

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
NUMBER

209

Interview with
Wilford A. Autry
June 26, 1974

Place of Interview: Fort Worth, Texas
Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello
Terms of Use: OPEN
Approved: W. A. Autry
Date: 7-1-74

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Oral History Collection

Wilford A. Autry

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Fort Worth, Texas Date: July 1, 1974

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Wilford A. Autry for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on July 1, 1974, in Fort Worth, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Autry in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was aboard the USS Maryland at Pearl Harbor during the Japanese attack there on December 7, 1941.

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

Mr. Autry: I was born in Austin, Texas, on July 18, 1918, and I was there for a year. From there my parents moved here to Fort Worth. I lived here for the rest of my life for the time, except for the time I was in the service. I finished high school at Northside High School, and from there I went to a technical high

school for two years--really a three-year course. I was out a little while before I was called for service. After I came out of the service, I went to another GI school and completed that, and then I went to on-the-job training, and then from there to where I am now.

Marcello: Where are you working now?

Autry: Lennox Industries, Incorporated.

Marcello: I see.

Autry: They're heating and air conditioning manufacturers.

Marcello: Let's just go back here a minute. When did you enter the service?

Autry: I can't remember the exact date. I think it was February 11, 1941--active duty. I was in the Naval Reserve and was called up.

Marcello: I see. Then were you activated at that time?

Autry: At that date, yes.

Marcello: Why had you decided to enter the reserve in the first place?

Autry: At that time I was very interested in radio and shortwave. I never actually got into it, but that was my start, so I entered the Naval Reserve and was in it for a short while before the call to active duty.

Marcello: I assume that the Reserve was organized in a different way from what it is today. I would assume that at that time you did not go to basic training or anything of that nature.

Autry: No, no. They did have an annual cruise, I think, which they still have, but I didn't get to participate in that. We did have meetings, monthly meetings. At that time I was trained to be a radioman.

Marcello: This brings up an interesting question. How intensive was the training that you received in the Reserves? What I'm getting at is this: at the time that you were in the Reserves, I think it was quite obvious that the country was perhaps moving closer and closer to war, probably in Europe. I think most eyes were turned toward Europe.

Autry: Yes.

Marcello: But nonetheless, what was your training like during that period when you were in the Reserves?

Autry: It (chuckle) . . . I'm afraid to say it was rather minimum. We got the basics on the Morse code, of course. Like I said, at that time it was radio, and we got the basics on radio transmission, which I've forgotten most of. Not too much really (chuckle). There was no military training whatsoever. Only in communications.

Marcello: How adequately were you trained so far as communications were concerned?

Autry: I think fairly well. Of course, I went . . . when I went on duty, I went to the Naval Signal School in Chicago, which was before the war started, of course, and finished their signal school there and was rated then as a signalman third class, not a radioman, but a signalman. Then I went from there to San Diego.

Marcello: Why was it that you were designated or rated as a signalman rather than a radioman?

Autry: I think that the main reason was because there was a shortage of signalmen and plenty of radiomen.

Marcello: You mentioned that after you get out of that school in Illinois, you then were sent to San Diego. Is this where you joined the Fleet?

Autry: Yes. That's where we went for assignment. From there I was assigned to the Maryland.

Marcello: In other words, you did not volunteer for the Maryland or any other duty in that neck of the woods? You were assigned to the Maryland.

Autry: No. You didn't volunteer for anything. Right, you were assigned, yes.

Marcello: How did you feel about being assigned to a battleship?

Autry: I rather looked forward to it. Of course, knowing nothing about the Navy--very few Texans from the central part of Texas do--I really looked forward to it. Of course, I was rather young then and had some trepidation, too. It was quite an adventure, I think.

Marcello: What did you look forward to life aboard a battleship? Was that simply considered one of the glamour ships of the Fleet or what?

Autry: Yes, I think it was at that time.

Marcello: What sort of a ship was the Maryland?

Autry: You mean the type of people?

Marcello: In terms of life aboard the ship and this sort of thing and the people aboard the ship.

Autry: It was rather a disappointment in a way, I think, because it was rather primitive. I would say at this day and time it'd be rather primitive. We slept in hammocks, and we had no lockers. We actually lived out of our seabag. All our uniforms and everything was kept in a seabag. The food was good. It wasn't gourmet food. At that time the ship was being under an annual repair, I guess you would say, an annual overhaul. She was in drydock at that time. It wasn't too long until we got it out on trials, and that's my first experience of actually being on the

water, you know.

Marcello: What did you do during this period that the Maryland was in drydock?

Autry: Mostly we stood some watches on the . . . the ship had operational signal tower operations, and there was some small boats that they would send out and patrol the harbor, and we would go out with these patrol boats and challenge these log ships (chuckle) and boats and tugs that went by. It was a naval base, all right.

Marcello: So when did the Maryland then leave for Pearl Harbor?

Autry: I'm trying to think. Now let me see. It must have been around July or August, I think, that they left for Pearl Harbor. I believe I was there about six months before December 7.

Marcello: Now once you were aboard the Maryland, let's say in July of 1941, did the on-the-job training that you received intensify?

Autry: Oh, yes, yes. It was continual training all while I was aboard ship. Every day was . . . of course, that's normal duty aboard ship.

Marcello: Is this where you feel you got your most valuable training?

Autry: Oh, yes, yes. The school was basic and had to with signaling, but the real actual . . . it's just like anything else. Your actual experience comes when you're actually on (chuckle) the ship that you're going to be on, yes.

Marcello: What was the morale like aboard the Maryland at this time?

Autry: I think very good, yes. Of course, a war scare was going on at that time even. But I think it was very good, yes.

Marcello: How do you account for the good morale aboard the ship?

Autry: I would think the Navy always had good morale because this was before the draft and so forth. It was all voluntary, and most men that were in there had volunteered for it. They were not drafted or anything else. I think the requirements were rather high.

Marcello: I would assume that a great many of the petty officers and the officers aboard that battleship had a great many years of experience.

Autry: Oh, yes.

Marcello: Rank was relatively slow in the Navy at that time, was it not?

Autry: Yes, it was. Yes, yes. In fact, being a reserve, I think we were resented considerably because some of us like I got my third class rating after I had finished school, and a lot of them had been in there four to six years and still were seamen first class, and were very good signalmen. You can't blame them.

Marcello: And I assume that a great many of the chief petty officers and people of similar rank had been in as long as twenty years or even longer.

Autry: Yes. Oh, yes, yes. It took a long while to rise up in the ranks in the peacetime Navy to chief petty officer.

Marcello: While you were aboard the Maryland and undergoing this on-the-job training, did you get the feeling that they were giving you all the time that you needed in order to prepare you for the type of work that you were going to be doing aboard that ship?

Autry: Oh, I had quite that feeling because I got an intensive training there. I would say that even what they consider basic training now . . . we had had some basic training in San Diego, but we went through an intensive swimming education, of course, and everything there besides our actual operational duties.

Marcello: Now being that you went aboard the Maryland sometime in July of 1941, and since that was the period in which relations between the United States and Japan worsened considerably, I would assume that the Fleet, that is, the Pacific Fleet, was undergoing all sorts of continual maneuvers and this sort of thing.

Autry: Yes.

Marcello: Describe what these maneuvers were like in terms both of frequency and the type of maneuvers in which the Fleet was engaged.

Autry: Of course, at Seattle we were in drydock and repair.

Marcello: Now you mentioned San Diego awhile ago. Was it Seattle or San Diego where you were . . .

