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Robert Greenwood
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Place of Interview: El Paso, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Oral History Collection

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Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Robert Greenwood for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on July 7, 1974, in El Paso, Texas. I am interviewing Mr. Greenwood in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was at Hickam Field on December 7, 1941, when the Japanese attacked there. Actually, Mr. Greenwood was stationed at Fort DeRussy, but so happened to be at Hickam Field when the attack occurred.

Now Mr. Greenwood, to begin this interview, would you 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. Just be very brief and general.

Mr. Greenwood: Okay, I was born in Brooklyn, New York, on August 2, 1921. I entered the Fleet Marine Corps Reserve in April, 1939, got an interservice

transfer, went to the Army on September 7, 1939, and left--I believe it was in October or the beginning of November of 1939--to go to Hawaii.

Marcello: Why did you decide to enter the service in the first place?

Greenwood: Well, things were pretty rough, and I only had nine months of high school. It was a rough time to be brought up, and I wanted to do something and do some traveling and get away from the jungle.

Marcello: Economics is a reason given by a great many men for entering the service during that period. Of course, we were still in the midst of depression, and, like you mentioned, jobs were hard to come by. How come you decided upon the Army?

Greenwood: Well, because I had a cousin in Hawaii in the Army, and I wanted to get to Hawaii.

Marcello: Did you have your choice of being stationed there when you enlisted?

Greenwood: Right, but the only way I could get there was that I had to go into the Medical Corps. There wasn't any openings in the Artillery. I wanted to go into the Coast Artillery, but there wasn't any openings. I had to go into the Medical Corps.

Marcello: Where did you take your basic training?

Greenwood: Oh, I took a basic . . . they had two types of basics. They had the soldier basic which was just the basic rudiments of how to stand at attention and do left face and right face and how to do some various marching procedures. That was at Fort Slocum. It was on an island out of New Rochelle, New York. And leaving there, I went down through the Panama Canal-- it was a long trip--and then through Oakland and through Fort McDowell and from there to Hawaii.

Marcello: When did you arrive there in the Hawaiian Islands?

Greenwood: I believe the 13th of December, 1939, and I was then assigned to the 11th Medical Regiment, and there I took basic training as a medic.

Marcello: Where was this particular unit located--at Schofield Barracks?

Greenwood: Schofield Barracks, right. After taking training there--I stayed there awhile--and then I went down to the DMD, which is a medical detachment. . . Detachment Medical Detachment, for Hickam Field.

Marcello: It's called Detachment Medical Detachment?

Greenwood: Right. DMD, Detachment Medical Detachment, is what it was. And being stationed there, I was working

as an aid man under the flight surgeon. Hickam Field had just been moved over from old Ford Island--old Luke Field--and they had moved that over as the beginning of Hickam Field. We had nothing but tents. We had semi-frames with tents and screens. There weren't any permanent buildings there except for the hangars that they had built. I believe there was the 19th Bomb Group, and I began as a Pfc and a sixth class specialist, and finally I got an opening down at Fort DeRussy with A Battery, 16th Coast Artillery.

Marcello: In other words, you finally did get your transfer from the medics into the Coast Artillery.

Greenwood: Right.

Marcello: Why did you want to get in the Coast Artillery?

Greenwood: Well, I like weapons. I like weapons. I always had a good eye and a good knack and a good understanding of weapons and weaponry and soldiering more so than I did . . . I mean, I had an ability as a medic, too, but I felt that it was kind of slow. I wanted to do something a little bit more active as far as being a soldier is concerned.

Marcello: Describe what Fort DeRussy looked like from a physical standpoint. I gather it was not a very big installation.

Greenwood: Fort DeRussy was off of Kalakala Avenue, which is right along Waikiki, where you have the Moana Hotel, the Royal Hawaiian Hotel there. DeRussy was between Kalakala and the ocean.

Marcello: In other words, you were virtually stationed in Honolulu.

Greenwood: Oh, yes, I was "Waikiki Willie," you know? And we had A Battery, 16th Coast Artillery, and you had combat training of the 55th Coast Artillery, and then we had D Battery of the 16th Coast Artillery, which was a searchlight battery. And you had quarters there for General Short, who had quarters at Fort DeRussy--beautiful post. I remember him pretty well because he reminded me of William C. Fields.

But I was in the Coast Artillery. One of the first jobs I had when I got down . . . when I left Hickam Field and changing the branch of service, I had to go as a private. So I had to start all over again. And that's the way it was. Your rank was in units in those days.

Marcello: How would you describe the training that you received here at Fort DeRussy? Was it thorough training?

Greenwood: Oh, absolutely because after getting in there, I had to take what they called . . . like an artillery-type

basic. They give you a basic in the branch each time so that you know how to get along in your own branch of service with outstanding and professional soldiers. I mean, it was people. . .the educational level of the services at that time was probably around a fourth to fifth grade educational background. So it happened that with about a little over eight and a half years of schooling, I was in pretty good shape.

And in the Coast Artillery. . .in the Coast Artillery at that time was the highest branch within the service, within the Army. You had to have an ability with math and trigonometry particularly in dealing with artillery firing and weaponry.

But the people that I met there. . . the old corporal who was. . . in those days your ranking buck sergeant was the field first, and you didn't have a staff sergeant in the unit, and your first sergeant was a "tech" with a diamond, which is a five-striper with a diamond in the middle, and if the man was the ranking buck sergeant and the first sergeant left there, well, normally, the ranking buck sergeant will become the first sergeant. So he would get a two-stripe promotion.

