force, Third Division. That was normal. When they got new recruits aboard, they all went into the deck force first. Then from there they filtered out to various divisions.

Marcello: What was your case? In other words, after putting a specified period in the deck division, did you move to one of the other divisions?

Mannion: Yes, I went to the engineering division, and I think it was probably less than a year before I went to the engineering division. For the rest of my twenty years, I stayed in engineering.

Marcello: Why did you decide to go into the engineering division?

Mannion: I was just more or less interested in it because...well, the deck force is not much, you know. It's mostly chipping paint.

Then you usually went into gunnery, and, of course, there's not much of a future in gunnery. You had to get into electronics or...of course, there wasn't much electronics at that time either. Engineering was about the best deal.

Marcello: How rapid or slow was promotion in engineering at that time?

Mannion: Well, at that time promotion was pretty slow. A guy would make a third class or a second class petty officer in eight or ten years. Maybe they opened up or I was pretty fortunate, because when the war broke out, I was a second class petty officer. It was unusual to move up that fast, so probably they were starting to open up the rates a little more.

Marcello: A couple of questions come to mind here. How long was your initial enlistment?

Mannion: Three years and three months.

Marcello: Were you in under the minority cruise?

Mannion: Minority cruise, yes. I went in in October of 1938, so I did about three years and three months before I turned twenty-one.

Marcello: Had you gone in at the age of twenty-one or older, then that was a six-year enlistment?

Mannion: No, four years.

Marcello: A four-year enlistment.

Mannion: Of course, my minority cruise would have been up in March of 1942. However, there were men aboard ship whose enlistment had expired in September and October of 1941, but they were

not releasing them. They were holding them. So regardless of whether your cruise was up, you would have had to stay in.

Marcello: I'm assuming, then, that the training that you received in the engineering division was all on-the-job training for the most part.

Mannion: Yes. Well, you had various schools. Are you talking prior to Pearl Harbor--the schooling?

Marcello: Yes, yes. All my questions now are prior to Pearl Harbor.

Mannion: Well, yes, it'd be on-the-job training.

Marcello: What particular speciality within the engineering division were you interested?

Mannion: Well, I was a boilermaker, is what I was. Of course, that's repairing boilers, operating boilers, and operating your turbines and pumps and blowers and what-have-you.

Marcello: Did you find that most of the senior petty officers aboard the Nevada had a willingness to teach a new person all of the ropes?

Mannion: Oh, yes, because most of them were pretty mature. A petty officer had fifteen years in or something like that. As far as the breakdown from the senior petty officer to a new recruit, there was quite a bit of experience between them.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were a second class petty officer by the time of the Pearl Harbor attack. Did this create any amount of resentment? The reason I say that is because,

like you pointed out awhile ago, promotion was very, very slow in that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy.

Mannion: Well, no.

Marcello: Some of those old-timers had been in there for quite a while.

Mannion: No, no, I didn't notice any. Of course, this is jumping ahead, but after I left the Nevada--I went to this cruiser, the Northampton. Right after I went aboard her, I made first class petty officer. Of course, most of the first class on there--the least--had twenty years in the service. They didn't hold no resentment, but it did seem kind of funny.

Marcello: Talk a little bit about your living spaces aboard the Nevada when you first went on. Describe what they were like. I'm referring to the amount of space you had, the kinds of sleeping accommodations you had, and things of that nature.

Mannion: Well, we had ample room. In my division I think they may have had sixty men. It was a very large compartment. It was a living compartment and a sleeping compartment. What they did during the day, they raised the bunks up, you know, pushed them up against the bulkhead. All your meals was fed family-style, you know. There wasn't no cafeteria. They set up mess tables, and you had regular dishes. So it was pretty good.

Marcello: Did you ever have to sleep in any of the hammocks?

Mannion: In training only. The Nevada, I think, was one of the few

that had all bunks.

Marcello: You were talking about the eating facilities aboard the Nevada a moment ago. What did you think of the chow aboard the Nevada?

Mannion: It was good, very good.

Marcello: Did you serve a tour of mess cooking duty?

Mannion: Yes, I was a mess cook for three months.

