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Interview with
JAMES E. BEAUCHAMP
October 8, 1980

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewer: Ronald E. Marcello

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Approved:

James E. Beauchamp
(Signature)

Date:

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Oral History Collection

James Beauchamp

Interviewer: Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

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Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing James Beauchamp for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on October 8, 1980, in Denton, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Beauchamp in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was aboard the battleship USS Tennessee during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Mr. Beauchamp, to begin this interview, just very briefly tell me a little bit about yourself. In other words, tell me when you were born, where you were born, your education--things of that nature. Just be very brief and general.

Mr. Beauchamp: I was born on April 4, 1923, in Greenwood, Texas. That's about ten or twelve miles northeast of Decatur, the county seat of Wise County, up north of here.

Dr. Marcello: Did you go to school in Greenwood?

Mr. Beauchamp: I attended the first two grades, until I was ten years old, I guess. And my mother married John R. Keeton, who lived at Boliver, Texas. That's about eight or

ten miles west of Sanger, Texas, and we lived about two-and-a-half miles west of Boliver on the Freeman farm. Nora Freeman and her two brothers owned several farms in that area. One of them ran a drugstore in Sanger.

Marcello: Then did you have some additional schooling there in Boliver?

Beauchamp: Yes, when I moved there at ten, we walked a lot in those days, two-and-a-half miles to school except in bad weather. Then my stepfather had an ol' Model T . . . he had a 1925 Model T later with a covering and all and glass and hand operated windshield wipers. But he had one before that that had a buggy, canvas-type cover. I don't know what year it was, you know, and they'd come after us in bad weather in those cars--it was a gravel road--and, otherwise, we'd walk, cold weather and hot weather (chuckle), which wasn't too bad, thinking back about it.

Marcello: Did you complete your education there in Boliver?

Beauchamp: Boliver at that time had had up to ~~the seventh or eighth~~ grade. I believe it was the eighth. And for high school at that time, the eleventh grade was the senior class. So I went to Sanger for one year.

At that time someone else rented the farm my father was working there at Boliver, and we moved back close to Greenwood, the other side of Slidell, Texas. It's farther west of Boliver. You know where Slidell is?

Marcello: Yes.

Beauchamp: I think that was the Rudd place at Greenwood. It was a small place, and it really wasn't too much of a living there. But I rode the bus to Slidell. And it wasn't very long there at Slidell, either, that I attended.

Then my stepfather rented a place up close to Wichita Falls, in between Byers and Wichita Falls, a little place called Charlie.

And then there was another little antique place called Thornberry. There was a sandy land farming area, and we raised peanuts and had orchards. There were some huge orchards around there; I mean, there was work to do in the summer gathering peaches. And we raised peanuts. We had a peanut thrasher. The man that owned the place had a peanut thrasher on the place. It was a deep, sandy place, and there was plenty of trees for me to hoe under (chuckle) and plenty of weeds to hoe. And back in those days, you've heard the old-timers . . . and I'm not too ancient, but I'm pretty ancient--fifty-seven years old. But back in those days, you heard of what they call "poke salad" growing wild in the woods and other areas of the country. Well, it's like spinach, a wild plant like spinach or turnips. It's a wild plant that you use the leaves, and it's real good. It's as good as spinach. And my mother would can, you know, twenty-five or thirty

cans of that--quarts of that--a year just for me. And on Saturday I would bundle up little bundles the size of my fist, with a rubber band around them, and take them up to Parker's Grocery in Wichita Falls on Saturday and make my show money selling them for so much a bunch, you know, to make money for the show and candy and so forth.

Marcello: Did you continue your education in that area then?

Beauchamp: Yes, there at this little farm in between Charlie and Thornberry, a school bus carried us to Byers. Now that's across from Petrolia. I think Petrolia's in Oklahoma, isn't it?

Marcello: No, I believe it's in Texas.

Beauchamp: Anyway, it's close to Petrolia, and there's another town across the border in Oklahoma. It's pretty close to the Oklahoma border there, but Byers is where I graduated. I had three or four extra credits when I graduated, but I wasn't a brilliant student. I just had taken the subjects and passed them.

Marcello: And in what year did you graduate?

Beauchamp: That was in . . . it must have been 1941. I went in the Navy in June of 1941, so I don't think I was out of school a year when I probably went in. I already had the literature that I picked up at the recruiting station in Wichita Falls, and I done had my plans made. Back in those days, there wasn't money to go to college, and there wasn't

money for trade school. There wasn't any trade schools in 1941, you see.

Marcello: Why did you decide to enter the service?

Beauchamp: Why did I decide to enter the service? Well, like I said, in 1941 there wasn't much available for trade schools or college--I mean, money, you see. I mean it was probably \$1.50, \$1.25 a day for hoeing cotton. I forget how the scale went for picking peaches off the trees, but there was some huge orchards in that sandy land country around Charlie, Texas, there by Byers. But it wouldn't send you to college.

Marcello: Why did you decide . . .

Beauchamp: Well, I'll answer your question. I wanted to learn a trade. I was interested in electricity. I enlisted. I got a job in the Electrical Division on the Tennessee for three-and-a-half years and then spent the rest of the time at the Mare Island Navy Yard.

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

Beauchamp: Oh, "Join the Navy and See the World." "Sailors have more Fun." You know that. You're not stuck down in one place. You see all the beauty, not just part of it.

Marcello: Where did you take your boot camp?

Beauchamp: San Diego. That was the ol' stand-by.

Marcello: Was there anything eventful that happened in boot camp

that you think we need to get as part of the record, or was it just the normal Navy boot camp?

Beauchamp: I really didn't know how to swim. I was really a dry-land boy, but, you know, that wasn't no problem. You saw a reason why you might need to know how to swim, so we just dove off and learned how.