Due to the fact that the economy was tight and you didn't have the money to spend on promotions as . . . just like the officer corps was so slow. I mean, a man being in the Army eight or twelve years might only be a lieutenant, and the captain might have twenty years' service or more. Not that they were unqualified. They had been to the command staff schools and so forth, and they were experts.

But the leadership in the services in those days was not so much officer-oriented. The NCO was the backbone, and the officer was strictly the leader who set the scene, and the NCO's would do the job.

I was very proud, even though there wasn't any money in those days in the service. I was very proud to be a member in Hawaii at that time in the United States Army because I felt that the integrity and the honesty and the morality and the dedication of those people at that time there was never any higher than anytime in the history of this country.

I love my country, and I've studied history. I was always interested in people like Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Payne, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln. I mean, those more so than any other because

they had, I felt, more to offer. Being a flag-waver, I had my ideals of what my country meant to me. If there was a better place as the years went by, I would have been there, but I haven't found a replacement with all our complaints.

Marcello: What you're saying in effect, then, is that the morale in that peacetime Army prior to Pearl Harbor was very, very high.

Greenwood: Absolutely.

Marcello: How would you account for this? I think in part you've at least talked about it, but maybe we can draw things together here.

Greenwood: Well, I appreciate you asking this particular question because this is something that the services need to know today, and apparently they're not getting the information from the right sources as far as I'm concerned. At that particular time it was dedication. It was hard. You didn't get babied. You didn't have any Military Police Corps, so to speak. You were assigned to Military Police duty, but there was no branch of Military Police. There were no corps of military policemen. These were people out of different branches that would have to spend so much time in that as an assigned duty for

a period of time with TDY and so forth. And at that time, like I say, the people that came into the service, even though they lacked education, they got the education. They didn't have enough money to go out every night for "number one," so you had to spend time in your unit. So we'd pull out a TM (training manual) and a FM (field manual), and sit around and ask questions to one another because you wanted to be sharp. You were proud even though you were maybe a private for a year or two.

You just wouldn't get a promotion to fill that slot until somebody died or transferred or went home. And the dedication of those people . . . say a corporal had been in the Army fifteen-twenty years. I mean, he could tell you how many threads to the inch of a bolt, and by firing one round through the rifling of an artillery piece . . . I mean, what would be the wear. I mean, this was nothing but pure experience and knowledge gained by dedication. I mean, dedication was the thing.

Today we feel that we have to pay people. We have to offer them everything. We have to give them what they want. Now when I came in the service, I mean, it was tough. They didn't baby you. If they

told you to pick up something and you gave the sergeant static, they put a foot in your butt and you took it . . . in other words, you asked to go in the Army. In other words, you have a contract now. It's up to you to live up to it, see? Now today, I mean, you have a contract, and you don't have to live up to it if you don't want to.

In other words, in those days courts martial were a rarity. We didn't have courts martial. When you got court martialed, you went to the rock pile because you were guilty, and they didn't fool with you unless you were guilty. And if you were a good NCO, for instance, and you went downtown and had a little scuffle with somebody and broke a plate glass window, okay, they may bust you, but maybe three months later you were shaped up again. Okay, they promoted you right back up to your original rank just because, say, you were a corporal. If you had fifteen years in the service, and you got drunk downtown one night, and somebody gave you some static, and you had a battle royal, you didn't come back and start out as a private. You know what I mean? Because you had fifteen years of experience. You can't take a man and say to him, "These are the rules today, and

we're going to change them tomorrow." This is what has happened today. In those days the regulations were so set that there were very, very few changes, and you accepted those things. And you held up your hand and took your oath of allegiance to the United States. This was part of your contract. You had a contract with the government.

Marcello: I assume from what you have said that you received a great deal of on-the-job training there in addition to a certain amount of book learning, I suppose we could call it.

Greenwood: Right.

Marcello: Did you get the feeling that the NCO's and the old hands there were quite willing to take the time to teach you all the basics?

Greenwood: If you showed the interest. This was the whole key. There were professional privates. There were fellows that had been in the Army fifteen or twenty years. I can remember there were guys there from World War I. One guy in particular Pfc Fagen, and he had been up and down as first sergeant, private, yardbird, and know what I mean? Up and down over the years. He had a drinking problem. He'd give you twenty-seven days out of the month of outstanding soldiering,

and then he'd go off on a three-day lost weekend, so to speak, and that would be that.

But the dedication that these people had . . . in other words, if you were willing to listen . . . if you were willing to learn . . . in other words, when they called your name out for detail, if you shuffled your feet, well, then you got more details. See, they remembered you. If they gave you a detail to go down and cut algarroba bushes which have big thorns on them, three or three and a half inches long, and you shuffled your feet, you would have another detail the next afternoon. But you got to the point where you said, "Right, Sergeant!" and you moved out or "Right, Corporal!" and you moved out and you took that job, and you really hustled at it.

In other words, the good soldiers were in good standing. So then, after a period of time, they got to know that this was a good man. They they started picking on the shufflers, you see, and they'd work on them until the guy realized, "Now I'd better do what I'm told when I'm told to do it, and with a smile on my face. Not 'to hell with you, Sargent', but I'm going to do it." It was, "Yes, Sergeant, I'm

doing it." You know what I mean? "I'm moving out." This is the thing. It was a matter of telling a guy, "If you do this, I'm going to promote you." Hell, there was no promotion in those days. It was very tight, like I said before.