Marcello: What did those duties consist of?

Mannion: Well, I was not on the general mess, you know, which is for the crew, or the officers' mess. They have the chiefs' mess, and I was in the chiefs' mess. Actually, it was a little bit different than general mess. They had their own cook; they had their own galley; they had everything separate. Of course, they had the best food, too.

Marcello: I know it was common practice among the lesser ranks to tip the mess cook on payday. Was this true among the chiefs, too?

Mannion: No, the chiefs didn't tip them, but I think you got \$5 a month extra. The head mess cook got \$10 a month. On general mess now, I guess they probably got more in tips because each mess cook had maybe twenty guys that he took care of. Normally, they just took a bowl on payday and put it on the table. They probably made better tips than what you would have as the chiefs' mess cook.

Marcello: In the period before Pearl Harbor, was the Nevada a happy ship? I'm referring now to the morale.

Mannion: Yes, it was. They say it was probably the best ship in the fleet--for the battleships.

Marcello: Why was that? What made it a happy ship?

Mannion: Gee, I don't know. I guess it was the people.

Marcello: You mentioned the food was pretty good. I guess that would have been one of the reasons.

Mannion: Yes. Everyone just got along well.

Marcello: I know that a lot of the ships were proud of their bands. Was that true aboard the Nevada?

Mannion: Yes, they had a pretty good band.

Marcello: Like you mentioned, in 1940 the Nevada moves out to the Hawaiian Islands more or less on a permanent basis.

Mannion: Yes.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of being stationed in the Hawaiian Islands?

Mannion: I liked it. You had a lot of time and a lot of sports. I played a lot of ball.

Marcello: Well, you brought up something that I think I need to pursue a bit further. What role did sports and athletic competition play in the life of that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy?

Mannion: Well, it was, I guess, one of the most important things. A big thing they had was the "Iron Man." You had ships that had football teams, baseball teams, rowboat crews, and what-have-you.

Marcello: What was the "Iron Man?" I've heard that term, but maybe

somebody who reads this interview won't know exactly what it is.

Mannion: (Chuckle) I never seen it, but it was some kind of an old jack-leg trophy somebody made. I never have seen it.

Marcello: How did one get the "Iron Man" trophy?

Mannion: By having the highest total in sports. You know, you would get so many points for...well, they had everything--just every sport there was.

Marcello: I think it also included such things as whaleboat racing and that sort of thing, too, did it not?

Mannion: Yes, they had whaleboat crews, football, baseball, boxing. Wrestling was also big.

Marcello: Speaking of competition among the ships there, is it not true that there was also a lot of rivalry relative to getting the "E" for efficiency?

Mannion: Well, yes, they had an "E" for engineering and an "E" for gunnery. When I first went in the Navy, I was in a turret. When I was in the deck force, they operated the turret. I know that during the months I was in that division, we had these practices, and we ended up with the "E." I think we got \$10 extra for it.

Marcello: And wasn't there also an "E" painted on one particular portion of the ship or something?

Mannion: Yes. If it was, like, a turret, there'd be a big white "E." If they got it two years in a row, they'd put a little hash

mark below it. If you got an engineering "E," they'd put a big red "E" on the stack. There was a lot of skulduggery in getting that "E" for engineering.

Marcello: How would you go about getting an "E" for engineering? It had something to do with fuel consumption, among other things, did it not?

Mannion: Yes, it depended on fuel consumption and the water and...just over-all efficiency as to how much fuel you burned per mile, how much feed water you used per mile. Of course, on fuel oil they would figure how much oil they were accounted with and how much they used. There was ways of getting around that because if a tanker would come alongside, well, you'd give them, say, a ham or ice cream or something like that, and they'd give you maybe a thousand gallons more oil. That way you got a thousand gallons you weren't charged with.

Marcello: I guess, in many cases, battleships could offer a lot of services to some of these other ships because a battleship was almost like a city. It had almost everything. It had a soda fountain and everything else.