You know, I just remember crawling under live rifle fire in boot camp, you know, machine gun fire, whatever they had. It was interesting.

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

Beauchamp: Six weeks. That was before the war, actually. It was in June.

Marcello: Yes, that was before the war, but if boot camp was only six weeks long, that meant that they had already cut it down considerably because before that boot camp had been longer. They must have wanted to get you guys out into the fleet pretty fast.

Beauchamp: How long was it before that, and when did they change?

Marcello: Well, I don't know but it was sometime before that . . . Don't ask me the questions. I'm supposed to ask you the questions (chuckle). But I know they did. The point I'm trying to make is that, since boot camp had been cut down to six weeks, they must have been expecting some sort of an emergency.

Beauchamp: Well, the world was on fire.

Marcello: When you thought of the country getting into war . . .

Beauchamp: . . . well, nobody really even dreamed of it then, really.

Marcello: When you thought . . .

Beauchamp: . . . but the big boys knew it was on fire.

Marcello: When you thought of the country getting into war, did you think mainly in terms of Europe or in terms of the Far East?

Beauchamp: Nobody on that ship except maybe the . . .

Marcello: No, I'm back in boot camp now. Let's keep these things in sequence.

Beauchamp: Nobody thought of it in boot camp of getting in war. No, as far as I know, it wasn't even mentioned. It wasn't dreamed. Even when the bombs started falling, we said, "Well, this is a surprise practice. They're dropping sandbags or something."

Marcello: If the country perhaps had gone into war in 1941, when you were in boot camp, is it safe to say that you probably would have thought of getting into war against Germany and over in Europe rather than in the Far East?

Beauchamp: Yes, it really wasn't expected that the Japanese could do that. I wouldn't have thought that they were advanced with aircraft carriers and . . . I just didn't know. You see, I mean, it just didn't enter our minds. I mean, even after the attack started, we said, "Is this real, or what's going on?"

Marcello: Where did you go from boot camp?

Beauchamp: The Tennessee and maybe another ship or two pulled in there and took on recruits in San Diego.

Marcello: So you went from San Diego directly to the Tennessee?

Beauchamp: Yes.

Marcello: Was this voluntary or were you simply assigned to the Tennessee?

Beauchamp: Oh, I was assigned, I'm sure, because I wouldn't know the difference in ships. I was glad I was on it now, though, because Providence saw that it was inboard of the ship outboard that took seven or eight torpedoes in the direct place where my battle station was.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of going aboard a battleship?

Beauchamp: Well, those battleships were built right after World War I, and they were the "big, bad boys" of naval warfare of that day. Even though the aircraft carriers had begun operations, the battlwagons were the ultimate, they thought.

Marcello: So you considered it to be rather prestigious to go aboard a battleship?

Beauchamp: At that time?

Marcello: Yes, that's what I'm referring to. All my questions are referring to that time.

Beauchamp: They're out-of-date now--too slow and big.

Marcello: What kind of a reception did you get when you went aboard the Tennessee in the beginning? After all, you were still

strictly a "boot," so to speak, so far as the "old salts" were concerned. What sort of a reception did you get when you initially went aboard the Tennessee?

Beauchamp: I don't remember the day I went aboard it. I don't remember anything. I remember crossing to Honolulu in about a week's trip and seasickness there, but that's about my first memories that I have right now of being aboard the Tennessee.

Marcello: When you initially went aboard the Tennessee, where did they assign you?

Beauchamp: Well, I don't think I went anyplace but the E Division with the electricians.

Marcello: You did not spend any time at all in the deck force?

Beauchamp: Oh, wait a minute! I don't know when I was up there. I helped holystone the deck. You know what a holystone is? It's a little brick-type nugget. It might be called a midget brick--a rough carborundum stone, I guess they'd call it now--on the end of a stick. And at that time they had about inch-and-a-quarter or two-inch boards over the top deck, the outside deck, of the battleships, and they kept this varnished. They was spit-and-shined. That's what they had us do, so they looked good. And they stoned this varnish off. It was a rough sand-type stone, and they called it a holystone. They'd sand this varnish off and replace the varnish

every so often. And then the varnished wood deck really shone.

Marcello: Didn't they also use saltwater along with the holystoning? Didn't they also hose down the decks with saltwater and so on?

Beauchamp: I'm sure they did to get rid of the wood dust, you know, but I don't remember that part of it.

Marcello: How did you manage to get in the E Division?

Beauchamp: I requested that before I . . . evidently, they had taken your request because I requested that at the recruiting office in Wichita Falls, and I had the literature and told them that's what I wanted. I guess I kept telling them that all the way through. I don't know whether my last telling or first telling accomplished it.

Marcello: Describe the on-the-job training that you received in the E Division as you were striking for electrician's mate.

Beauchamp: Well, there's seaman 3rd, 2nd, and 1st class, which is the way it goes, and this is more or less a beginning. You did a lot of things, you know--swabbing the deck and serving food and a lot of general learning of the ship and the rules.

Marcello: Are you saying, in effect, that these are some of the first jobs that you had when you went into the E Division?

Beauchamp: Yes.

Marcello: What kind of on-the-job training did you have in terms of

becoming an electrician's mate?

Beauchamp: Well, I was sent as a helper with the man that took care of the lighting system. Then I eventually ended up in charge of the lighting system aboard the ship. There were men who took care of the power system--the motors, the electrical motors. And then eventually I was in charge of the four big 4,800-horsepower electric motors that drove the ship with a shaft about the size of your waist or bigger, iron shaft with four propellers, two on each side of the back.

Marcello: So this shaft would be somewhere around thirty to thirty-five inches in diameter?

Beauchamp: I suppose. And I ended up in charge of those motors and every . . . I don't know how often, but we would take the end off of one and go in and clean the carbon out around the slip rings and the coils. It was a huge motor; I mean, it was, you know, as tall as this room and as big as a living room, you know, huge motor.