But you got a satisfaction of knowing. You used to do all of your gun drills and training in the morning primarily. In the afternoon you had details and so forth. If you weren't put on a detail such as garbage detail or trash detail or policing up the post or re-building things or painting, or so forth, then you could be off down the beach or using the facilities or swimming or athletics, or sports.

We had a good sports program. That's another thing we had--outstanding sports program. You had a lot of inter-unit sports--baseball, softball, or boxing. We had some of the best boxers in the world, I believe, at that time. It was people like Gunna Lowenstein up at Schofield, who was named by Max Baer to be the next heavyweight champion. And, oh, we had a great many good fighters over there. People that were there even before that were outstanding fighters. Fighters who were nothing but welterweights would fight heavyweights. Tanker

White was out of the tank unit up there out of Schofield a year before that. But they produced a lot of good fighters. They had a lot of good ones. We had a fellow in my battery--A Battery, 16th Coast Artillery--named Frankie Valerino, who, at one time, was supposed to fight _____ for the title, and he joined the service to break the contract because the manager was going to be making all the money.

So we had good people, and you get a lot of learning, and when you were told to do something . . . it was codes that you had. For instance, you didn't steal in those days. See the difference today? We have the greatest, most educated service in the world. Our people in the service today have an average, let's say, of one year in college, and yet we've got thieves. We've got people that are your friends that you're supposedly going into combat with and lay your life on the line for and have confidence in, and yet they'll steal from you, you see. Now we didn't have that. We used to have crap games, and if a guy'd bring us some loaded dice, the NCO's would take a walk and they'd put him in a bull circle, work him over, bounce him around a little bit. He got to realize that he wasn't going to do that anymore.

Marcello: Now during this period prior to Pearl Harbor, did you give very much thought to the possibility of war with the Japanese, or were most eyes still turned toward Europe at this time?

Greenwood: No. Well, I mean, that's one of the reasons I joined. You asked me awhile ago why I had come into the service. Well, I had seen the activities of Hitler. And being brought up and raised in Brooklyn, New York, where Mayor LaGuardia was the mayor and a very good one, a man I would have voted for as assistant to God. He was a dedicated man. He was Italian and Jewish. He had the minority groups, and he was an honest man of the highest integrity, and he would call a shot a shot. He could foresee . . . made many comments on the radio about this--about Hitler the paperhanger and what he was trying to do to destroy people and to take over and fascism and communism and Nazism. It was all the same to me. I mean, at that time, I had fought the communists, and I was fifteen years old in New York--the Young Communist League. So there wasn't any difference between communists, the fascists, or the Nazis. They were all the same to me. In fact, Russia should never have been my ally. They were never my ally.

This is a comment I'm throwing in there now--right now. But all my life they have never been my allies. Not the people, but the political run of the country.

The Russian people are outstanding, very warm-hearted people. The Germans . . . nothing is the matter with them. They're very industrious. The Italians are very fun-loving and happy-go-lucky and hard-working people. They've been used over the years.

But I could see something coming. But the thing that I was concerned with was that I felt that when they put the embargo on Japan . . . in other words, we were looking for trouble. Even though I was young at the time, I had a great interest in the world that I lived in and the world that I was going to be living in, even though I didn't have any money. But it was still my country, and I always felt that it's just as much mine as it is yours, whether you're a millionaire or a billionaire. This is my country because, like I told a general in the Army, and many a colonel, this is my Army. It's no more your Army than it is mine, and if I die you're not going to take up any bigger casket or any more spots in the ground than I am. If I die for my country, your

wife or your mother or your children aren't going to shed any more tears over you than mine is. I'm an equal owner of this country.

Marcello: Did you feel relatively secure at Pearl Harbor even if we were to get into some sort of a conflict with Japan? After all, it was thousands of miles from Japan, and I think most people felt fairly secure there at Pearl, did they not?

Greenwood: Well, we had a well-trained Army. We had a well-trained Navy. Our Navy was second to none as far as I'm concerned.

Marcello: But I think just from the standpoint of distance, you know. If there were a war against Japan, probably the Philippines would get hit and certainly the Dutch East Indies probably. But the Hawaiian Islands were pretty far away from Japan.

Greenwood: Well, no, I wouldn't worry about that because we had a storage of arms and weaponry. We had well-trained people. We lacked--what I feel that we didn't have enough--air support there at the time. They were dragging their feet . . . for a country that was . . . we knew . . . we should have known because I felt that we were sold down the river. I felt that Pearl Harbor was a known fact. The information was available to the United States government of what the

Japanese were trying to do and what they were going to do. And I felt that Roosevelt had been a great President and had done a lot . . . WPA and the CCC got people off the street and got jobs done in the construction of roads and good projects and all of this. But I felt that they were going to use Pearl Harbor to let the Japanese start the war so that we could say. . . prior to that Roosevelt said, "American troops are never going to serve on foreign soil." Well, we did serve on foreign soil, as you know, but we had to get into the war. I felt that probably what happened is that the set-up where we were attacked . . . they did not believe, or he did not believe, that we were going to be hit that bad. In other words, we had our fleet in.

Marcello: Okay, now I know the Hawaiian Islands have a relatively large population of Japanese ancestry. Did the people at Fort DeRussy ever worry much about the possibility of these people committing sabotage or acting as fifth columnists or anything of this nature?