Mannion: Yes. Of course, they all did the same thing. I always figured that when the war came along, that sort of messed up logistics, because them ships just didn't perform as efficient as they were on paper at the time. I've heard there were ships where they would have someone go over and check to see how much fuel they had on hand so they could balance things out, and

some of these ships would flood the oil tanks with saltwater. Of course, the oil would float, so when the guy put a sounding rod down there, he would come up with a full tank of oil. Actually, after he left they would strip the tanks. You had a stripping pump; you could pump the saltwater out. I think that probably did affect their fuel calculations. If the Navy went by what was on paper there, they were way off.

Marcello: Now that we've got the Nevada out to Pearl Harbor, let's talk about the training exercises in which the ship would participate. Describe what a typical training exercise consisted of. In other words, was there a particular day of the week when the Nevada and the other ships would go out on one of these training exercises?

Mannion: Well, there was weeks at a time when you would be out, and they would hold General Quarters, which would bring us under battle conditions. At the time the battleships had big blisters on either side. Actually, they were for flooding with sea water. They would take it out and assume that they had a hit on this side here (gesture), and then they would flood the other side to counteract the weight displacement. I know that for several weeks before the war they did this. They had never done it before. They must have knew there was submarines or something out there because when we were at sea and they would set what they called Condition Yoke, which was the next highest condition for battle. They had

never done that before. In engineering it was a continuous training program. You assumed that this particular machinery went out, and what do you do to counteract it. You lose fuel suction or your pumps go out, how do you counteract it? But that's normal; I mean, it's just everyday living.

Marcello: How much time was devoted to antiaircraft practice? This would perhaps be hard for you to answer since you were down in the engineering spaces.

Mannion: I sort of get that confused with what we did after the war. I don't believe there was too much before the war.

Marcello: Well, for one thing, I'm sure that you didn't have the 20- or 40-millimeters before the war, did you?

Mannion: No, we had 5-inch, and that was it. On a battleship they had the main battery, which was 14-inch, and then they had the broadside battery, with 5-inch .45-calibers. The only antiaircraft gun was machine guns. It wasn't until after the war that the 1.1-inch and the pom-poms and the rest of them came out.

Marcello: So, like you mentioned awhile ago, you did see some changes taking place in your training as you got closer and closer to December 7. You mentioned Condition York awhile ago.

Mannion: Well, not in training but in the way the ship was set up, yes. You were well-trained. The reason I mentioned about how they set the ship up was...well, every night, say, in the evening at five o'clock, they set what they called "X-ray."

They would close off part of the ship, especially down below the waterline. Then Yolk would be the next higher condition, and they would close off certain doors. Of course, they were all marked with "X" or "Y" or "Z." That would restrict the movements throughout the ship. In the event something did happen, they could really button it up real fast. But, no, as far as engineering training, I think it was up to snuff.

Marcello: Well, to get back again and clarify something, are you saying that the activities relative to Conditions "X" and "Y" were routine things that were being carried on continually as the fleet was training, or are you saying those things increased in frequency as one got closer and closer to December 7?

Mannion: Well, no, actually, that was normal everyday living. What that was was just the lower parts of the ship. They would close the doors, and if something happened--a flood or something--it wouldn't flood the ship. On Yolk they would close certain doors but still allow passage through the ship.

Marcello: Well, did Condition Yolk occur with more frequency as one gets closer and closer to December 7?

Mannion: Yes, I think so. Yes. In fact, I'd never seen them do it before outside of routine exercises. At night they would set Condition Yolk.

Marcello: When approximately did they start instituting Condition Yolk?

Mannion: Oh, I think...

Marcello: You'd have to estimate that, of course.

Mannion: I would say probably six months or longer. Of course, you had a regular engineer watch in all the spaces. Then you had a what they called a roving engineer watch--petty officer watch. I guess around August of 1941, they started arming him. He had to carry a .45-caliber, which he never did before. That was kind of strange. Of course, anyway, with the ship anchored out, it's pretty hard for someone to get aboard, but they did start arming the security watch at that time.

Marcello: When you and your buddies sat around in bull sessions, especially as conditions between the United States and Japan continued to get worse, did you ever talk about the possibility of a Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor? Did the subject ever come up in discussions--as opposed to war with the United States? There's a difference between war with Japan somewhere else than there is war with Japan at Pearl Harbor. Did you ever talk about the possibility of war coming at Pearl Harbor?