Marcello: As you look back on that on-the-job training, how would you rate it in terms of its quality?

Beauchamp: Oh, quality and speedy and high potential--all great.

Marcello: Do you feel that the senior petty officers trained you thoroughly?

Beauchamp: Yes. Yes, I could ask any question of the old-timers, and they would know what to do; and if you proved that

you were sincere in trying, they'd go all the way to help you--officers, petty officers, all of them. They appreciated anybody that tried.

Marcello: How slow or how rapid was promotion in the E Division during that time before war started?

Beauchamp: Well, everytime I'd spent enough time for an advancement, I took a test and made it. They rated the tests, and I think 4.0 was perfect. I don't know just how that goes--that rating, you know. I'm not saying I made 4.0, but I passed the tests. Everytime my time period passed for an advancement, I made it. I was a little anxious to make it on account of the money, you know.

Marcello: So at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack, then, what was your rank or rating?

Beauchamp: Well, I don't know if I'd got past the first rank or not.

Marcello: In other words, you were not yet a petty officer at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack?

Beauchamp: No, I was still a seaman--1st, 2nd, or 3rd class. I don't know which.

Marcello: What kind of time in the Navy did those senior petty officers have? How much time did they have in the Navy? You would have to generalize on this, of course.

Beauchamp: Well, they went in then usually for a career, and I believe more of them stayed in then than they do now.

Marcello: Approximately how much time would those men have had in

the Navy?

Beauchamp: Oh, they had three or four four-year stripes on, some two four-year stripes, some one-year stripes.

Marcello: So generally speaking, then, these senior petty officers could have had anywhere from four to twelve years in the service, is that correct, or maybe even longer?

Beauchamp: Some of them had twenty.

Marcello: I think it's also true at that time that some of them spent their entire careers on one ship.

Beauchamp: Oh, yes . . . well, I don't know. I suppose. Maybe.

Marcello: Awhile ago you mentioned serving the food. I gather, therefore, that you did some time as a mess cook when you were aboard the Tennessee.

Beauchamp: I don't remember much about that. I don't think I spent very much time doing that. Now they sent the food down the elevator shaft, and then it was in the these little containers that we . . . we had to place it somewhere where the men could . . . my memory's a little foggy there. We had to place it somewhere, and I remember handling it, you know.

Marcello: These containers were called tureens, weren't they?

Beauchamp: I don't remember that terminology.

Marcello: In the beginning, how was the food served? In other words, was it cafeteria-style, or was it family-style when you first went there?

Beauchamp: Well, then it was more family-style or group-style. It was sent down by elevator shaft to the divisional location, and you ate in there in a group. At the end, when they went from about 800 to 1,800 men on the ship, you lined up in a long line except during battle conditions, which they sent you the hard-boiled eggs and bread or some easy thing.

Marcello: At that time, what was your opinion of the Navy food?

Beauchamp: Oh, I never have had trouble with food? I never had ate asparagus at that time. I never heard of it. I was really a country boy. But I liked it, and I ate it, you know. I loved it.

Marcello: So, in general, were you . . .

Beauchamp: I just wish the lines hadn't been so long, after the war started, where I could have went through several times (chuckle).

Marcello: So in general were you satisfied with the food aboard the Tennessee?

Beauchamp: Sure. It was great.

Marcello: What particular food did you not like at that time?

Beauchamp: Oh, what they called chipped ham and gravy on the "shingle." They called it something else. If you want me to say it, I'll say it. I don't care (chuckle).

Marcello: They call it "SOS," do they not?

Beauchamp: Not exactly (chuckle). "Shit-on-the-Shingle," if you want to know what it is. But I liked that. I loved it! I

loved that stuff, and everybody in the world will gripe about that one thing more than any other thing. I liked it even for breakfast. I loved it.

Marcello: Describe what your living quarters were like aboard the Tennessee.

Beauchamp: Well, at that time, the seamen and the new people slept in hammocks swung from hooks--thick canvas, heavy canvas hammocks swung from hooks--on the ceiling or floor of the upper deck. And the senior men slept on cots, folding cots, and in the morning we had to wait until they folded their cots and put them away. Along the sides of the bulkhead there was compartments to put the cots in. Then we'd come out of our hammocks and roll it up a certain way and tie it up a certain way and store it. And then we had to go to bed first at night to get our hammocks up and get out of the way. If there was anything I didn't care about, it was the hammocks.

Marcello: Why was that?

Beauchamp: Oh, I don't know. It was the putting them up and taking them down and being last and first and all this, that, and the other, you know.

Marcello: How comfortable or uncomfortable were they to sleep in?

Beauchamp: Oh, they were comfortable to sleep in. I slept as good in them . . . that wasn't the part I didn't like, the sleeping; I mean, that was all right. I could sleep good.

You'd just rock in the cradle, see, and when somebody rocks you in a cradle, that's pretty nice.

Marcello: Awhile ago we were talking about the food aboard the Tennessee. Were the tables hung from the ceiling, and then were they lowered at mealtime?

Beauchamp: After the war started or before the war started?

Marcello: Before the war. All my questions now have to do with before the war.

Beauchamp: You know, I remember getting the food out of the elevator and carrying it somewhere, and I remember eating, but I don't know what we ate off of, whether we sat on our . . . we must have set up tables. They must have had some there, but I just don't remember. It's not even in my memory. I can't recall.

Marcello: Where did you stow your gear?

Beauchamp: Well, we had lockers. There was a limited amount of space and a limited amount of clothes. And they had, every so often, an inspection. You stood by your locker, and each sock had to be folded a certain way, and clean; your underwear and everything folded a certain way. Your locker had to be shipshape--unbelievable. I don't know if the guys do that today or not. I know a lot of people I know, they're not of the temperament that would want to do it today. Then you didn't question anything. It was a joy to be strict like a stormtrooper, so to say.