Greenwood: Yes, this was something that I feel that . . . see this . . . calling a shot after the ball game is the easiest thing in the world, right? But naturally, in the Hawaiian Islands you have all the Orientals there. In fact, you have Portuguese and White Russians,

Filipinos, Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, Southeast Asians--everything in the world. It was a melting pot, and the people that lived there, they brought different cultures with them. And being an American, blue-eyed, you know, Presbyterian or so forth, you felt, well, maybe, you know, they'll turn against us. So there was always a doubt of that fact, but as things progressed we found that the people were dedicated, and they were grateful for the opportunity that they had when they came to Hawaii and what they could do because it's the most truly . . . at that time prejudice was something that was nothing. You could walk down the street with a four-headed woman and each have a different color head on them, and nobody would turn around and give you a second glance. There just wasn't any prejudice in these people.

I loved the people, and I got along with them. I met the people, and this is the difference, you see. Being a serviceman, I think, is the greatest asset the United States Government has to represent this country. He meets the people. He doesn't just meet the big wheels or the people that are appointed as an ambassador because he donated so much money to a certain cause or to a certain party. You're meeting

the people down at the level where the people work. In other words, when you give money to a country, and you're talking to John Doe down here and John Doe isn't getting any of it, you know damn well that something's going on upstairs. Supposedly, you're giving it down here to John Doe, but he never gets it. So therefore, I mean, the military man who travels the world and meets the people--I feel it can be a great asset to us. So in other words, in recruiting people for the armed services, we should be very careful. We shouldn't take people, let's say . . . the judge says, "Well, if you go in the Army, I won't put you in jail." No, no. We don't want those kind of people. I say they shouldn't be in there. Give me a man who's got integrity and honesty, and I can train him and teach him a job. But give me a man that is immoral, has no set of ideals, has no scruples, and even if he has all the trains in the world, I don't want that bum next to me or around me in a combat zone.

Marcello: What sort of steps were taken here at Fort DeRussy to guard against the possibility of sabotage?

Greenwood: Well, one of the things . . . there were water pumping stations and so forth which processed water and purified water, and those were under guard.

Having pulled that type of guard duty, I was aware of what could be done if you were to poison the water or to put a type of germ or bacteria into the water system. You could poison the population and put them out of action.

You see, I always kept reading about chemical warfare or getting into biological warfare. I always thought . . . I was a free thinker. What would I do? How could you knock out a place like this? I put myself in the other point of view or from the other side of the fence--what I would try to do. In other words, if you shut the people off where they couldn't eat, couldn't supply food, you couldn't exist. You couldn't be resupplied, and you're going to die off. You'd have to surrender, even if you had weapons. You couldn't eat artillery rounds, and you can't eat your weapons. Like they said in those days, the Army travels on its stomach. You had to be able to eat to perform.

And I felt that we were pretty strong. We had a pretty good stock. We ate eggs that came from . . . were stored in storage from World War I. Many a time I broke open an egg, and there'd be an old feather or something . . . nothing in the egg.

They were cold storage eggs. But we had a lot of good food. We ate good. Our cooks were dedicated. If they didn't serve the food right, they'd be thrown out of the mess hall by the mess sergeant. You were served with dignity, and you sat down at the table with dignity. You didn't come in with grease and stuff all over you. You were clean when you came in there, and you sat down at your own table. You had your place to sit. At each table your squad leader sat, and at the other end of your table sat the assistant squad leader. When you made buck sergeant . . . I went up to buck sergeant in this organization, and I sat at the sergeant's table.

There was a reason for a man wanting to become promoted. Well, why should I get promoted? I could say a guy was a good gambler. He could make more money shooting craps, like I did. I made more money shooting craps than I did from my pay, you see. But the idea is I wanted to be a corporal because I had more dignity. See, this is the difference today. You make a man a non-commissioned officer, and then you tell him to go out and pick up stones. You tell him to go and pick up garbage. When you made corporal in that Army, you didn't pick up nothing. The only

thing you used your finger for was to point. Today we have too many chiefs and not enough Indians. So therefore, I mean, you get to be a sergeant, and then when he tells you to do this detail that is below the dignity of your . . . that's what's wrong with the service. They now make E-8's and E-9's. You could make E-15 and you're defeating the purpose because in those days the regulations stated that a corporal, as a noncommissioned officer, has the authority to settle all quarrels and frays among members of the military establishment. That's the authority that man had as a corporal, see. And later on, you start . . . well, the corporal's going to do this. He's going to do this and he's going to do . . . the sergeant's going to do this and the other sergeant's going to do this, and pretty soon they're all out there as just a bunch of overpaid privates. Then we worry about why we can't have a professional Army!

Marcello: As we get closer and closer to Pearl Harbor, how did the intensity of your training change? Or how did your routine change as relations between the United States and Japan grew steadily worse? Did you notice any differences in your training? Were there more alerts and maneuvers and things of this nature?

Greenwood: Yes, there were more alerts. There was more emphasis on . . . if you're going someplace, you know, let somebody here know where you're going to be so we can give you a call in case something comes up. In case something comes up, soon as you can, get here in the shortest possible time and the shortest possible route that you can take to get back because we need you. On the other hand, they always trained in Hawaii . . . like if you were on a gun crew. Like fourteen-inch . . . we had fourteen-inch disappearing rifles. For instance, you didn't have to know one job. You had to know about every job on the gun crew. You had to know so that in case this guy got knocked out, you might have to take his job. So we used to practice this, and you'd have to be doing two or three jobs.