Autry: Seattle was where I went to my ship. I went from San Diego to Seattle, where my ship was in drydock . . .

Marcello: I see.

Autry: . . . which was actually the Bremerton Naval Yard. After a shakedown cruise--they'd make a few cruises out in the harbor and the straits--we went from there to Pearl Harbor. The training was intensive--very intensive. We'd go out almost every week and come in maybe on weekends. There was no such thing as lackadaisical duty. It was fulltime training,

intensive training.

Marcello: Now did you usually go out on a Monday and come back on a Friday or something of this nature?

Autry: That's the way I remember it, yes, yes.

Marcello: What sort of maneuvers took place?

Autry: Well, there was a battleship fleet--quite a few battleships--and it was actual formation and firing. We did a lot of firing and the different (chuckle) naval maneuvers you do in formation, and, of course, there was a lot of planes and take-offs. Of course, all the battleships had their own scout planes. I don't remember us operating with carriers as such, but battleship formations.

Marcello: Normally speaking, how many battleships would go out at a time? I'm really picking your brain on this, I'm sure.

Autry: Just about the whole Fleet would go out at a time, which was at that time two, four, six . . . about eight. It was quite a show.

Marcello: They would usually send all the battleships out at one time?

Autry: Yes.

Marcello: And normally they would all be in at one time?

Autry: Yes.

Marcello: In other words, part of them would not be in, while the other part was out?

Autry: Rather unusual, I think, for a ship to be in by itself, yes.

Marcello: Did these Maneuvers continue like this right up until the time of the Japanese attack?

Autry: It seems to me like they did. There wasn't too many days that we were just there, unless it was in for fueling and provisioning. It wasn't wartime activity, but it was very intensive, yes.

Marcello: On any of these maneuvers did you ever have any scares or anything of this nature? In other words, were there ever any . . .

Autry: Oh, yes.

Marcello: . . . submarines detected or anything of this nature?

Autry: Yes, I was just going to say that actually twice we detected submarines, and I remember very clearly once that the lookout in the foretop reported a submarine. He was questioned very strongly by the captain, and he insisted it was a submarine. It was sighted by he and several others, too. So there was no doubt. There was a submarine sighted.

Marcello: There's something else I think we need to get clear for the record. Now these battleships obviously did not go out alone. They were probably accompanied by cruisers and destroyers and this sort of thing.

Autry: Very well-escorted, yes. Yes, sir. There was full battleship formation with their escorts and some cruisers and, of course, destroyers, quite a few destroyers.

Marcello: What action was taken when this submarine was sighted?

Autry: Normal action. Evasive actions. Of course, they started zig-zagging, and destroyers were going back and forth. It was just a sighting. Nothing ever actually happened. There was no firing of torpedos or anything else.

Marcello: Of what vintage was the USS Maryland?

Autry: It was rather old.

Marcello: In other words, when was it made, laid down?

Autry: I think it was laid down at the end of World War I, completed sometime in the twenties. It was getting rather old. It was a beautiful ship, I think, beautiful lines. It had good armament. It had sixteen-inch guns on it. The speed was rather slow. I think twenty knots was top speed, and it was pretty well vibrating then.

Marcello: I assume that we're talking about a spit-and-polish Navy in those days . . .

Autry: Oh, yes!

Marcello: And all of the ships were just immaculate.

Autry: Yes. Oh, yes. That was something that was, like you say, immaculate. It was beautifully kept.

Marcello: I assume this was especially true of the battleships since they were considered the showpieces of the Fleet.

Autry: Right, and our ship had the admiral in charge of the Fleet on it. The bridge even had what they called battleship linoleum on it, which was kept waxed at all times. The outdoor bridge, even. So everything was white paint. It was beautifully kept.

Marcello: So the Maryland was the flagship of the Pacific Fleet.

Autry: Of this, of this battleship fleet, yes.

Marcello: How was the Maryland selected? Do you know anything about that?

Autry: I know nothing about that. No, sir. I was rather new then, of course.

Marcello: You mentioned the armament aboard the Maryland just a moment ago. How about antiaircraft protection?

Autry: I can't give you the exact number, but they had quite

a few five-inch antiaircraft guns, and they didn't have any forty millimeters at that time or twenty millimeters. They had fifty caliber machine guns, and this was the type of ship that had the old basket-type foremasts, two masts that was woven. They had large (chuckle) . . . some sort of containment on top, and they had machine guns up there. For its day . . . now for World War II and later on, it was poor, but for its day before the war, it was very well-protected.

Marcello: This is the point I wanted to make. If we were to see a picture of . . . or if we were to inspect the Maryland before the war and then inspect it during the war, I would assume that every spare space after the war had begun was filled with some sort of an antiaircraft weapon.

Autry: Yes, it was. It was quite . . . it was . . . after the attack, it was taken right back--of course, there was slight damage to it--and there was an intensive overhaul done to it. A lot of armor plate. They even had to add a tremendous lot of armor plate to the signal decks and so forth.

Marcello: I would assume that it would be safe to say that the

Japanese taught us a rather expensive lesson at Pearl Harbor, and that was that the days of those battleships were numbered so far as being the offensive backbone of the Fleet was concerned.

Autry: Yes, yes. I think they did teach us (chuckle) quite a lesson, yes.

Marcello: Okay, so as you mentioned the Maryland and the rest of the battleships in the Fleet were on constant maneuvers--daily maneuvers--and usually would be in port on a weekend. When the Maryland and the rest of the Fleet came into port, what sort of liberty did you receive?

Autry: We, the enlisted man, got no overnight liberties. It was until midnight, the way I remember it. So it was either Saturday or Sunday, and, of course, you never got the same day. They rotated. So I think it started approximately at eight o'clock in the morning, and you had to be back by midnight that night.

Marcello: In other words, it was a port-and-starboard-type liberty?

Autry: Yes.

Marcello: Half the Fleet might be off on a Saturday and the

other half off on a Sunday.

Autry: That's the way I remember it, yes. No more than that, no.

Marcello: While we're speaking in terms of the type of liberty that was granted aboard the Maryland, when was payday?

Autry: (chuckle) I can't remember. You mean how many times a month?

Marcello: Yes, or when during the month did you get paid?

Autry: I don't remember. I frankly don't. Maybe it was twice a month. I'm not sure. Now I don't think it was weekly.

Marcello: I'm pretty sure it probably was not weekly.

Autry: No.

Marcello: I was thinking perhaps in terms of maybe the first and the fifteenth or something of this nature.

Autry: I believe that that was what it was. I don't remember. We didn't get much anyway.

Marcello: When the Fleet was in, let's say, on that weekend of December 7, it was safe to say that you probably had at least been paid possibly a week before.

Autry: I would think so, yes.

Marcello: What was social life like in Honolulu?

Autry: Well, there was a whole bunch of sailors there, so

there wasn't too much to do. There was some sight-seeing. You could eat and drink, and there was quite a bit of that, I'm sure. You couldn't go too far. It was some distance from Pearl Harbor to the main part of the city. So you couldn't go too far but, say, Waikiki Beach and swim a little bit and do some sightseeing.

Marcello: I would assume that most of the bars on Hotel Street were fairly full on those Friday and Saturday evenings.

Autry: Very, very busy. Yes, sir. You could look down the street, and, as I say, you could just see a wave of white hats (chuckle). It was very crowded.

Marcello: And this was usually standard operating procedure, let's say, when the Fleet was in.

Autry: Yes.

Marcello: Generally speaking, what would the condition of those sailors be when they came back off those liberties?