Marcello: Approximately how large was your locker where you stowed your gear?

Beauchamp: Oh, the best I remember, it was as tall as I am, maybe, about two foot wide. But, you know, I've had lockers at Moore Business Forms here for thirty-three years now, and I've had them longer than the six years in the Navy, so I might could be wrong about the size of my locker.

Marcello: So they were about six feet tall then?

Beauchamp: Oh, no, they were not six feet tall, maybe five.

Marcello: About five feet tall.

Beauchamp: Maybe.

Marcello: Describe what the morale was like aboard the Tennessee during that pre-Pearl Harbor period. Was the Tennessee a happy ship?

Beauchamp: Yes, it was great! There was gunnery competition between the battlewagons. They had the ol' target ship, Utah, out there towing targets, and the ship that had the best gunnery record with the big . . . it was 14-inch guns then. They had five battleships built after World War I--the Tennessee, Virginia, Maryland, California, West Virginia, and they had 14-inch guns. They had six of those guns on the bow and six on the stern, besides the antiaircraft guns. Now the antiaircraft guns were single 5-inch guns, uncovered, with wooden decks for splinters in case the bombs hit. But after the war started, they were enclosed

twin 5-inch mounts.

Marcello: Now before the war, I assume that those 5-inch mounts were . . . were they dual-purpose guns?

Beauchamp: Yes. They were antiaircraft guns. We could tie the shells, and they could go up and explode. And all the twin mounts . . . after the war started . . . and, also, you know, I guess that's the size the destroyers had. The "tin cans" had 5-inch guns, you know, twin mounts instead of the big turrets, see.

Marcello: Where was your battle station aboard the Tennessee during the pre-Pearl Harbor period?

Beauchamp: I don't know if it changed or not, but at Pearl Harbor it was in a compartment where there was no machinery of any kind. It was back from the bow, on the port side, in an empty compartment. It'd be just more or less for water control and fire fighting, you know. There was a chief petty officer and two or three others down there. The West Virginia was outboard of us, and they're the one that took seven or eight torpedoes, which, one of them would have got us if we hadn't been inboard.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk about the . . . well, let me back up a minute. We were talking about the morale of the ship awhile ago, and I wanted to ask you why the morale on the Tennessee was so high. How would you explain that? You mentioned the competition.

Beauchamp: Well, I expect it was high on all the ships. They had the big parades there in Honolulu. I don't know if it was Armistice Day, November 11th, or July the 4th, or what, but we would put on our leggings over our white uniforms and have the parade.

And I remember one interesting thing there. I wasn't with the marchers, but I saw a drunk sailor. This hula girl was really shaking it out there, and he got him a match and was trying to strike a fire to that grass skirt to see what was under there, you see. And the Shore Patrol got him right quick.

Marcello: What role did athletics play aboard the Tennessee and among all of the ships at that time?

Beauchamp: Oh, a lot . . . baseball teams as well as gunnery practice, you see. The band came on topside when we were in port in the mornings and played. There were just all kinds of activities. It was just fun; I mean, war was a million miles away. War never entered the enlisted man's mind back then, as far as I know, unless they were around some of the high officers that might have mentioned something about what was going on in the world.

Marcello: What kind of activities did you participate in in terms of sports and things of that nature? Did you participate in any of that?

Beauchamp: Not except my job during gunnery practice. I was an

electrician. I might be on the switchboard with the earphones down there in one of the generating plants. In case one generator failed, I'd switch over to another one. But, see, the boilers made the steam that run the turbines that run the generators that run the electric motors. And they were, the best I remember, were 4,800 horsepower.

Marcello: Let's describe some of the typical training exercises in which the Tennessee participated during that period before Pearl Harbor. Describe what a typical exercise was like. In other words, when did you go out--that is, what day of the week normally--and how long would you stay out and when would you come in?

Beauchamp: Oh, some of those details, I don't know. I don't recall. I was too concerned with getting to be an electrician. I know I seen the planes fly over towing . . . see, we had two planes aboard the Tennessee. They were launched off by a steam ramp. They'd "rev" up wide open--their motors--and then launch them off a steam ramp, and they'd have enough speed to go off. Then they'd come back and land on their pontoons beside the ship, and a crane would pick them up. I don't know if they pulled the targets or not, but there were planes sent out, probably from a land base, maybe, that would pull the long target behind them for the antiaircraft practice. And the ships would

pull the targets for the big guns.

Marcello: Normally, how long would you stay out on one of these training exercises?

Beauchamp: I don't recall.

Marcello: Would you go out normally on the same day of the week all the time and come in on the same day of the week all the time?

Beauchamp: I don't even have any idea to the answer to that question.

Marcello: As one got closer and closer to December 7, and as conditions between the United States and Japan continued to get worse, what changes, if any, could you detect in your training? Or, on the other hand, was it business as usual?

Beauchamp: Well, as far as I could tell, it was business as usual, you know. But I wasn't a real close observer. Like I say, when the attack started, we just couldn't believe it was a war. It'd been so long since there was a war. We just couldn't believe it was for real. We thought the ship had exploded or somebody was dropping sandbags or was pulling a surprise drill on us; I mean, we discussed it until I looked out the porthole and saw a man blown off the West Virginia in the water, and then I knew something had to be wrong. So I took off in my pajamas and went to my battle station.

Marcello: Now during that pre-Pearl Harbor period, when you thought

of a typical Japanese, what sort of a person did you usually conjure up in your mind? After all, there were lots of Japanese in the Hawaiian Islands.