Marcello: Well, did this sort of training increase as one gets closer to Pearl Harbor?

Greenwood: Well, I would say yes. I would say yes.

Marcello: What was social life like for a young soldier stationed close to Honolulu in those days? What did you do so far as social life was concerned?

Greenwood: Well, I spent a lot of time on the beach. I wasn't a drinker. I mean, I would take a drink just once

in awhile just to be sociable, but I wasn't a drinker. I was just an athlete. I was interested in boxing and baseball, softball, swimming. I used to work down at Fort DeRussy as a lifeguard. I got a few bucks extra a month for that.

And you've got to remember that . . . what you could do. I mean, you got paid . . . under normal circumstances, if the private had any sense--and he'd better have it--he got X number of dollars, usually around \$19.75. You gave ten cents a month to the Red Cross and twenty-five or fifty cents a month to the Old Soldier's Home. Then you had the quartermaster laundry. So I think you drew about \$19.75, somewhere around that.

Out of that you . . . like I had something like twenty-eight sets of tailor-made khakis. You didn't wear that issued stuff. I mean, it wasn't good enough. You were proud to be a soldier, so you spent money on your own uniform to look better and have pride in it because most of the time you'd wear your uniform when you went downtown, or you'd put an aloha short on and a pair of pants. You didn't have to be outstandingly dressed as long as you were neat and clean. And the haircut, you could always tell a GI by his haircut in those dsys. I mean, I

think that some of the . . . that was ridiculous. You'd have a baldheaded colonel, and everybody had to be baldheaded just because he was, you know. I mean, I don't believe in that. I believe that a man has certain dignities. He should be able to have his hair. He should be able to have a mustache. As long as he's neat and clean and trim and looks like a soldier.

He's not out there "expressing his thing," you know. I'm against this "thing" bit. But you're not in the Army to do your "thing." You're in there to do the thing for the government--serve your time, pay your dues, and then that's the end of that. Now you go out in after-duty hours, put your wig on, then go out with ninety pounds of hair if you want.

Marcello: Do you recall when your payday was at that time?

Greenwood: Yes. We were paid the last day of the month, once a month. There were certain things we used to do . . . I mean, I never . . . we didn't run around chasing local girls around. Of course, you used self-control. There was always so much stress put on it. You know, if you went with a girl and she was so old and she said she was so old and she wasn't so, she gets you for statutory rape. You're in the

military, so you were a second class citizen and, man, they put you away and throw the keys away.

So they have legalized prostitution over there. They were all registered, and they all had to take a physical . . . they were checked out three times a week. They were registered with the police department. You didn't get any venereal disease by going to those places because when you went there, even if you just went in to listen to the jukebox, you had to take a prophylactic preventive before you left because there were two bit MP's of Sp's there, and you took one whether you had any intercourse or any sexual relations or not. So you had a VD rate which was practically nil.

Marcello: How often did you usually get liberty during that pre-Pearl Harbor period?

Greenwood: Oh, it was pretty regular, pretty regular.

Marcello: How about your weekend liberty? How did they usually run? In other words, did you usually have every weekend off, or did you have most weekends off?

Greenwood: Unless you were on detail. And a lot of times it depended on if you had any money. I mean, who wants to go downtown if you haven't got any money? You'd be down on the beach, you know what I mean? Usually,

you would tell your buddy where you're going, or somebody there, when you signed out. You had to sign out when you went out.

And for another thing, a pass was a privilege, and anytime you left your organization, you had to have a pass in your possession. You had to sign out, and you had to go before the CQ. If you went out in uniform, your uniform had to be perfect. You had to know the positions of a soldier at attention. You had to describe these things. A pass was a privilege. It wasn't just your right to go out shuffling off and representing the country. You had to represent your country and your organization so . . . the status in those days . . . I mean, you didn't go out that much. There was always enough people there to handle things.

Marcello: Generally speaking, within a month how many weekends would you usually get off?

Greenwood: Well, I have to point out that they used to do things different. When you went to any organization . . . say you pulled a month of KP; then you were done. You didn't pull no more KP. Then you'd pull a month of dining room orderly; then you didn't pull no more of that. Because the only other thing you had to pull was your guard duties or details as they would

come along. Other than that, you wouldn't have KP every so many days because you'd pulled all of your KP for your hitch, and that was the end of that.

Now being transferred from Schofield, I did my KP there, and then I did my KP and so forth at Hickam Field, and then I had my KP and so forth when I got to DeRussy. So I really was loaded up. You might say I put about five months on my details out of my three years over there prior to the war.

Marcello: Now you mentioned prior to the interview that you were at Hickam Field when the Pearl Harbor attack actually occurred. Were you down there for any particular assignment, or did you just happen to be down there at the time, or did you work between Fort DeRussy and Hickam Field?

Greenwood: No, I was on pass. I was a short-timer, and my time was up to come back.

Marcello: When was your time up?

Greenwood: Well, there had been rumors that there was a ship in, and possible I could leave the eighth or the thirteenth or the twentieth. I don't know, you see, exactly when the ship was in. As a short-timer, you were relieved of duty as far as details and stuff. You didn't have no details. You were a short-timer,

and you were honored for doing your time over there.