Mannion: Well, I'll talk about just the division I was in. I would say it was almost a consensus of opinion. That's all you heard. I know the Saturday a week before the attack, they only had the China Clipper flying out there--that was one plane a week, I believe--and they had a bunch of Japanese that left Hawaii. They were going back to Washington on

Saturday. No, I believe most everyone I knew thought the war would happen.

Marcello: But not at Pearl Harbor.

Mannion: Yes, yes.

Marcello: They thought it would happen at Pearl?

Mannion: Yes. Well, I even wrote to an ol' guy on the Oklahoma there. He had about ten years or more in the Navy--at the time--than I did. I just wrote to him a couple of weeks ago and asked him, and he was of that opinion.

Marcello: When these training exercises occurred, would the Nevada go out on a particular day of the week everytime, or would that vary?

Mannion: No, it would vary. We'd go out maybe for two weeks and operate. Well, yes, you could almost set a clock. It'd be underway Monday and then be in on Friday. If that's what you mean, yes.

Marcello: Normally, on a weekend would most of the ships be in Pearl?

Mannion: Yes, most of them.

Marcello: In other words, even when you came in off a training exercise on a Friday, maybe the other division would go out on Monday?

Mannion: Yes, yes. Most of the time, they would have a division out. I think that was the first time in six months that all the ships had been in there.

Marcello: When the Nevada came back into port, what would you do for recreation? What would you do for entertainment?

- Mannion: Sports. They had big ball fields there at Aiea. Shortly before the war, they were supposed to set up an air patrol around Hawaii. It was supposed to patrol out four hundred miles. I don't know if that thing ever did get into effect or not, but that air patrol was supposed to cover the islands so nothing could sneak in on us.
- Marcello: From my reading, I don't think they ever had enough planes to do a complete 360-degrees patrol.
- Mannion: Well, yes, that was part of it. I think they was going to patrol, but it would be just haphazard. They'd just go out and pick an area and patrol it.
- Marcello: How did the liberty routine work aboard the Nevada? In other words, let's suppose you came in on a Friday. Normally, you had an inspection on Saturday morning, is that correct?
- Mannion: Not every Saturday. But I guess that was the routine mostly.
- Marcello: Once the inspection is over, what portion of the crew would have liberty on Saturday?
- Mannion: One-half.
- Marcello: In other words, you had a port-and-starboard liberty setup. Then would the other half go ashore the next day?
- Mannion: Yes.
- Marcello: As I recall--correct me if I'm wrong--the liberty section had to return at midnight.
- Mannion: Yes, it did. There was overnight liberty for a while. Then they curtailed it to midnight; you had to be back at midnight.

However, a lot of guys had their wives and their families out there at the time, and they could stay overnight. I think the officers and the chiefs could have overnight liberty if they wanted.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us into that weekend of December 7, 1941. We want to go into as much detail as we can remember relative to that period. Do you recall when the Nevada came in off exercises at that time?

Mannion: I know it came in Friday afternoon.

Marcello: What happens at that point? In other words, first of all, where does the Nevada tie up?

Mannion: The Nevada ties up at the last quay in the row. Our bow was to the Arizona's stern, which I imagine it was maybe fifty feet or maybe a little bit more.

Marcello: I believe you were at the northern end, is that correct, of Battleship Row?

Mannion: Yes.

Marcello: What did you personally do on Saturday, December 6? Do you recall what your routine was that day?

Mannion: No. I was just aboard ship.

Marcello: In other words, you did not have liberty, or at least you did not go ashore.

Mannion: I didn't go ashore. We came in on Friday, and there was an ammunition lighter that came alongside, and they started taking the ammunition off the ship. They were going to

exchange it. You know, they send it back so often to have it checked. At the time, during the attack, the ammunition lighter was alongside. There was a boatswain who cut it loose. That's the way they got the ammunition lighter away from the ship. This ship took off all our large ammunition. They had machine gun cartridges aboard ship. No, I guess I didn't do anything special that Saturday night.