Beauchamp: Oh, I didn't conjure up a picture of a young one. There was an ol' Japanese with whiskers who put this tattoo on my arm, and he done a real good job. It's been on there . . . '41, '51, '61, '71 . . . it'll soon be forty years, won't it? And, see, the red in the roses faded out but the green has stayed in the leaves.

Marcello: And a Japanese did the tattoo job?

Beauchamp: An ol' Japanese, whiskered ol' fellow.

Marcello: Why did you decide to get a tattoo?

Beauchamp: Oh, it was the thing to do.

Marcello: That proved that you were "salty?"

Beauchamp: Well, there were some "salty" guys that wore them (laughter). Where they had them, I don't know if I ought to tell you or not. But I would.

Marcello: Where did they have these tattoos?

Beauchamp: Well, in the shower room there while he was taking a shower, I saw a bumblebee that was tattooed on the end of a man's sex organ. He said that's where he got it, you know. And some of them had cottontailed rabbits on buttocks headed toward the hole. And some of them had naked ladies with tender nipples on them, you know, and so forth and so on. That's just like it is. I believe

in being a realist; I mean, there's too many people and too many religions living in a dream world. Let's face it like it is. What do you say?

Marcello: Were a lot of these people old Asiatic sailors, perhaps?

Beauchamp: No, they were just some country boys like me--get drunk and didn't have any sense.

Marcello: Did you have any of the old Asiatic sailors aboard the USS Tennessee?

Beauchamp: Oh, there was some that'd been in Asia, but not like sailboat days. No, I mean, when I think of an Asiatic sailor, I think of sailboat days.

Marcello: Well, when I think of Asiatic sailors, I'm thinking of those that serve with the Asiatic Fleet, maybe over in China or in the Philippines or someplace like that. Did you have any of those characters aboard?

Beauchamp: They didn't send, usually, the big wagons over . . . well, after I went in, they didn't send them over that far.

Marcello: Well, I guess what I'm saying is, had any of these people ever been transferred aboard the Tennessee?

Beauchamp: Oh, yes, there was officers and the men had been around the world, everyplace, you know. They'd tell us a little bit about it here and there, you know. Nobody thought serious; I mean, life was a ball.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about your liberty routine when the Tennessee was in port at Honolulu. First of all,

what did you think about the idea of being stationed
in the Hawaiian Islands?

Beauchamp: Well, I liked it.

Marcello: Why was that?

Beauchamp: Oh, the climate. Oh, what you didn't get on the ship, you could get ashore, even if you would get it in the United States. And, you know, the sights there--the ol' king, when the natives ruled, King Kamehameha and his statue. And along the sidewalks they'd have wooden barrels with iced-down pineapple juice. I wasn't a drinker back then. I never drank any over there during that time. They had this pineapple juice iced down in fifty-five-gallon wooden drums, and it was good because you didn't get all you wanted aboard the ship, you know. And, man, I just loved it! I'd drink that stuff by the quart.

Marcello: Awhile ago you said what you couldn't get aboard ship, you could get ashore. Are you thinking primarily in terms of food and all sorts of other activities, also?

Beauchamp: Oh, yes, social life.

Marcello: Normally, when you went on liberty, what did you do?

Beauchamp: Oh, for a while I went sightseeing, picture-taking, and at the YMCA you could get a little social life. They had girls, ladies, there. I wasn't too much of what some people would call "morally bad" then, but I have counted . . . I wasn't in the line, but I've counted 150 men in

line at some of those houses where they got their sexual needs met.

Marcello: Was this down on Hotel Street and Canal Street?

Beauchamp: Yes, yes, I'm afraid so. That's the way it was. In fact, I wish I'd saved that paper. I had a paper, during that time before Pearl Harbor, and the headlines . . . now, they wouldn't have printed a headline like that in this country because they were not realists in this country back then. They were dreamers. At that time, in Honolulu, they printed it like it was. They faced life like we're beginning to face it here. The headlines of the paper said, "Prostitution Houses Net One Million Dollars for 1941." Or '40, whatever it was, you know. They didn't make no bones about it; I mean, food, clothing, sex, sleep--it's a part of life, and they faced it like it was. But you wouldn't even dare mention sex in this country in the headlines, I mean.

Marcello: Well, prostitution was legal in Honolulu in certain areas at that time, was it not?

Beauchamp: It must have been.

Marcello: What else did you do when you went on liberty? How about Waikiki Beach? Did you ever get down there very much?

Beauchamp: Oh, yes, yes. We went swimming. You know, the mattress covers then were made in sack fashion. They were as long as the mattress with one end open. And you could get

those things wet and run along the beach with the mouth open and fill it up with air and tie a knot in it right quick. And then you could take them out past the breakers and ride them in. That was fun, you know.

Swimming, sightseeing, buying cards, compiling a photograph album, driving around, socializing at the YMCA. Oh, I don't think they had USO's then. They might have; I don't know. I doubt it.

Marcello: Generally speaking, when did liberty commence aboard the Tennessee?

Beauchamp: Oh, at that time, I don't know. I guess it'd be either every other day or every day. It all depends where you were at, I guess--how far, where you were at--as to how many days you got off, say.

Marcello: Well, I'm referring to Honolulu.

Beauchamp: It would expire at twelve midnight or something like that. You had to be back aboard ship. You couldn't stay all night all the time. Some of the officers could.

Marcello: Why was it that liberty expired at twelve o'clock? Do you have any idea?

Beauchamp: I don't know why it did over there. I never did think about it.

Marcello: Could it possibly have been because there would have been very few places to stay ashore? There weren't very many hotels there.

Beauchamp: No, there wasn't. Really, I don't know.

Marcello: I guess the only really big hotel was the Royal Hawaiian, and then there was the Ala Moana, but you probably weren't making enough money to stay in any of those places.