Autry: Oh, from good to bad (chuckle). I would say about half and half. There was quite a bit of drinking going on.

Marcello: Well, the point I'm trying to make is this: a great many people assume that if the Japanese were going

to attack or if any enemy were going to attack, a Sunday morning would have been the best time since the boys would have been out on a Saturday night and may have come back rather inebriated and this sort of thing and wouldn't be in condition to fight on Sunday. My own feeling is that this really isn't true.

Autry: No, I don't think it is true. I think probably Sunday would have been the best day to attack, of course, for not only the reasons for being on liberty, but I think because I believe people are just more relaxed on Sundays.

Marcello: It was generally a day of leisure . . .

Autry: Right.

Marcello: . . . even if you didn't have liberty on that day. Normally you weren't working unless you were in a particular duty section.

Autry: Right, unless you were on watch, right. I don't mean to give the impression that people came back so bad they couldn't carry on their duties. No, it was very, very few people that couldn't carry on their duties.

Marcello: This is an important point.

Autry: Yes.

Marcello: I think it needs to be a part of the record. It's kind of like . . . I guess we could almost call it a non-event. It's something that actually didn't happen, but a lot of people assume happen, that is, that there were a lot of people with hangovers and this sort of thing on a Sunday morning.

Autry: Oh, no. No, sir. There were surprisingly very few hangovers. Of course, you got to realize that almost everybody was quite a bit younger then, too, and (chuckle) recover very much faster.

Marcello: What did Pearl Harbor look like during this period with all of those ships in there on a weekend? I would assume it was just a beehive of activity with ships all over the place.

Autry: Yes, it was. Battleships usually lined up on what they called Battleship Row.

Marcello: Which was located where?

Autry: Right next to Ford Island. There was certain special piers. Now I'm not sure whether . . . what side, you know, what direction. The Naval Base was on one end, and this was on the side of it. There was these battleships--quite a few--but they were

just a small amount of the actual ships. I happen to have a full list of the ships that were there, so that's how many ships were there.

Marcello: I knew there was quite a few . . .

Autry: Yes.

Marcello: . . . and I've seen a list similar to that before. Now I do know that at Ford Island the battleships were lined up two-by-two. Why was this done?

Autry: I think because of the space actually--the space--because a battleship's quite large. I don't know the length, whether it's 600 or 800 feet long, but four or five of them take up a lot of space. So I think it was just the . . . just not enough room to disperse them properly. There was definitely no room to put them out and put torpedo nets around them. I don't even know whether they even thought about torpedo nets at that time or not.

Marcello: But the battleships never did have torpedo nets strung around them at this time.

Autry: No, never before the war started. No, sir.

Marcello: And again, it was probably a matter of space, like you mentioned awhile ago.

Autry: I'm sure, yes.

Marcello: I do know that on the Sunday morning of December 7, the USS Maryland was tied up inboard of the USS Oklahoma.

Autry: Right, right.

Marcello: Was this the usual position that the Maryland took?

Autry: No, I don't think we always had the Oklahoma. I don't know how they predetermined the positions, but as far as I remember, that's the first time the Oklahoma was alongside of us, and I don't recall that we were always inside or inboard.

Marcello: Normally speaking, on these weekends before any liberty was granted, there was always a fleet inspection, was there not?

Autry: You mean every weekend there was an inspection? Yes, we had a Friday inspection, yes.

Marcello: And I know for a fact that there was one on that weekend of December 7.

Autry: Yes. Actually we were in the middle of the annual military inspection, which was an annual deal.

Marcello: Describe what this was like. I've never heard this term being used before.

Autry: You'd never heard that term used before?

Marcello: No.

Autry: It was, like I say, an annual deal, and it was a spit-and-polish deal where the admiral would come by and make a very intensive . . . and part of the annual military inspection was actually maneuvers, too. It wasn't just a case of a man coming by checking the people. It was partly checking the operation of the ships, the crew, how they reacted. The ships would go out on maneuvers. They would fire. They would check their firing. They'd fire at night and at day. They would also flood the ship under certain conditions to see how the crew would react. There was also the launching of planes and recovery.

The way I remember it, Sunday was a part of the static--I guess you might say--inspection where you were in the harbor at anchor. Now the ship was . . . since it was an inspection, there was no live ammunition at any of the guns. It was only target ammunition or show ammunition which is highly polished and everything. Ammunition was actually . . . lockers were even locked up, the way I remember it. So the ship was shining like a new baby and awaiting this inspection.

Marcello: Now I gather that during that weekend of December 7, Admiral Kimmel was personally going to inspect one of the ships, and nobody really ever knew which ship it was going to be. As I recall, on that particular day it happened to be the Phoenix, a cruiser, rather than one of the battleships. But is it not true that during these inspections--and let's specifically pinpoint the one on the weekend of December 7--is it not true that during these inspections that a great many, if not most, of the doors and hatches aboard these ships were open?

Autry: Oh, yes.

Marcello: In other words, watertight integrity obviously was not maintained at all.

Autry: No, sir. No, sir. It was not maintained. If it was, it was minimum. There was open access to all our living compartments at least. I know of that, and we were down . . . I believe it was on the second deck. There was no problem getting from one compartment to another.

Marcello: Now I would assume that this was a normal procedure, was it not, when the Fleet was in port?

Autry: Right.

Marcello: Was this done simply because it provided easy access from one part of the ship to another?

Autry: I'm sure that that was one of the main things, yes.

Marcello: What sort of a job is it to maintain watertight integrity?

Autry: It's almost impossible to go anywhere if it is maintained because the doors are all locked, and in some cases you're not allowed to open doors. Certain doors you cannot open, so once it's set you're pretty well stuck where you are.

Marcello: And as I recall, there are, what, eight dogs on each one of those doors?

Autry: Oh, yes. I would think it was at least that, yes. It was a kind of a time-consuming deal to open the door properly.

Marcello: And I would assume that on a battleship it was probably even more time-consuming, given the armor plate and so on aboard a battleship. Is it not true that some of the doors and hatches on board a battleship had to be actually lifted off with a crane? Some of those on deck or something.

Autry: It's quite possible, but I don't recall (chuckle) one, unless it would be with the turrets themselves--

the large, main armament turrets. I don't recall a crane opening a hatch like that, no, sir.

Marcello: But the point I'm trying to make about this watertight integrity is that on a weekend, and especially during an inspection weekend, watertight integrity was at a minimum, which meant in effect that those ships could be sunk much more easily than they could have been had watertight integrity been maintained.

Autry: Right. Yes, I agree with you. I think the Oklahoma was a very good example because I'm sure that her watertight integrity was practically nil because she went over in just a very, very short time.

Marcello: In your spare time and when you and your buddies got together for bull sessions, did you ever talk very much about the possibility of the United States getting into war with Japan or with some other potential enemy?

Autry: I think it was . . . the way I remember, it was very well assumed that there would be a war very soon, and with Japan, naturally. I think that people almost expected it momentarily. At least I seemed to think so. It seemed like that at that time that the main thing . . . I believe, if I remember correctly, it

was either six or nine months, the story was, that being a Reserve you'll be relieved and go back home. I think my time was getting pretty close, and I was hoping that it would happen before a war did start. Especially after sighting a submarine or something was caused by a submarine, we were very alert, I would say, or apprehensive.

Marcello: How closely were you keeping abreast with world events?

Autry: We had radios, of course, and we got into town quite often and news broadcasts. I think we were fairly well abreast of it.

Marcello: What was your opinion of the Japanese? When you thought of a Japanese, what sort of a picture did you conjure up in your own mind?