Marcello: So far as you know, then, was Saturday night a rather routine night so far as life aboard the Nevada was concerned?

Mannion: Yes. Everything was just as usual.

Marcello: Did the ships in the harbor, including Battleship Row, have their running lights on and so on? Did they have lights strung up?

Mannion: Well, I would say they were on because that was routine. I can't think of them being off. In fact, I'll swear they were on.

Marcello: When you're in port like that--I think this is something you can probably answer--how many boilers do you have lit?

Mannion: One. Of course, the Nevada had six boiler rooms. The number two boiler was lighted off. It was furnishing light and power. On Sunday morning we shifted boilers because you run so many hours on one and then get it ready to clean. So they lighted off number one, and number two was still warm. That was the reason the Nevada got underway so fast--because she had two boilers lit.

- Marcello: Normally, how long does it take to get a ship underway?
When you're in port, and you're on one boiler, how long does it take to get things ready under normal circumstances?
- Mannion: Our thinking at that time was that it took about forty-five minutes to an hour. The big thing was raising vacuum on the main engines. It took quite awhile to do that. Under normal routine, if you follow all the steps and check-off procedures, it takes about an hour to get up steam and get everything ready and about an hour and forty-five minutes to get underway.
- Marcello: What is the danger at trying to get everything revved up and get out of there...
- Mannion: Well, there's no danger...
- Marcello: ...under less than normal time.
- Mannion: Well, it's a strain, you know. On the boiler you would be heating everything up too fast, and then you do damage to the brick-work. Of course, you can only raise vacuum so fast. That was our thinking at the time. However, the war proved different because we did things a lot different during the war.
- Marcello: What were your plans for Sunday morning?
- Mannion: Nothing. I was just sitting there reading the paper when the attack started.
- Marcello: I guess since quarters were so cramped, you couldn't sleep in an extra amount of time, could you, because didn't you say

that the eating area and the living area was all the same?

Mannion: There was a separate space for the eating. It'd be separated out. In the living quarters, you know, where the bunks were, if you wanted to sit around and play cards and that, the bunks were up. Yes, the bunks were all up. There wasn't no sleeping in because reveille at that time was, I think, probably at six o'clock. They changed it later on. I think they had reveille at six o'clock every morning.

Marcello: Okay, so you're in your bunk reading the newspaper.

Mannion: No, I was sitting in a compartment.

Marcello: I see.

Mannion: All the bunks were up.

Marcello: I see.

Mannion: I think I was the only one in the compartment. They were sending over the Shore Patrol, and part of the guys in the division were up there ready to catch the boat. The others were all up on topside just loafing around. Where I was sitting in the compartment was right next to Ford Island. You could hear the machine guns and all that. Like everyone else, I just assumed it was holding target practice or something. The first thing I know about it, the guys in our division came running down the ladder and said there was Japanese planes up there bombing. From where I was in the compartment, my battle station--where I got into the engineering spaces--was, I guess, a matter of probably a hundred feet,

so I was right there. I didn't have to move far.

Marcello: Did you hesitate before you moved to your battle station?
Did you question anyone?

Mannion: No, no. Of course, General Quarters was going off, too,
because someone sounded the alarm, I guess, just about the
same time.

Marcello: How did General Quarters go off aboard the Nevada? In other
words, by what means was General Quarters sounded?

Mannion: They had a gong, a klaxon, like, and also a bugler. Of
course, everything was right there because the bugler was
already on station. He was just sounding Colors. The band
was up there, so they didn't have to hunt up the bugler
(chuckle).

Marcello: You say the band was up on deck for Colors. Did they usually
play the "National Anthem" and so on?

Mannion: Yes. I guess they finished it out before they left. They
kept playing the "National Anthem" until they completed it.
I guess they were sort of dazed, too; they didn't know what
was going on (chuckle).

Marcello: So General Quarters sounds, and you go to your battle station.
Where was it? Where was your battle station?

Mannion: My battle station was in the uptakes, which is more or less
a control station for all the boiler rooms. I went down
there, and, of course, people kept filtering in--those that
belonged on the engineering spaces.

Marcello: What happens at that point?