I was a short-timer, and I had been on pass downtown in Honolulu, and I wanted to get up to Hickam Field to look up some of my buddies up there-- Victor Verdi--and he was in the medical detachment there--and Kirchner--he's from New York City, and Victor Verdi was from, I think, Buffalo, New York. Those were two good buddies of mine. I had another guy there that was an outstanding weightlifter and an amateur boxer--outstanding little fellow. And there was another fellow named Frakes. These are guys that were buddies of mine.

Marcello: Let's just go back here a minure. Now what I want you to do is to describe in as much detail as you can remember what your routine was on Saturday, December 6, 1941, and then from there we'll move into your routine on Sunday, December 7, 1941. Let's start with Saturday, December 6, 1941, first of all, and give me as much detail as you can remember from your routine on that particular day.

Greenwood: Well, I was off. We had inspection, I believe on Saturday. They had inspections Saturday mornings,

which is just about a SOP (Standard Operating Procedure), and in the afternoon . . . we were off Saturday afternoon. We normally used to get Wednesday afternoons off for what was called jockstrap time. And, again, if you were on good standing you had off, and if you weren't in good standing you'd have details. I had been down to the beach, and then I went out that night and went downtown to Honolulu. I went to the Log, which looked like a log cabin, a bar. I was looking for some buddies of mine.

As it was getting later, I run into . . . I think it was first class petty officer, machinist's mate. He was on the Pennsylvania, and he was from New York City. I can't remember his name. He was an Italian fellow. We got to battling the breeze . . . we was making the rounds. It was getting pretty late, and we'd been up really doing the town. So somewhere around five o'clock in the morning, I guess it was, we decided . . . I was still on pass . . . he was going back to Pearl, so I said, "Okay, I'll go back with you and I'll get off and go to Hickam Field and look up my buddies." So I got up there about 6:30 or so, and I was trying to find a place to sack out. I got myself a bunk of somebody who was out on pass

or leave and sacked out.

Then I heard chow call go, and I said . . . I was kind of hung over, and I said, "Well, . . . " I was hungry, but I didn't want to . . . I was more tired than I was hungry. So finally I decided . . . it was around 7:30. I said, "Well, I'll try to get over there. Maybe I can get a cup of coffee or something."

Marcello: Sunday was generally a day of leusure unless you had the duty, isn't that correct?

Greenwood: Oh, yes. That's right. That was off-time. I was heading for the mess hall when I saw these planes coming over.

Marcello: Were you out in the open?

Greenwood: I was out in the open. I was on my way to the mess hall. I looked up there, and I thought, "This is one of their alerts or one of these maneuver tactics that they're using on us." Looking up in the air and seeing these planes and seeing the circle on them . . . they didn't have our star, but way up in the air you couldn't tell if it was a red spot or a blue spot or anything. It was just a spot, you know, on the wing. Then I heard (sound) swish, ba-boom! I said, "Uh, oh! That jerk! They're supposed to be

dropping dummies!" You know what I mean? I thought, "Boy!" and then I heard a couple more ba-booms, and "Hey, that's the real thing!" So I ran around like a chicken with its head cut off, you know, trying to figure what the hell to do.

Then the planes start. . . they're strafing Hickam Field to try to keep the planes from taking off and bombing there. The other planes were circling and coming in to torpedo-bomb. This was a different type of an airplane. And they were torpedo-bombing into Pearl Harbor. They were strafing and bombing Hickam Field and Fort "Kam," which is connected to Hickam. In fact it was just like cutting a piece of pie, I'll say, about one-third of a pie. . . oh, probably more than that. Pearl Harbor, Hickam Field, and Fort "Kam" were just right close together.

Marcello: This is Fort Kamehameha, right?

Greenwood: Fort Kamehameha, right. And the bombs start falling and, boy, it was. . . I ran so much that when people talk about time--how much time was it, or what time exactly was it--I didn't know exactly what time it was.

Marcello: Would you describe your initial reaction as one of perhaps panic? Perplexity? Fear?

- Greenwood: Shock, fear, panic--all of it--because I was sitting there, and I was an individual with nothing, and guys . . . you know, I mean it was just disorganized. There was a sneak attack, and actually they used our own maneuver tactics when they came over the pass. The way they came in there is exactly the way they had done previously on maneuver tactics--how they come in through Kole Kole Pass and so forth. They were in on top of them before they knew what happened.
- Marcello: So what did you do after you saw the planes, and they were dropping the bombs?
- Greenwood: I wanted to try to fire at them, to shoot at them. I had . . . there were people running around and trying to get the keys to the ammo and get weapons out there.
- Marcello: Did you know your way around Hickam Field fairly well?
- Greenwood: Well, there had been more permanent buildings put up since I had been there, but I knew the north, south, east, west location of what was basically there. I knew they had weapons, and I was trying to get a weapon, and after a period of time we got some weapons out. I understand somebody had to shoot the lock off to get the ammo and get the weapons. It was like

DeRussy or Schofield or any of the units. You had a weapons rack right in your squad bay and the CQ had the keys, so they turned them loose, you know what I mean? Then the only thing you had to get was your ammunition. Hickam was pretty disorganized. They finally got something out there, and people were . . . whatever weapons they could get out.

Marcello: Now was all of this taking place during the first attack? In other words, when were the weapons broken out? Were they broken out during the first wave?

Greenwood: Oh, it was after that.

Marcello: What did you do during this first wave?