Beauchamp: Twenty-one dollars a month and beans for breakfast on Saturday.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us up to that weekend of December 7, 1941, and so what we'll do at this point is go into that weekend and describe it in as much details as you can remember. First of all, do you recall when the Tennessee came into port on that weekend? When did it get in?

Beauchamp: December?

Marcello: On that weekend of December 7. When did it get in? Do you recall?

Beauchamp: I don't know how long we'd been in port, but I'd had some liberties.

Marcello: And where were you tied up?

Beauchamp: Fox, they called it. It was a concrete place to tie your lines on and cables. I don't know what number it was, but it was on Ford Island. It was on the edge of Ford Island.

Marcello: But it was one of the Fox piers?

Beauchamp: Yes.

Marcello: As I recall from my research, the Tennessee was inboard of the West Virginia?

Beauchamp: Right. And they've sold models in Denton and around this

area of every ship but the Tennessee in past years, and never have I found anywhere a model of the Battleship Tennessee. And I'd liked to have had one because my boy is always putting models together.

Marcello: I guess when all those battleships were in at one time, it was a rather impressive sight, was it not?

Beauchamp: Yes, it was eight or nine lined up there. The Arizona was at the rear of them all, and the Tennessee was directly in front of the Arizona, and the West Virginia was outboard. And was it the California or the Maryland in front of us? And the Oklahoma was outboard of them. And then on up the line.

Marcello: How usual or unusual was it for all the battleships to be in at one time like they were on that weekend?

Beauchamp: Well, I would just have to guess. I suppose they'd done it before, but I really don't know. That was the ideal place for them to tie up in that shallow-water port. See, it wasn't very far to the bottom. They didn't have very far to sink, or those battlewagons wouldn't never have been of use any more.

Marcello: So what you're saying, in effect, is that it was not unusual for all the battleships to be in on a weekend?

Beauchamp: Well, I don't think it was, but like I say, I wasn't very alert to the world situation, and I wasn't very concerned. We just never dreamed war would be possible,

you know. It's always something that happens somewhere else, you know. It'd been so long since there was a war that you just heard of it happening, you know.

Marcello: Did anybody aboard the ship ever talk about the possibility of a Japanese attack--in your bull sessions or whenever you got together and talked?

Beauchamp: I don't remember a word about it. All the war that I seemed to think about was in England and Germany.

Marcello: Did you have any liberty that weekend?

Beauchamp: No, for about a week I'd been in the sickbay. That was forward, almost up to the bow. There was still some portholes. At that time, the first deck had portholes on it, with steel on the inside covers and glass covers, too. I broke out about a week before with a rash, a red rash--just solid--and they couldn't figure out what it was. They called a doctor from the island over there because they thought it might really have been some Chinese "crud." But you know, they jokingly call it the "cat fever" (laughter). They felt I hadn't been ashore often enough.

Marcello: In other words, they at first thought you had some sort of venereal disease or what?

Beauchamp: Oh, no, "cat fever" is a longing for the house of prostitution.

Marcello: I see.

Beauchamp: You probably hadn't heard the terminology "cat fever" before?

Marcello: No, I hadn't. So you were in sickbay then . . .

- Beauchamp: They called them "cat houses," you know, the houses of prostitution.
- Marcello: So you were in sickbay, then, on that weekend of December 7.
- Beauchamp: Yes, but I wasn't sick. I was just broke out. I'll do that now. When I have a fever or I have an incision in my body or the flu or any kind of infection in my body, anywhere, I'll break out solid red all over.
- Marcello: Were you confined to the bed while you were in sickbay?
- Beauchamp: I was supposed to have been. I was confined to the sickbay, yes. I was confined to the sickbay.
- Marcello: Okay, this brings us into that evening of December 6, 1941, which would be a Saturday. What did you do that Saturday night? Do you recall? Even if you were in sickbay, do you recall if you did anything in particular? Do you recall what you read or anything like that?
- Beauchamp: Well, I had to read. You'd go nuts if you didn't read. But what I read, I don't have no idea.
- Marcello: Was there anything unusual that happened that evening?
- Beauchamp: Not a thing. I don't know if the chaplain came around or not. He probably came around some time during the day--Presbyterian chaplain, good ol' boy.
- Marcello: Generally speaking, on a weekend, how serious a problem would drinking be, and drunkenness, aboard the Tennessee? Again, I'm referring to that period before Pearl Harbor.

All my questions have to do with before Pearl Harbor.

Beauchamp: You said aboard the Tennessee? Drinking aboard or drinking ashore?

Marcello: Well, drinking ashore and coming back aboard the Tennessee.

Beauchamp: Oh, they might still throw up a little bit after they got back. Usually, going over those waves in the harbor, by the time they got back to the ship, they'd done have the bottom of the boat covered with vomit. You'd be ankle-deep in vomit. That's a little exaggeration there, but you'd sure have it on you whether you're drinking or not. They was usually rid of the vomit by the time they got to the ship.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us into that Sunday morning of December 7, 1941, and, again, what I want you to do is describe your activities from the time you got up until all hell broke loose. I'll let you pick up the story on December 7.

Beauchamp: Well, when you're in the sickbay and confined to the bed, you don't get up. I was laying there, the best I remember, about 8:30, and I felt my ship go up and down in the water.

Marcello: Would you have been in your skivvy shorts?

Beauchamp: No, they had long pajamas.

Marcello: They had a hospital robe for you or something?

Beauchamp: Yes, hospital pajamas, you know, thin, summer, tropical

pajamas. I felt my ship go up and down and some deep "booms," and, of course, I wondered what it was. And I laid there a little bit, and something real interesting happened. I don't know if the other guys have told you or not, but a guy tried to blow General Quarters. You know, there's a certain . . . they had bugle calls for every activity, and General Quarters was for battle stations. He tried to blow it. He'd been topside. See, the buglers had been with the boatswain's mates or somebody up there where they could see if it's for real. The torpedoes had done begin to hit the West Virginia beside us, and he couldn't blow General Quarters on the bugle. He just "boo-booed"; I mean, he just blurred every kind of a sound but the right sound. And somebody must have jerked it out of his hand, and they hollered out something and said, "This is not a drill!"