Mannion: Well, we had to light the boilers off--light all the boilers off. Probably four or five minutes after the attack started, that's when the Nevada took the first torpedo.

Marcello: Describe that sensation as best you remember it.

Mannion: Well, I never knew we took it (chuckle).

Marcello: Is that right?

Mannion: I felt the jar, but as far as knowing what caused it, I didn't know. I guess the big thing I remember is all the near misses. That's what makes the noise. After the ship got underway and started ou the channel, she was hit seven times while she was trying to get up steam. On her way out, that's when they all merged on us and tried to sink us in the channel. There were a lot of near misses then, and they made quite a noise.

Marcello: Let me just back up a minute and talk a little bit more about that torpedo hit, since it was the thing that occurred first. You mentioned that it did jar the ship. Did the Nevada take a list at that time?

Mannion: Yes, it was gradual. See, this is all after I'd had time to look at it and everything. The ship did have a forty-foot hole in it that the torpedo made.

Marcello: I assume, then, that you were nowhere near where the torpedo hit.

Mannion: No, the torpedo hit up near the bow.

Marcello: In fact, it was the port bow, I believe, was it not?

Mannion: Yes. We were quite a bit further aft--the engineering spaces. However, it did start taking on water. In fact, the water kept coming back, and the fire rooms gradually flooded. The forward ones flooded first. The water started coming in from the second deck, and we had to close off some of the hatches to keep it out. A lot of the fuel tanks were ruptured. I don't know how many guys was injured.

I know there was a chief storekeeper there...well, they had gas masks at the time which had sort of a cannister on the back. Over the cannister--over the holes--where the air went through, you kept sort of a piece of tape on it until you had to use it. When they found him, well, he was dead. They say that fuel fumes is the reason you put on this gas mask. However, he forgot to pull this tape off. Whether that is true or not, I don't know. It may have been that he was knocked unconscious and just never came around.

Marcello: Did you know that it was a torpedo, in fact, that hit the bow?

Mannion: No.

Marcello: What kind of sensations or feelings or thoughts do you have, knowing that you're down below in the engineering spaces, with all this other activity taking place up on deck, and knowing that if the ship does go down, you're going to be the last group to get out?

Mannion: Well, I tell you, you're so busy that you don't know. Of course, it was taking several bomb hits. At that time, in the bulkheads they had cork. I guess that cork was for insulation. It was probably four inches thick. When the bombs would hit, that cork would just fly off the bulkheads. That was about the only thing we saw flying around down there.

Marcello: I do know that after the torpedo hit, the Nevada caught its first bomb by the starboard antiaircraft director. Do you recall the bomb that came shortly after the torpedo?

Mannion: Oh, yes. I recall several bomb hits. I could tell when it was hit by a bomb.

Marcello: Describe the effects of a bomb hit at that time.

Mannion: Like I say, it's an awful jarring. The cork and everything would fly off the bulkheads. But there was only a bomb hit that...of course, now I know what caused it after I went up there and looked. The bomb had come down and split the stack. Of course, at the time I didn't know it. I was down below. All the fires in boilers, you know, just...the bomb blew them out in the spaces. We had to secure the boilers because everything filled up with smoke. It wasn't too long that we got it cleared out and got them lighted off again. I didn't know at the time what had caused it. In retrospect, this bomb, when it hit the stack, blew the fires out.

Marcello: In essence, you have to relight the boilers over again?

Mannion: Yes. The rooms kept flooding from up forward on back because

of that torpedo hit. It was taking water. First, the forward ones flooded; then it kept going back and back. After we ran her aground, the only boiler that was safe to operate--it was sort of set at a kilter--was at number six. The number six boiler was in fact, tore apart. We were cleaning it. This other boilermaker and myself went down. There was no light or nothing, but we used flashlights and put that boiler back together. Then we operated that all night long. That's what kept lighting on the ship.

Marcello: While all this is taking place, that is, the torpedo has hit and it takes a couple of bomb hits before it gets underway, is everything taking place in a rather professional manner down there in the engineering spaces?

Mannion: Yes.

Marcello: There is no panic.

Mannion: No, just almost routine.