Autry: I think the general opinion at that time was that as most people considered them--buckteeth monkeys or copiers. I don't think the opinion was too high except that they did know they had quite a large navy and everything. It wasn't nothing to be sneezed at, of course.

Marcello: Had you ever seen any of the operations of the Japanese Navy or anything of this nature? Had they

ever paid any courtesy calls to Pearl Harbor or anything of this nature while you were there?

Autry: Not while I was there. No, sir. The only thing we actually knew about them was our . . . we had different classes in ship recognition, and that was all. There was no political indoctrination or anything like that.

Marcello: Generally speaking then, there was a certain amount of respect for that Japanese Navy.

Autry: Oh, yes. I think so, yes. It was not as bad as some people thought of them, of course. Our opinion was higher, I think, than maybe the general public.

Marcello: As one gets closer and closer to Pearl Harbor, did your routine change any? In other words, were there ever any special alerts or anything of this nature?

Autry: No, I don't think so. We had practice alerts, general quarters, while we were out at sea, but that's just a matter of training. We had general quarters in the mornings, sunset and sunrise, and during the day. But I don't think there was anything to give you alarm or anything like that.

Marcello: I also know that as we got closer and closer to war that there was a large influx of reserves into the Fleet during this time.

Autry: Yes.

Marcello: Were you a part of this particular influx of reserves?

Autry: Yes, I was a reserve, yes. Yes, sir, I was a feather merchant, as we were called (chuckle).

Marcello: (chuckle) What percentage of the complement aboard the Maryland would you say were reserves?

Autry: Oh, I'd have to judge this by our signal crew. I would say, oh, maybe a fifth, 20 per cent, maybe. I'm sure that the ship at that time was being used as a training station, too.

Marcello: And I would assume that there was an influx of both enlisted reserves and officers.

Autry: I'm sure, yes.

Marcello: Now at this particular time, was the ship up to its full complement of men?

Autry: Oh, yes, and more! Oh, yes. I think we had a surplus. Like I say, I believe that there was some training going on. You know what I mean. It wasn't planned that it would be that high all the time.

Marcello: Was this generally the case aboard all the other vessels also, or can you only speak for the Maryland?

Autry: I think so. I can only speak for the Maryland, but I assume that it was because there was a tremendous lot of reserves brought into the Navy at that time,

and they didn't have that many new ships (chuckle).

Marcello: There is something else we didn't talk about here in terms of the technical aspects of the Maryland and the other battleships, I would assume that they did not have radar aboard at the time.

Autry: No. No, no, not at that time. I understood that there was radar on the docks ready to be intalled, but it did not get installed on our ship at that time.

Marcello: And I would assume that probably there was no adequately trained personnel to man it anyway.

Autry: No, definitely not. If there were, I didn't know about it. It'd take special training to run it.

Marcello: What was your thoughts regarding or concerning your safety at Pearl Harbor? Did you think that it was a relatively safe place from an attack?

Autry: Yes, we all . . . I think everybody felt relatively safe there.

Marcello: Why was that?

Autry: Well, I think because it was so far away from Japan at that time. I think, if I remember correctly, that one of the fears was that we might be sent to the Philippines, which we were sure would be the first place hit since it was so close.

Marcello: This is interesting, and I think this is an important thing to get into the record. Most eyes were turned toward someplace in Asia rather than thinking in terms of Pearl Harbor.

Autry: Other than Pearl Harbor. Right.

Marcello: Perhaps either the Philippines or maybe the Dutch East Indies or Singapore or something like that.

Autry: Yes. Of course, I think probably we thought more the Philippines since it was American.

Marcello: Yes. That's, I think, a very interesting observation to get into the record. Now the Hawaiian Islands also have a relatively large population of . . .

Autry: Japanese?

Marcello: . . . Americans of Japanese ancestry, I guess we could call them.

Autry: Yes.

Marcello: Did you ever think about these people as representing some sort of a threat?

Autry: Yes (chuckle). The fact is I'm sure that the . . . all of the Naval . . . the officers thought that, too, considerably because, as you've probably read, they were afraid of quite a bit of fifth column activity. They claimed that's why the airplanes were lined up so well to . . . so they could be

taken from the fifth column. So there was a lot of worry about that.

Marcello: I would assume that probably the Army would have been more worried about this than the Navy since the Army was on land and this sort of thing.

Autry: Yes, yes. That's true. They were surrounded while the Navy seemed to be isolated a little bit, but there was some worry aboard . . . in the Navy, too.

Marcello: How easy or how difficult was it to gain access to Pearl Harbor?

Autry: Well, of course, you had to go through guarded gates, and there was fences and guards around it, but I'm sure if anybody really was experienced and wanted to slip in, there'd be no problem.

Marcello: I know that it was pretty easy to slip in from Hickam Field. There was only a chain-link fence dividing Hickam Field from Pearl, and I've heard other people say that if . . .

Autry: Yes, right.

Marcello: . . . they wanted to go over to one of the ships and see a movie, they would simply slip under the fence or something of this nature.

Autry: I don't think they'd have too much problem. No, sir. We had no desire to . . . we never had a reason

to slip over a fence like that.

Marcello: I was thinking primarily in terms of civilians.

I was wondering . . .

Autry: Sure.

Marcello: . . . how difficult or easy it would have been for civilians to get on the base.

Autry: I don't think it'd been too difficult. Now I don't know how far they would've gotten because I'm sure they all had identification badges like they do now.

Marcello: Were there very many civilian dockworkers on the base?

Autry: Oh, yes. Quite a few. There's a lot of civilian dockworkers.

Marcello: And I would assume that probably some of these would have been of Japanese-American ancestry.

Autry: No doubt about it, yes.

Marcello: This, I think, more or less would bring us up to the days immediately prior to the actual Japanese attack itself, and at this point what I would like you to do is to describe in as much detail as you can remember what you did on Saturday, December 6, 1941. Then from there we'll go into that fateful Sunday.

Autry: I'm trying to remember. I don't think I had liberty because I was planning on liberty Sunday morning. I

don't remember anything significant. I think it was just the normal shipboard routine--watches and so forth, and cleaning, of course--but I don't recall anything in particular.

Marcello: Now when did that inspection take place? Was that on a Friday, or was that on a Saturday?

Autry: Well, we had a Friday inspection. On Saturday ordinarily the people who had liberty went on liberty and those who didn't stayed aboard and stood watches.

Marcello: Can you recall when you turned in for the night, or did you have any watches during the night?

Autry: Yes, I had the morning watch that morning from four to eight o'clock. I didn't see the attack because I had just been relieved for chow, but I went on watch at four o'clock in the morning.

Marcello: Obviously then, you must have turned in relatively early on that Saturday evening.

Autry: Yes, yes. Lights out, if I remember correctly, was nine o'clock.

Marcello: Do you remember anything extraordinary or outstanding about any of the guys coming in that particular night or anything of that nature?

Autry: Not a thing. I don't recall anything unusual about it. It was just normal, everyday occurrences.

Marcello: But there was no, what shall we say, loud-mouthed drunks or anything like that coming in?

Autry: I don't recall anything like that.

Marcello: Okay then, so you were on watch from four to eight in the morning, and let's pick up your routine at that particular point on Sunday morning.

Autry: I've been trying to remember whether I'd even eaten or not. I don't think so, but . . . let me see. Let me review my notes here. See, I was down in the compartment, and there was . . . I don't remember too many of the fellows' names, but I do remember this man's was G. T. Williams. We were planning on liberty together.