Greenwood: There were fires going on. I was trying to put out fires, get anybody I could and pull them out of the way of getting hurt, and trying to keep myself alive at the same time. This is a very . . . as good as you've seen my memory has been on a lot of things, at that particular time it was like your whole life being consolidated into a pea in time. You were just doing so many things. I wasn't scared because I didn't have time to be scared. I mean, originally . . . I mean, by the boom-boom . . . then I got scared. Then the fear went away, and I just started doing everything that I felt that I could do to help and

just kept doing that. Later on, there was a . . . I picked up a weapon, you know. Somebody that had a weapon was knocked out, and I grabbed his weapon and fired.

Marcello: Well, would you say that during the first wave that things were totally disorganized?

Greenwood: Oh, yes, absolutely.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that you were helping to fight fires. I recall that there were some busted water mains that made fire-fighting rather difficult.

Greenwood: Well, by fighting the fire, I meant I was trying to fight it any way I could, you know, with a shirt or try to put it out and get a guy away from something or drag him away from it. I mean, as far as fighting a fire, I had nothing to go around spraying on it. But when I say fighting the fire, the person--the people--are the most important thing. But the short period of time, the amount of damage was that was done was . . . to me was unbelievable to think that we could get ourselves in that position.

I think that the **Kimmel** and Short were scape-goats, and the things that came out later . . . Short was a good general officer. **Kimmel** was a--as far as I've been able to determine from anybody in the

at the time--was an outstanding administrator. He knew his business. But when you send somebody a routine telegram, I mean, in a position of . . . given the world's situation the way it was at that time, it was ridiculous when you had a direct line phone going right to the individual . . . you don't tell a man, "Well, use your discretion, but don't do this, and don't do that."

Marcello: Let's just get back to the attack a little bit, and we won't do too much editorializing at this point because I want to get to what you did during the actual attack itself. Now you mentioned that during the first wave of the attack there was a great deal of disorganization. Then I assume that during the lull between the first wave and the second wave . . .

Greenwood: We're trying to get weapons.

Marcello: You're probably getting your wits about you by this time, and, as you mentioned, weapons were being distributed. I'm sure that you saw all manner of weapons being distributed. Actually, Hickam Field had very little to fight back with, did it?

Greenwood: Right.

Marcello: I mean, there were planes there, but they were bombers, and they sure as hell couldn't have been

much help against those Japanese fighters coming in. Okay, so describe what happened during the second attack. Now I guess you had a weapon by this time.

Greenwood: Well, I got hold of a Springfield '03. I start firing, you know what I mean? I got a cartridge belt off one fellow that had been hit. I got his cartridge belt. I got the '03 off him, and I was just shocked, and I was doing what I could. I mean, the planes would come in, and I'd try to line them up. I remember one time I dove to the ground, and something told me to turn over. When I turned over, right where I'd been laying . . . of course, you don't hear the bullet. You don't hear a round. The round went (sound) ffft-ffft-ffft just right where I was laying. Of course, that went in my mind but none of this really registered until . . . after the attack is when I really got shook. I was a nervous wreck after that because then it all hit me what happened and what things that I had done and how easily I could have been killed.

Marcello: Do you think the fact that a great many people were firing back with rifles and pistols indicates the sense of futility that the people had? In other words, you had to do something.

Greenwood: That's right.

Marcello: Probably . . .

Greenwood: I would have thrown rocks at them, if anything.

Marcello: How low were these planes coming in?

Greenwood: Well, I'd say as low as they could come in. I mean, the ones that were doing the strafing, they'd come in and they'd try to hit ground personnel or hit aircraft and keep the planes from getting up in the air. That's what they were concerned about. I think, if I can remember this, you had bombers, and you had the torpedo bombers, and then you had planes that were like maybe fighter-type planes. There was pursuit-type or fighter-type. They were strafing and what few bombs that they had they'd put out, too, but they were trying to keep the planes on the ground because that would give them more chances in the sky to do the damage that they wanted to do.

Marcello: I understand that since there was so little resistance being put up that these planes appeared to be coming in very, very slowly and were so low that at times you could even see the pilot.

Greenwood: Oh, yes, you could see them. Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, I got a piece of plane which I'd taken home later on. I've still got a piece of metal in my

house, a little piece of one of the Japanese planes that crashed going toward . . . which got hit, which didn't make it. When he come in, he didn't make it up. He crashed just before you were getting to Fort "Kam." I remember there was barbed wire and stuff stored at that end, and I remember that got hit and the barbed wire was flying around, and I got a couple of nicks and scratches and cuts on that barbed wire. I remember hearing it (sound) wooshhh. It was wrapped, you know, under tension. That stuff started spraying all over the place.

I did everything that I could do, and, like you say, you felt, "What can I do?" You know what I mean? Here we are looking at this thing, and here you are watching these planes be destroyed and the fire and the hangars going and the explosions of our own ships and the bombs and then the big explosions going on. You could see all the black smoke where they were making hits over in Pearl Harbor itself. The damage that they had caused down there, I mean, there was just tons and tons of black smoke going up. Just trying . . . all you could do is, like I said . . . I mean, I'd have thrown rocks at them. I would have done anything. I'd have

tried to bite the damn plane or kick it or any damn thing that I could to . . . because, you know, when you're fighting for your life there's nothing that you wouldn't do.

Marcello: As serious as this whole affair was, can you remember any funny things that happened? Usually, inadvertently, in a situation such as this, there is some humorous incident that usually occurs. Can you think of any?