Marcello: And there is no chaos.

Mannion: No.

Marcello: Around this same time, the Arizona blows up. Now you may have not of known it was the Arizona at the time, but do you recall what effect the blowing of the Arizona had upon the Nevada in terms of jolting the ship and so on?

Mannion: No. I know the ship got jolted several times, but I couldn't say which was which.

Marcello: How long did it take you to get up steam that day to get moving?

Mannion: We got underway, I guess, in about a half-hour. Like I say, the only reason this occurred was because they had one boiler already on, and the other boiler had just been shut down, so they were both hot. Like I say, the thinking then was that you don't do things fast; you follow the book. That's all been changed.

Marcello: Also, is it not true that to get the Nevada or any other ship underway, it normally requires tugs and all that sort of thing?

Mannion: Yes. Of course, they had an oil line that ran out and which partially blocked the channel. There was always big arguments between the high-ranking officials about getting them ships in and out, and they would have to get out and move that big piece of pipe to get the ships in and out. This day, however, they just maneuvered it right out. They had a quartermaster, and I guess he maneuvered it.

Marcello: So you get the ship underway, and you're heading someplace. Obviously, the Nevada is now being singled out. It takes a lot of near misses. Describe the sensations and the reactions to those near misses.

Mannion: Well, you hear a lot of popping when you get a near miss. Then when you get a hit, well, you could feel the ship shudder. I guess the most impressive thing is the near misses because they make the most noise.

Marcello: When you say "the most noise," can you describe how loud

the noise is? Is there anything comparable to it that you can think of?

Mannion: No. The noise is loud, but it's almost like if you took a string of firecrackers and lighted one, and it just all started going off at the same time. That's probably what they were-- the near misses dropping down. Of course, they were louder than firecrackers. You know the way that sounds--just one rapid going off.

Marcello: Were there any fires. Did any fires reach the boiler room?

Mannion: The only thing was that that bomb blew out the fires, filled the spaces with smoke. No, there wasn't no fire in there.

Marcello: What effect did that have upon visibility?

Mannion: Well, you just had to close the door and get out. You see, on the older-type ship, they had what they called the closed fire room. You had a double set of doors. One was an air lock, and then the boiler room itself was under air pressure. Depending on the speed you'd make, that's how much air pressure you would carry on it. To come in from one side, you would have to open one door and then walk into this sort of an air lock and then close it off and then get into the other door. When that happened, if you stepped back into the air lock, you isolated yourself from the fire rooms. That's not the way with the ships now. Like I say, they did pressurize the entire engineering space. However, today they just pressurize maybe twelve inches around the boiler

itself for your air pressure.

Marcello: So, you're heading out the channel. Eventually, the Nevada beaches itself over Hospital Point. What do you recall from the beaching of the Nevada?

Mannion: Well, I didn't even know it was beached (chuckle).

Marcello: There isn't a sudden jolt or anything when it hits the shore.

Mannion: No, no, no. The only time I know it was beached was when I was topside. I saw that we were sitting on the bank there. Of course, when you had to go the rest room, we went out in a big cane field. You could walk right off the ship and right into the cane field. I never felt any jarring or anything like that.

Marcello: Did you have lighting the whole time?

Mannion: Well, you had a little bit of lighting, yes. Now and then they lost lighting, but you had just enough to keep auxiliary power on the ship.

Marcello: Okay, the Nevada beaches itself. What do you guys in the engineering spaces do at that point?

Mannion: Well, we stayed there all night. Of course, you were still operating; you still had your one boiler going. You still had all your related equipment--your pumps and the rest of the equipment--operating. We stayed in the engineering spaces until the following morning.

Marcello: What do you talk about that night?

Mannion: I guess we mostly slept (chuckle).

Marcello: You actually could sleep that night?

Mannion: Oh, yes.

Marcello: Sleep came easily.

Mannion: Well, I guess you was tired, you know.

Marcello: What kind of rumors were going around?

Mannion: Oh, that they were being invaded from Waikiki and the cane fields. See, when guys would go out to use the rest room out in the cane field, they'd take a piece of cane and start eating it. Of course, somebody started the rumor that the cane was all poisoned (chuckle), so they quit eating the cane. I don't know where it started. I think someone had a strong imagination.