Marcello: When you say you were down in the compartment, you mean down in the crew's quarters?

Autry: Our living quarters. Our crew's quarters, yes.

Marcello: Where was this located on the ship?

Autry: It's about two decks down, the way I remember it, off of the main deck.

Marcello: Do you remember what time this was approximately?

Autry: Yes, about 7:55 a.m.

Marcello: How early would you be relieved? You said your watch was from four to eight, and I can't recall from my Coast Guard experience when the watches were

relieved. Was it kind of like a half hour before or fifteen minutes before?

Autry: I think it was less than a half hour. Maybe a half an hour to fifteen minutes before, the way I remember it. It's been a long time ago (chuckle).

Marcello: It wasn't nearly so long for me but I can't remember, so . . .

Autry: (chuckle) Is that right? As I was saying, I was down in the compartment. We were talking about liberty when the general quarters started.

Marcello: In other words, you didn't hear the noise of airplanes or the falling of bombs or anything of that nature until general quarters were sounded.

Autry: No, sir. Not a thing.

Marcello: What was your reaction when . . . first of all, how was general quarters sounded?

Autry: It came over as the regular general quarters. The sound that they used . . .

Marcello: Was it the claxon or a bugle or what?

Autry: A bugle and "General quarters." The actual . . . the words, "General quarters! General quarters! Report to your battle stations!" I think that was it, yes.

Marcello: This is interesting that you can remember this

because in reviewing my notes, I do know that aboard the Maryland there was both bugle and the claxon.

Autry: I don't recall whether it was both of them. I do recall the bugle and the voice.

Marcello: What was your reaction? What did you think?

Autry: We all thought it was a drill because, like I say, drills were going on all the time. If I remember correctly, they came over by voice and said, "This is no drill! This is no drill! General quarters!" It didn't take you too long to realize that it wasn't a drill.

Marcello: What was your assigned battle station under circumstances like this?

Autry: We had what we called the battle flags, which was on the quarter deck, midship, on top of the deck. It was an enclosure where the signal flags were enclosed. I think it was about a quarter-inch steel. You opened the hatch to go inside, and they had two round ports at the top that the halyards went up. The idea was that if the main bridge was knocked out, the battle flags would take over and do all the signaling from there. I was in charge of the battle bags.

Marcello: What's it called?

Autry: Battle bags.

Marcello: The battle bags.

Autry: Yes (chuckle). I think that's just a term.

Marcello: And what were battle bags?

Autry: That is where the signal flags . . . these yards . . . you've seen these signal flags go up on halyards? That's where they were stored. We operated from there. We'd go inside and close the hatch, which gave us some protection from, I guess, shrapnel. Then from the bridge or from the central control, they had telephone communications. They would give us what signals to run up, when to execute, and so forth.

Marcello: Would these be run up whether or not the bridge was knocked out, or would you rely on telephone communications up to that point?

Autry: We'd rely on telephone communications, yes. We initiated nothing of our own. We were actually just . . . all the information was relayed to us. We were actually told what to do.

Marcello: Generally speaking, what would most of the complement aboard the ship do on a Sunday morning?

Autry: If they had liberty, they'd go on liberty.

Marcello: What if they didn't have liberty?

Autry: There was a church. I can't remember exactly when that was, but there was a church call for the different religions. Other than that, you'd go on liberty or if you wanted to, you, I guess, just loaf.

Marcello: You could sleep in, could you not?

Autry: No, no, sir.

Marcello: You couldn't?

Autry: Aboard our ship, like I say, we slept in hammocks, and they were stowed at a certain time, and there was no such a thing as sleeping in in the hammocks. They were all put up, so there was no such thing as just going into a bunk somewhere and taking a nap.

Marcello: Okay, so the alarm was sounded. General quarters was sounded, I should say.

Autry: Yes, sir.

Marcello: Did you promptly proceed to your battle stations?

Autry: Oh, yes, definitely! I think that, like I say, we'd been in training, and even if it was a drill, of course, you were expected to go full speed.

Marcello: Did everybody seem to go to their battle stations in an orderly manner, or was there panic, or was it professionally done?

Autry: Very orderly. Very professional, I think. I don't recall any panic whatsoever, even after they knew that it was the actual thing.

Marcello: Did you hear any outstanding comments or funny comments or anything of this nature when you were going to general quarters? Was there any griping or anything of this nature?

Autry: I think there was one young kid that . . . about the time that the general quarters came over the speaker, he came running down in our deck and said, "There's an air attack on the Japs!" That's the way I remember it, and that reinforced it (chuckle). He was quite excitable anyway.

Marcello: What were your own thoughts when you found out that it was not a drill and that it was the real thing?

Autry: I don't remember anything of being in fear as such. I think a lot of this is automatic. You get so much training that you do it automatically. But like I say, I had to run out across the quarterdeck to get to my station. I remember seeing the torpedo hit the West Virginia behind us, and I was covered with water from the spray. It shoots quite a spray of water in the air.

Marcello: What was it like? What was it like when the torpedo hit the West Virginia? Did it jolt the Maryland any?

Autry: Yes, I think there's quite a bit of jolting. I don't remember any particular jolts, you know. In

times like that things don't soak in too well. I do know that when I ran across the deck, I was covered with water, and you could hear the machine guns. I'm sure they were machine guns from the planes, not from the ship. I understand that there was a few, I believe, aboard our ship. They say that there was one seaman up there writing a letter, and he jumped on the machine gun right away. The shocking thing was when I ran to our station, and it was locked up. The door was locked.

Marcello: Was this normal procedure?

Autry: In the annual military inspection everything had to be kept clean, so to keep it clean, they'd lock it up. It wasn't used. So you couldn't get in (chuckle).

Marcello: Now did you panic?

Autry: Right. I didn't panic, but it's no good to stand out there in the open. About that time the Oklahoma was beginning to go over, too. There was actually a gangplank from the Oklahoma to the Maryland, so they just walked back and forth.

Marcello: Now again, for the record, we want to establish the fact that the Maryland was tied inboard the Oklahoma, which meant that the Maryland was fairly safe from torpedos.

Autry: Yes. Oh, yes.

Marcello: The only thing you had to worry about was strafing and armor-piercing bombs probably.

Autry: Right, right. Yes, we were well-protected by the Oklahoma alongside of us.

Marcello: How long would you estimate that it took to get from your quarters to your battle station?

Autry: Less than three minutes. It'd take a very short length of time. You go full speed, and they had it arranged. Starboard and ports run one way and then the other way. It wasn't a case of everybody going two ways through a port or a hatch. You went certain directions, so they had it worked out so that you could get there in a very short period of time.

So since the door was locked, I ran back into where they, at that time, set the mess tables up for chow. After chow was open they would hang them suspended from the ceiling. You probably had the same thing. Well, the mess tables were still down, of course. So what we did immediately, we started clearing away mess tables, and we had to bring ammunition up by hand because there was not enough steam for the power hoists to bring it up. So there

was plenty to do (chuckle). We started helping them pull up and clear up tables and grab these lines and start pulling the ammunition up. That's the anti-aircraft ammunition.

Marcello: Yes, obviously you weren't going to be using sixteen-inch ammunition for airplanes (chuckle).

Autry: (chuckle) No, not at that time.

Marcello: Now by the time that you got into the mess hall, had the Oklahoma already been hit?

Autry: Oh, yes, definitely.

Marcello: Describe this particular experience.