Greenwood: No, no, I can't think of anything funny at that time. I was shook after this had taken place. In fact, I stayed there for several hours assisting people, helping the aid man, helping the guys up, and doing what I could to assist in any manner that could sooner than go back to my organization which I was quite a way off. I didn't feel that I could get a ride back. There was nobody really running around the highways. I felt that I could do more where I was doing at the time than I could back . . . because there wasn't any landing now. I had personally expected a landing.

Marcello: I'm sure that there were all sorts of rumors floating around in the aftermath of that attack.

Greenwood: Oh, yes. I felt that there was going to be a

landing. That afternoon--I'd say it was around lunchtime--I got a ride . . . they were trying to get some food, so they were going down to Ruger, to DeRussy, to Shafter, and to this other place . . . I'm trying to think where they had the quartermaster laundry. I can't think of the name of it right now . . . Fort Armstrong. So they were trying to get down there to get food and stuff because, you know, there was a lot of damage being done there, and those guys were about to get hungry later on. I got a ride back to DeRussy, and then they were setting up and putting barbed wire and getting ready and waiting for the landing.

Marcello: Had DeRussy been hit at all?

Greenwood: No, no, DeRussy hadn't been hit. Possibly some rounds had been sprinkled around. Like a lot of people said that there was enemy fire. Well, firing all of that ack-ack that was going on, and you had shrapnel floating through the air and going all over the place.

But there was futility all over the . . . like you say--to watch something go on and feeling so disorganized and not ready to do anything. When you think that there's an island, and there's all of

that water out there for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of miles, and for the damn island to get and . . . to think that we didn't know that those ships and those carriers were out there, that's absolutely ridiculous!

So I blame that on the higher echelons. I blame that on ~~into~~ Washington. I don't blame that on Kimmel or Short. At the time, maybe, I felt that . . . when it was taking place, "What's the matter with these jerks?" You know what I mean? But as you piece things together after that, what had happened and the way it was laid on in . . . they would say, "Watch your step, but don't get involved." You know what I mean? "Don't make no waves." You know what I mean? Now this is a heck of a way . . . you can't give that type of command to somebody and expect them to do anything with that.

Marcello: I assume that in the aftermath of the attack there were also a lot of trigger-happy GI's around.

Greenwood: Oh, yes. You had to watch out for them because . . . particularly the newer guys over there, they'd shoot at anything, you know. Well, I remember one time shortly after . . . we were still expecting a landing. They had an automatic weapons section, and I had

this 37 millimeter antiaircraft weapon and also with .50 calibers, water cooled and mounted. At DeRussy we had like a sea wall, and then we had a channel that came right by DeRussy which went into the old . . . I think it was Kohala Basin. It had this channel in there because that's how they got the big rifles . . . they were the fourteen-inchers. They had to float that in, so they had to cut through the coral. They had to make a channel to bring them in and send them in to DeRussy. So you had this channel going all the way down to Kohala Basin. A sampan got loose . . . which is like a Japanese fishing boat. Of course, you couldn't see it at night. I had been down there, and I heard this slapping of the water. I knew there was something out there. I could see nothing. I wasn't going to yell out there, or I wasn't going to flash no light out there and give my position away. I was professional enough at that time. So I figured out where the sound was, and I finally decided . . . I opened fire. Later on, we found out it was . . . that was during the darkness. The next morning the sampan was fiddled full of holes out there and was setting up there on the coral.

Marcello: How did your attitude toward the Japanese change as a result of this attack?

Greenwood: Bitter. I was very, very bitter because . . . I mean, that was a sneak attack, you know. It wasn't that Mr. Clean stuff, you know, that they were declaring war. It was walking up to a man in good faith and batting him in the head and saying, "I don't like it." You see, we had always been under the . . . in history we've always said, "Well, we're declaring war. War is declared. You are now our enemy. We are now going to take military action."

And this was a sneak attack as far as the public was concerned. It was a planned attack by the Japanese and the Dragon Society and a few of the militarists. I don't believe that it was Hirohito. I mean, he was a victim of circumstances, I think. This is an opinion of people who wanted to have military action because in my own mind . . . in the long run I had no doubt that we would win.

But to see our fleet go down in the tubes and be locked in and be incapacitated . . . our Navy . . . even though I was in the Army, I had a great, great respect for the Navy and the personnel in the Navy because they were on a ship, and you didn't run down

to the drugstore and say, "I need this." You didn't run over to the machinist and pull into port and say, "I need this." No, you could make it. You had a machinist, by God. You had a draftsman. You had everything that you needed on that ship, and you could build and do anything that you wanted to do right there. They were self-supporting. So they had to be qualified personnel. They were very well-trained, and I admired that. We had an outstanding Navy of dedicated people.

To see politically . . . politically, which is always the case . . . like they call the military complex warmongers. Now a professional soldier doesn't like war because I was a professional soldier. I retired in March of 1961. I never liked war. I don't like to kill. But I know that you've got to be strong to stop somebody from attacking you. To this day . . . I should have brought along . . . I have a little medallion "Remember Pearl Harbor." It has Diamond Head there and a palm tree and the steering mechanism of a ship. On the back it has Fort Kamehameha and Schofield, Hickam Field, Pearl Harbor. You know, "Remember Pearl Harbor." In fact, I have my old original dog tag here, which I lost the other half of it at Pearl Harbor itself. That's my old dog tag.