Marcello: This is all coming over the public address system?

Beauchamp: Yes. "This is not a drill," and they piped it. "This is not a drill!" Then they piped it on the boatswain's pipe, you know.

Marcello: What was your reaction at that point?

Beauchamp: Well, I went and looked out the open porthole, and I saw a guy jump or blown off the West Virginia, and smoke, and guys were running. Guys started running on our own ship, then, when General Quarters sounded.

Marcello: What did you personally do?

Beauchamp: Well, after I looked out the porthole, I took off for my battle station in my pajamas. I stayed in my pajamas a day or two. We stayed down there until after the attack was over, until after the enemy forces had got away.

Marcello: How far were you from your battle station when you were in sickbay?

Beauchamp: Oh, it was down in the bottom compartment.

Marcello: Now where was the sickbay?

Beauchamp: Well, the sickbay was on the first deck, I believe, and then you go down, down below the third, I believe. It's an empty protective compartment for ballast, water control, fire control, you know, and there's doors between compartments.

Marcello: So you had to go down several decks in order to get to your battle station?

Beauchamp: That wasn't no problem getting there.

Marcello: Describe getting from sickbay to your battle station. How did you proceed?

Beauchamp: I don't remember a bit of it. I just remember getting down there, and the chief petty officer and all of us started talking: "Is this real? Can it really be a war?"

Marcello: Now in your battle station, what sort of view did you have of what was going on outside, or couldn't you see anything that was happening?

- Beauchamp: I couldn't see a thing. We'd get little messages on the telephone, you know, through one man.
- Marcello: Awhile ago you mentioned that you looked out the porthole there in the sickbay, and you saw some of the damage being done aboard the West Virginia. Describe what you saw during that short period of time.
- Beauchamp: Well, the two ships were going up and down in the water, the man was blown off of the side of it, and explosions, just a little smoke.
- Marcello: Did you catch a glimpse of any of the Japanese planes, or didn't you see any?
- Beauchamp: No. There wasn't enough view there.
- Marcello: When you got to your battle station, what did you and the rest of the people there talk about?
- Beauchamp: Whether it was really a war or whether they was pulling a surprise drill on us--dropping sandbags. We still couldn't believe it.
- Marcello: This was the opinion of the chief petty officer, also, that was there?
- Beauchamp: No, we just discussed it. I don't remember whether he entered into it or not.
- Marcello: What kind of thoughts were going through your mind?
- Beauchamp: Well, it began to get a little scary, wondering if it was a real war, because we'd all read stories about the infantry fighters in World War I, and artillery, you know,

but we still wasn't aware . . . we didn't know . . . we knew that we could all be sunk, you know.

Marcello: Now did you remain at that battle station all during the attack?

Beauchamp: Yes, but the fire burned, see, a day or two on the Arizona, and there was the clean-up of the burnt bodies up above where the open guns were--20-millimeters and antiaircraft guns. They jerked out the boatswains and the others that were on duty up there, got out the arsenal, all the machine guns, and they was shooting everything they could at them low-flying planes.

Marcello: Okay. So, you're down at your battle station, and you really can't see what's going on. This must be a rather uncomfortable situation, especially since you're several decks down.

Beauchamp: Yes, as we got a second-by-second description of it, I don't know if it helped us or scared us. It's not a good feeling.

Marcello: Now I do know that at one stage a converted 16-inch shell crashed down on the number two turret a few feet forward. Do you recall when that converted 16-inch shell hit the Tennessee. In other words, what the Japanese did was that they converted artillery shells into bombs, and one of them did hit the Tennessee around the number two turret. Do you recall that?

Beauchamp: Forward turret?

Marcello: Yes.

Beauchamp: No, I don't recall it.

Marcello: I was wondering if you could detect any sort of a shock or anything of that nature when it hit?

Beauchamp: It must not have went off. It must not have went off, did it?

Marcello: Well, evidently it did. It crashed down and . . .

Beauchamp: There was two or three bombs that hit. I don't know just where they hit.

Marcello: Okay, so you're down below decks all this time, and you can hear things, but you really can't see anything. How much time did it seem like--to you at the time--had actually elapsed during that time? Did it seem like you were down there an eternity?

Beauchamp: Oh, I don't know. The best I remember, it seems like that after thirty minutes, things kind of eased off. I don't know whether they was still coming in or not.

Marcello: But how long did it seem like you'd been down there?

Beauchamp: Well, I don't remember of it being long or short.

Marcello: Okay, so what happened when the raid was over? What was your function at that point when the attack was over?

Beauchamp: Well, we wasn't released from battle stations immediately until they were sure that the enemy was out of range. But I came up to the topside, and I wasn't doing anything right

at first. I just came up to see, and they were fighting the fires on the Arizona behind us. It got hit, you know. A bomb went down the smokestack and blew up. I know that after the fires were out, there was bodies burned, and pieces were wrapped up in blankets. We'd carry them down to a certain place.

Marcello: What kind of assignments did you have after you got back out on deck again? In the aftermath of the attack, what did you do? What was your assignment?

Beauchamp: Well, all the damage was done topside and to the other ships, mostly. So it was just clean-up above deck and firefighting over at the other ships and wondering if the guys . . . the West Virginia had turned over on its side, and its bottom was sticking up there right beside us. We knew there was lots of guys in there.

Marcello: Did you participate in any of the salvage or rescue operations over aboard the West Virginia?

Beauchamp: No.

Marcello: Describe what the scene looked like when you came up on deck.