Marcello: On the other hand, did you believe most of those rumors?

Mannion: No, no.

Marcello: Not even at the time, you didn't believe them.

Mannion: No.

Marcello: What kind of an appetite did you have that day?

Mannion: I guess it was good if there was something to eat. Well, see, there was another ship that came alongside that night. I don't know what time it was, but they brought food out to us.

Marcello: What did you do the next day?

Mannion: I guess the next morning there wasn't much to do, so they sent most of the crew over to the base. We went over, and they kept all the engineering force intact. They put us

in a bowling alley, and we slept in the bowling alley.

I guess until the 17th of December, I was assigned over to Aiea. That's a landing where they was dragging all these bodies that were in the bay. They would bring them over. We had some kind of chemical. We'd try to clean them up and get the name off the clothes. If we couldn't find anything, we'd just didn't know who they were. Then we'd put them in...they had big pine boxes. We'd nail them in there, put them on a truck, and they would take them up to Red Hill and bury them.

Marcello: How long were you on that detail?

Mannion: Well, it'd have to be the...yes, I guess the 17th, because I went aboard ship--this cruiser--about two o'clock in the morning, so that'd be the 18th.

Marcello: I'll assume that that was one of the most distasteful jobs that one could have gotten after Pearl Harbor.

Mannion: Well, yes, yes.

Marcello: When was it that you finally got back to the Nevada again?

Mannion: You mean after I left?

Marcello: After you left. In other words, you mentioned that after the Nevada was beached, then they pulled you off. You went over to the bowling alley, and that's basically where you were staying.

Mannion: Yes.

Marcello: Then you were on this job trying to identify bodies.

Mannion: I never did get back to it.

Marcello: You never went back to the Nevada.

Mannion: No, no, because there wasn't nothing to do. Well, hell, it was just laying on the bottom. In fact, the admiral of the yard said it would never be raised. That's how bad it was. So they put us over there in the bowling alley, and, like I say, we was on that burying detail. Then as ships came in, they would split up the crews. I went to the Northampton, which was a heavy cruiser. The rest of the crew went to various other ships.

Marcello: I'm sure you had all sorts of possessions aboard the Nevada. Did you have a chance to go back and ever get any of your belongings?

Mannion: Yes, I got most of my clothes. I think we took them the day we left--that morning.

Marcello: I see.

Mannion: Like I say, this admiral...at least it was his opinion that that ship was finished. The crew knew it was going to go elsewhere, that they wasn't going to stay on that ship.

Marcello: At any time after the attack, did you get a chance to observe, or look at, the damage that had been done by that torpedo?

Mannion: No, I never did. The only thing I saw was pictures of the hole after they raised the ship. They took the pictures and had guys standing in it, showing the dimensions of it.

Marcello: I guess one cannot imagine the damage that a torpedo of that type could do to a battleship until one actually saw the hole.

Mannion: Well, yes. Where it hit the armor belt didn't extend up that far. That was one of the reasons it made such a big hole. I guess they do do a lot of damage. Later on, I was on the Northampton, and we got sunk at Guadalcanal (weeping).

Marcello: That evening of the 7th and in the following days, how would you describe your emotions? In other words, was it anger at what the Japanese had done? Fear? Frustration? Was it a combination of all those things?

Mannion: I'll tell you, at the time you were just so darn busy you didn't have time for much of anything. You're talking about after the war started?

Marcello: Yes. Let's say that evening of the 7th and in the days following, the 8th, the 9th, the 10th--that period.

Mannion: Well, you were just kept busy doing things, and in addition you didn't know where you was going to go. You wanted to get to where you was going to go. That was the main thing.

Marcello: And when was it that you finally got out of Pearl?

Mannion: Well, I guess I went aboard that Northampton on the 17th or 18th, so I guess it was two days later.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Mannion, that's probably a pretty good place to end this interview. I want to thank you very much for having spoken with me. You've said a lot of interesting and important things. I'm sure that researchers and students are going to find your comments most valuable when they get to use them.