Autry: Well, when I ran up on the quarterdeck, you could see she was . . . I think I went up at least . . . I ran out a second time to try to get to my battle bags after we did some initial clearing away of tables, and it was still locked up. At that time the Oklahoma had quite a list on her. One of the unusual things was that some of the men on the Oklahoma were ready for liberty, too, in their dress whites. As I came back under cover, because my battle bag was still locked up, I met a man that I went through signal school with off the Oklahoma. Everything seemed to be so calm. You know what I mean?

Marcello: In other words, by this time it was already clear

the Oklahoma was turning turtle and going under

. . .

Autry: Oh, yes. The fact is . . .

Marcello: . . . so men from the Oklahoma were already coming over aboard the Maryland.

Autry: Coming over to the Maryland, yes. The fact is he had run down the side of the superstructure from the signal bridge to get off of the Oklahoma. It was already going over so far that he couldn't use the ladder. I don't remember what happened to him. I'm sure he wasn't hurt anyway, but I never saw him after that. There was another man there that we noticed who was just sitting there frozen. We thought he'd been wounded. It was just a case of shock, though. But I think everybody performed exceptionally well. There was only one case of this man that would seem to be a case of shock that I recall of anybody showing any sign of fear whatsoever.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were handcarrying ammunition in this mess hall. I don't quite understand how you could be handcarrying ammunition in the mess hall.

Autry: I didn't do it. We were helping them pull the lines that pulled the ammunition up the hoist or operated the hoist. I can't give you the exact details of

how this ammunition was hoisted up, but it wasn't the main ammunition. It was the five-inch ammunition.

Marcello: But it was coming through this mess hall?

Autry: Either that or the lines we were pulling operated the mechanism that took it up to the deck above. I'm not sure exactly. I myself, at least, didn't carry ammunition by hand, no.

Marcello: What effect did the torpedoing of that Oklahoma have aboard the Maryland? In other words, could you actually feel it when those torpedoes hit the Oklahoma?

Autry: Yes, we felt something. There was quite a few jars. The fact is I remember that somebody had to go out and cut the huge lines that tied the ships together because the Oklahoma going over was putting a tremendous strain on the Maryland, and those were huge lines as you've seen them. They were tied rather securely fore and aft. Those lines had to be cut. You could feel the concussion, naturally.

Marcello: What sort of attack did the Maryland come under during this period? I know that it was strafed, and I know that it took two bombs sometime during this attack.

Autry: Yes, it took two bombs, but they were sometime later. I believe it was after we got . . . I think I saw my

signal chief about that time and told him the battle bags were locked up. He says, "Just unlock them." So I made it to the battle bags, and the other men started to filtering in then. In a short time we were fully manned.

Marcello: Where did you get the keys to unlock the battle bags?

Autry: He had evidently had the keys or had gotten the keys himself. I believe the chief . . . Collins, I believe his name was, his duty was to carry the keys. We got in there, and it was sometime after that that we felt these two bombs hit.

Marcello: What did it feel like?

Autry: Well, the ship just seemed to move up and down. It wasn't a sharp, jarring explosion. It was more of a kind of a rumble. Of course, there was a tremendous amount of noise.

Marcello: From what I gather from the records, one of these bombs was a fifteen-inch armor-piercing-type shell.

Autry: I have a part of the shell myself.

Marcello: And it hit where? Below the waterline, did it not, and exploded?

Autry: One of them hit below the waterline, and the other one went right to the forecastle, straight down through the forecastle. One went below the waterline

and hit the bow. One went to the forecastle, the way I remember it.

Marcello: And as I recall, the one that hit the forecastle did cause some fires and that sort thing, did it not? Some very small fires?

Autry: I think it might have, though it didn't last very long. There was quite a bit of water in there, but it was from firefighting. I know that there was a head up forward that I went to, and we had to wade through water above our . . . about the calves of our legs. That's how I found this shell fragment. I'd stumbled on it. It was laying on the deck. So there had been some water, but none of it was from the sea. It was from firefighting.

Marcello: By this time how much time had elapsed by the time that the Maryland itself came under attack?

Autry: Actually was hit by the bombs?

Marcello: Yes.

Autry: It must have been less than fifteen minutes after the initial attack, I would say, that we got the two bomb hits or armor-piercing shells that were dropped, yes. Of course, we were being strafed all the time. Every plane, evidently, that came in

strafed us. Before the bombs hit, though, our antiaircraft guns were in full operation.

Marcello: In other words, it didn't take the ship's defenses long to start functioning.

Autry: No, actually, surprisingly, it didn't. I would say in less than ten minutes most of the guns were firing.

Marcello: In general, would you say then that the crew aboard the Maryland acted in a very professional manner? There was no panic or perplexity or things of this nature?

Autry: No, sir. I don't think so. The fact is I think that there was more excitement than anything. I don't recall, except this one case of fear, that . . . and I thought they worked very professionally. I think if we had had ammunition topside, it had have been a little different story, actually.

Marcello: Did you actually see any of the Japanese planes themselves make any of the runs?

Autry: I don't recall seeing any, no. I remember being covered with water (chuckle). That's about all. Then like I say, the battle station we had on the quarterdeck was covered except for holes that looked up through the top.

Marcello: So what did you do then when you finally got to your battle station? What was your function in there?

Autry: Well, of course, the first thing you do is report through the phones to the bridge, and they gave us a signal to hoist. I believe that signal was . . . I'm trying to remember what it was now (chuckle). I can't even remember. I thought I had it in my notes--what we hoisted. It was some signal we hoisted. Our signal said, "Submarine sighted," believe it or not (chuckle). There was a submarine sighted in the harbor.

Marcello: These were the midget submarines, of course.

Autry: Yes, yes. So that was the signal we hoisted.

Marcello: Why was that particular signal hoisted?

Autry: I have an idea because (chuckle) in the shock and everything, somebody sighted a submarine, so they hoisted a signal, "Submarine sighted."

Marcello: Who would have told you to have done that? The bridge?

Autry: It had to come from the bridge, yes.

Marcello: Now at this time who was on the bridge? In other words, what I'm getting at is this: obviously during the weekend, there were a good many officers

that were ashore, including . . . was it Admiral Anderson, who was aboard the Maryland?

Autry: I believe it was, yes.

Marcello: I think later on he had to come out by means of a launch from one of the other vessels.

Autry: That I wouldn't doubt. Yes, I'm sure he didn't spend his night aboard.

Marcello: So it would have not been the commanding officer, but whatever officers had the particular duty on that Sunday that would have been giving the orders.

Autry: Yes, the duty officers only. I'm sure that that's what it was. There was, of course, duty signalmen up there on the watch--the ones that relieved us--and the signal officers.

Marcello: Did you remain at your battle station inside during most of the attack?

Autry: Yes.

Marcello: In other words, you didn't see too much about what was happening on the outside?

Autry: Only when we could open the hatch, which we weren't supposed to do, once in awhile and look out, see. There was some antiaircraft guns right next to our . . . on our main deck there.

Marcello: Did you actually see the Oklahoma turn turtle?

Autry: I saw it going over, yes, sir. And I saw the West Virginia get hit behind us by a torpedo.

Marcello: What sort of a feeling did you have when you saw the Oklahoma turning over?

Autry: Well, I guess shock more than anything else. Like I say, it's surprising there wasn't too much fear. I guess a person just doesn't actually react, but I don't recall any fear or actual fright. I don't think I recall . . . I think that one or two inside . . . after we got inside . . . being covered up, I think, is worse than being topside. One or two showed a little bit of fear, but it was surprising. The jokes were going on and things like that, and, of course, discussions. It was so noisy you couldn't talk very well anyway--too much explosions and everything. There were five-inch guns right adjacent to us that cut down too much talking.