Beauchamp: Well, there was a lot of smoke, oil, and the Arizona's oil' tripod mast was sticking out of the water. It was built before World War I, but these other five "wagons" were built after World War I. So even though they were eighteen years old, they were modern Navy then. The

Arizona was sunk, but it didn't have very far to sink. So most of the gun turrets and stuff was above water. The guys were killed in the fire and shrapnel and the wood splinters. They just had to clean them up, carry them off.

Marcello: So you were just doing general clean-up and so on aboard the Tennessee?

Beauchamp: Yes.

Marcello: How much damage had been done aboard the Tennessee?

Beauchamp: Well, I don't even recall from personal memory, myself. According to the records, there was two or three bombs that hit it, and it was the West Virginia that jammed it up against these Fox pier tie-ups, you know, and some of them had to be dynamited to get us loose to where they could tow us out. The Tennessee and the California went back to Seattle right quick, you know. I think it was two weeks before we got out--two weeks, I believe. If I'm not mistaken, it was two weeks before they could dynamite them piers and clear the way for . . . I believe it was the California in front of us, maybe. We came back to Seattle, and to take care of those torpedoes that hit in the side of the huge "wagons," they built some blisters along the sides, steel blisters, about as wide as from that corner here to the patio door--steel compartments.

Marcello: In other words about eight feet?

Beauchamp: Probably. They were along the side, which, the torpedo exploded when it hit that instead of going on into the guts.

Marcello: And this was done back in Seattle when you went back there?

Beauchamp: Bremerton.

Marcello: In Bremerton.

Beauchamp: Navy yard down at Puget Sound.

Marcello: Now that evening of December 7, what did you do? Do you recall what sort of activities you were engaged in that evening of December 7?

Beauchamp: Oh, how long I was at my battle station, I don't know. Whether they kept us overnight or whether we came out that day, I just don't remember.

Marcello: Well, awhile ago you . . .

Beauchamp: They were always expecting the possibility that if the Japanese could do that, well, where are they? They may be all over us. So I don't think we got relief from our battle stations too quick now. I don't know. I may be wrong.

Marcello: Well, awhile ago you mentioned that you were engaged in general clean-up and perhaps some firefighting and so on. Was this done while it was still daylight yet, or was this done in the evening?

Beauchamp: It was daylight when I did that, yes, so it may have been

that evening, you know, when they finally let us out.

I really can't recall right now.

Marcello: Was everybody kind of jittery that evening?

Beauchamp: Well, they had faced the fact that it was a real war and not just a drill.

Marcello: What were some of the rumors that you heard that evening?

Beauchamp: I don't remember any rumors I'd heard unless you could jog my memory up on what somebody else heard.

Marcello: Had you heard the rumor that the Japanese had landed?

Beauchamp: Oh, they had discussed that. It had been scuttlebutt that went around, you know, that the Army had taken on . . . but I don't know. You're liable to hear anything--scuttlebutt.

Marcello: Do you recall the planes off the carrier Enterprise that came in that evening and were fired upon?

Beauchamp: Oh, about half of them, but I don't know . . . you know, I might not have heard it, and I might have. I wouldn't have remembered it if I'd of heard it, you see. But, I mean, it was spooky because the guys were firing with little hand weapons at the planes, and it's no fun when you see chunks of meat and bodies torn apart. You know, I mean, you'll get spooky.

Marcello: That evening, could you still hear sporadic gunfire ashore and so on--the firing of guns by jittery servicemen?

Beauchamp: I just don't know.

- Marcello: You mentioned that it was about two weeks before the Tennessee got out of Pearl Harbor. What did you do during that two-week period?
- Beauchamp: Oh, I probably, after the first day or two, just continued on with our work. It wasn't enough extensive damage done to us. We were helping the other ships. We'd have work parties, you know, but maybe I was in some of them and maybe I wasn't all that time, you see. I just don't recall what all went on.
- Marcello: In the aftermath of the attack, what was the attitude or the emotions and the feelings of you and your shipmates? What kind of an attitude did you have toward the Japanese, for example?
- Beauchamp: They ought to all be shot--women, children, babies, all of them--cut their heads off. I don't feel that way now. We didn't have as big a perspective then as we do now.
- Marcello: To this day, that is, on October 8, 1980, what significance does Pearl Harbor have to you? What does it mean to you?
- Beauchamp: What date did you mention?
- Marcello: Well, today, October 8, 1980.
- Beauchamp: Oh, it was just one of those necessary things in the chess game, and I'd participate again. Yes, sir, it don't bother me. Let the big boys figure out the problems.
- Marcello: Okay, well, I think that's probably a good place to end this interview, Mr. Beauchamp. I want to thank you very

much for having participated.

Beauchamp: There's a lot of things that could have been brought out and could have been said, but that's enough, you know-- lots of interesting things.

Marcello: Well, is there anything else that you would like to bring out that we haven't talked about?

Beauchamp: I couldn't break in doing a discussion on some things because I wanted it to continue in the order that you had it planned, you know; I mean, I've forgotten some different things. There were seven or eight times I wanted to speak up, you know, but couldn't. If you think its a good enough interview, I mean . . . were you trying to relate the attack on Pearl Harbor to something more than just a slick maneuver by the Japanese and a surprise attack. Were you trying to say more than that?

Marcello: No.

Beauchamp: By questioning me?

Marcello: No, I . . .

Beuachamp: Some people try to read more into it than a surprise attack and a slick maneuver by the Japs.

Marcello: Were there any funny things that happened during the attack?

Beauchamp: No, not to me. I mean, I went to battle stations in my pajamas. I didn't want to wait around for the bombs to crash through that first deck when I could be down lower.

Marcello: Okay, well, again, I think that's probably a good place

to end this interview. I want to thank you very much for having participated.

Beauchamp: Thank you. You're welcome.