Marcello: I assume that it didn't take any time at all for that Oklahoma to go over.

Autry: No, sir. I don't think so. I don't know how long it took, but it was an unusually short time.

Marcello: I gather that some rather extensive fires broke out

aboard the West Virginia, also . . .

Autry: Definitely.

Marcello: . . . which was located behind you.

Autry: Right stern of us, yes, sir. Yes, she burned extensively. The smoke . . . and everybody was just black with smoke--ships and everything else. People, too, you know, were just covered with soot and everything--an oily smoke.

Marcello: How about the Arizona? Did you witness or hear any of the explosions taking place aboard the Arizona?

Autry: I'm sure I did, sir, but I don't recall any specific lurching of the ship, but at that time, with all the five-inch guns going off and all the ships firing, I think I do recall a concussion or something from it, but not what I would've expected from that terrific explosion.

Marcello: Okay. Now all of this, I think, that we've talked up to this point more or less took place during the first attack . . .

Autry: Yes.

Marcello: . . . and, of course, there was a second wave later on.

Autry: Yes.

Marcello: What took place during the interval between the first

attack and the second attack? Now you can only speak of your own personal experience, and, of course, this is what I want you to do.

Autry: Right. I think that it slowed off somewhat. I believe that we were fully manned by that time. I don't recall that we . . . being on this battle station, there wasn't too much to do but just sit there and wait or stand there and wait. I think we looked out, and there was spasmodic firing and so forth. I don't remember anything particular that we did.

Marcello: From what I've read, the band was playing during the interval. Do you remember that?

Autry: No, sir (chuckle)!

Marcello: This is something that I've read.

Autry: I don't remember a band ever playing. Now there may have been a band playing when they were raising colors when the attack started, but I don't think there was any band that played while the attack was going on. Not on our ship, sir.

Marcello: Now the Oklahoma had turned turtle, and the West Virginia was burning. Was there any efforts made at this particular time to initiate rescue efforts

so far as those men aboard the Oklahoma were concerned? I'm referring to those men who were trapped.

Autry: Yes, I'm sure. I think there was some men rescued all during the attack, and there was boats picking up men, too, even during the middle of the attack.

Marcello: Describe what happened then during the second wave.

Autry: I don't recall anything different except just continual firing and explosions.

Marcello: Just exactly how much action did the Maryland come under during the second attack?

Autry: When the Oklahoma went over, she was wide open, almost wide open. There was a portion of the hull still sticking up. So she was wide open from bombs and strafing. The damage, though, I don't recall any particular damage from strafing, except there was one man killed in the foretop. One ensign, I believe, and one enlisted man. The lower down part of the ship, I don't recall anything, except the two bombs. The West Virginia behind us was terrifically . . . several torpedoes. She was completely sunk.

Marcello: Was the West Virginia inboard . . . well, it had

to have been outboard.

Autry: She was outboard, right. The Tennessee was inboard. I don't recall any particular damage she got, except that when the West Virginia settled down, she jammed the Tennessee against the cement piers where she couldn't move. The California in front of us settled on the bottom, too. She was hit pretty hard.

Marcello: I would assume that none of these battleships had up enough steam that they could have had any mobility.

Autry: I understand that the Nevada was the only one that managed to get underway . . .

Marcello: Yes.

Autry: . . . and she didn't have full steam up by a long shot. No, there's only . . . the fact is, like I say, we didn't even have enough steam to operate our hoist properly.

Marcello: Was this normal procedure during a weekend, inspection or not?

Autry: Yes, especially during an inspection.

Marcello: What happened then in the aftermath of the attack?

Autry: I think that after awhile, they did bring some food around, but we weren't allowed to leave our battle

stations. Some of the mess crew brought around some food in metal trays.

Marcello: Incidentally, I think it was after the second attack that I read that this band was actually playing, where you were waiting some other kind of attack, but you still don't remember?

Autry: I had heard no band (chuckle), no, sir. I know that we had some food. There were more problems other than eating, though.

Marcello: What were the problems?

Autry: If you stayed several hours . . . well, going to the bathroom (chuckle). There was no place to go. I remember one fellow used a food container which was skittered across the deck. We opened the hatch and just slid it across the deck to get it away from us. But that was quite a problem because all the water is cut off on battle stations. These restrooms were flooded, and they were filled to capacity.

But I do remember there was one young man . . . I believe he was one of the signal gang. He got on the anti-aircraft gun. It wasn't his station, but I remember he thoroughly enjoyed everything, even the strafing (chuckle).

Marcello: Can you recall any of the funny incidents that perhaps happened during the attack?

Autry: Like I say, this one man used the food container for the restroom (chuckle). Then I remember that this man on the antiaircraft gun was thoroughly enjoying it. You could hear him hollering and laughing--quite a few curse words.

Marcello: I think that during that second attack the Maryland actually was credited with knocking down a couple or three Japanese planes. Didn't you have some fairly new 1.1-inch antiaircraft guns installed at that time?

Autry: I don't recall them but we may have. I was trying . . . I had it listed here. We were credited with quite . . . or we thought we'd got quite a few planes at first. Now I don't know how true it was.

Marcello: Well, I'm sure it's probably a part of the record someplace, but . . .

Autry: They said we got eighteen planes. I don't think we got that many, but that's what we thought we had gotten during the attack.

Marcello: I doubt if you did because I think there were only twenty-seven shot down altogether.

Autry: (chuckle) We sure got the majority, didn't we?

Marcello: What did you do during the aftermath of the attack?

Autry: Well, after the attack later on . . . of course, the general quarters were kept the major part of the day. I do remember that night that there was quite a scare aboard the ship. Like I say, everybody was afraid of the fifth column. They did put the water back on. The showers were operational, and I went to take a shower, and coming back I was surrounded by a group of men with knives and everything else. Well, first, before that though, I went on top deck, and a Marine stopped me with a submachine gun. I had to identify myself. This was topside. So after I went down to take a shower, coming back from the shower with a towel on my shoulder, I was stopped and told to identify myself. I was escorted back to my quarters, and I had to be identified before they let me go. So it was pretty touchy there, believe it or not and . . .

Marcello: In other words, there were a lot of trigger-happy sailors around.

Autry: Very trigger-happy. Yes, and I don't think it'd

have taken too much to have somebody . . . you could have been killed very easily there.

Marcello: Did you actually participate personally in the rescue operations that were taking place, let's say, aboard the Oklahoma or the West Virginia?

Autry: No, sir. No, sir. I know that night now we had another air alert. The fact is I'm sorry to say we shot down some of the Enterprise's planes. You probably have heard this. I do remember that the gunnery . . . the man in charge of the guns said he would have shot the tailfeathers off of a sea gull if he'd flown over at that time, but I believe that the planes incorrectly came over and . . .

Marcello: From what I've read the air was just littered with tracers and antiaircraft bullets and what have you when those planes came in.

Autry: Yes. They didn't have a chance. Poor guys didn't have a chance (chuckle). I think that was the only time I really became frightened. I was down in the sleeping compartment when we had another attack, and they reported . . . of course, I'm sure . . . later on, I read that the attack was over sometime in the day, but they reported high-flying bombers above.

That's one time I became frightened, was down below.

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

Autry: Yes, there was quite a few that there was a lot of fifth column activity going on.

Marcello: Can you remember any of the specific rumors that you heard?

Autry: Some of the rumors were that the . . . I do remember that there was rumors that there was Japanese landing around Diamond Head, that there was a lot of fifth column going on. Men in the yards were blowing things up and causing different things like that.

Marcello: And I'll bet you believed every one of these rumors.

Autry: Well, we didn't doubt them (chuckle). We had no reason to doubt them. I do remember the men . . . we were getting men or they were getting men out of the Oklahoma a day or two later. I do remember them taking them out of the ship alongside of ours.

Marcello: Did you get a chance to see the actual physical damage in daylight that had been done at Pearl Harbor?

Autry: Yes.

Marcello: Describe in your own words what it looked like and

what your feelings were when you saw it.

Autry: It was horrible. It was shocking, of course. We were able to get underway because the Oklahoma, when she rolled over, cleared us enough. We had to maneuver very close because of the California in front of us. We were able to get out enough to where we could get over to the dock and have our repairs done on the bow. The Pennsylvania was in drydock and pretty well beat up. The Shaw had blown up--I believe it was the Shaw--in drydock there. That was an unbelievable mess. The Arizona-- just a little bit of her was left. The West Virginia was setting down, and the California was settled on the bottom. Oil, of course, made an unbelievable mess. We were a day or two before we got away from there. I do remember seeing them pulling bodies out of the water, too.

Marcello: In general, what form did the usual casualties take? Was it mainly burns or shrapnel, or was it a combination of all?

Autry: Like I say, we were very lucky. Only two aboard our ship that were killed. I don't remember any casualties other than that. Most of the other

casualties . . . in the Oklahoma they were just flat trapped and drowned, or they weren't killed by the explosions. I'm sure the West Virginia was the same way.

Marcello: What were your feelings toward the Japanese now?

Autry: Sir, I'm sorry to say I still don't think too much of them. I'd like to make one statement. There was some apartments adjacent to our battleship on Ford Island. I believe they were enlisted personnel wives and so forth. There was one woman in these apartments that . . . she was evidently taking hula lessons. Being on the signal bridge, we had telescopes. We used to watch her take those hula lessons (chuckle), and one of the first things those people worried about was wondering if she got out of it alright, you know, because they were right in the line of fire.

Marcello: When you say those people, you mean the crew members (chuckle)?

Autry: Yes, the crew members because everybody had watched her (chuckle) in the signal gang. That was one of the first worries, if I may say so.

Marcello: You must have had a nickname for her.

Autry: Yes. Do you want me to say it?

Marcello, Sure, go ahead.

Autry: "Clutchbutt" (chuckle).

Marcello: "Clutchbutt?"

Autry: (chuckle) Because she had quite a movement in her . . . (chuckle), and one of the first words was wondering if "Clutchbutt" made it alright.

It's unbelievable. It's hard to describe anything like that. These ships were . . . the ones that weren't blown apart actually just turned black almost from this smoke and soot and everything. Everybody else was, too. You're used to a ship being spic-and-span like a new toy, and it's . . . even that's quite a shock. We were over at 1010 (Ten-Ten) dock, I think it was, which was adjacent to the Pennsylvania. As soon as they made the repairs . . . they repaired the one underwater. The welders went underwater and repaired it. We didn't go into drydock. To fool any fifth column, the orders were posted that we would shift docks, but we didn't shift docks. We immediately got underway and just proceeded on out. Some of the guys were actually left stranded on the dock that didn't get aboard ship when she pulled out.

Marcello: You mean a couple of days later, or do you mean when it made its initial . . .

Autry: When we shifted from the Battleship Row to the dock for repairs, and from the dock we took off to the United States, but the orders were stated that we would be shifting piers or berths, not getting underway. So it was a complete surprise to most people. We were actually getting underway.

Marcello: Getting back to your feelings toward the Japanese once again, was there a feeling of revenge, or how would you specifically describe your feelings towards the Japanese?

Autry: Now?

Marcello: No, at that time in the immediate aftermath of the attack.

Autry: Oh, yes. Certainly it was revenge, yes. Very much, yes. Quite a feeling of hate, yes. There was no brotherly love lost, I'm sure.

Marcello: As you look back on what happened, how did it happen in your own mind?

Autry: (chuckle) I think there was some stupidity involved, really. I think that there was some very poor

judgment. Being that close to war as everybody . . . I think most people that knew anything at all knew that we would be going to war. The people that should know should have known that we were open to attack because it wasn't the stone ages. They knew that there were planes and aircraft carriers. I think we should have been much better prepared, especially since we had sighted submarines or effects from a submarine. As I heard later on, they sank a submarine outside the harbor mouth sometime before the attack ever came on. It's just hard to believe it.

Marcello: So obviously then, without putting words in your mouth, you do hold certain individuals responsible.

Autry: Oh, yes, definitely.

Marcello: Would these mainly be the immediate commanders of the base? I'm referring now basically to Kimmel and Short.

Autry: I think so. I don't stop with them either. I'm sure that a lot of others agree with me that there were higher-ups, too. The politicians, too. Not military commanders in particular, but people in the government itself. I don't tend to be bitter,

but I'm sure that a lot of them think . . . in
your talking, you probably got the same report.

A P P E N D I X

Dec 7, 1941

I had the watch Sunday, The 7:00 to 8:00
At about 7:55 Sunday the Battleline was
attacked by Japanese torpedo planes
I was in the S. Division Compartment talking
to G.T. William when G.Q. was sounded.
We were planning to go on liberty that
morning ~~at~~ and General Quarters came
as a complete surprise, in fact we
thought it was another drill until I
reached the Quarter deck and heard the
gunfire and explosions of bombs and
torpedoes. I reached the Quarter deck in
time to SEE A torpedo hit the West Virginia
about midships. I ran to the battle bags,
which is my battle station only to find it
locked up. All this time there were quite
a few Jap planes flying over and
strafing and bombing us. There was
nothing for me to do but to seek cover.
By that time the Oklahoma which
was tied alongside us had a very sharp
list and men from her were

Streaming over to us, all covered with oil and some ~~one~~ with liberty whites on. The West Virginia also had a very sharp list on and there was a thick pall of smoke coming from aft. the Tenn. and West Virginia which were tied alongside.

We were caught wholly unprepared. ~~There~~ All guns were unmanned and with out ammunition except target ammunition. I returned inside the ship and proceeded to help carry ammunition and clear mess tables which were still standing from chow.

It was then that I felt several sharp lurches, from what I don't know. I returned to the Battle bags to find them still locked.

Shortly I saw Chief Collins and he said the bags were now opened so Jones and I went to them on the double. In a very few minutes the Battle bags were fully manned and ready and right away we hoisted

2.

Sail Emergency which meant Submarine sighted. Just about then our "AA" Batteries really got into ~~intensive~~ action and the noise was terrific (Our ship was officially credited with downing 18 planes.) While in the battle bags we felt several more lurches of the ship and I think it was then that a bomb was dropped on our forecstte. The plane that did that was downed immediately ~~to~~ by the forward starboard Pom Poms. ~~Meanwhile we~~ ~~seemed~~ From then on firing was spasmodic and Jap planes werent so numerous. We ate chow on stations. So far as I know we had only two casualties. One Ensign in the foretop and one Seaman S/C in the maintop. Nothing very eventful until on the 8:00 to 1200 when ten of Enterprises planes arrived and when acted very suspiciously and flew directly over us were mistaken for enemy planes and fired upon, downing three of them

I had the midwatch that night in Central Station and nothing of importance happened, but every one was as nervous as hell.

The ~~the~~ 4:00 to 800 had a little excitement though. High flying bombers flew high over head and it really was a scary feeling to be in the darkened compartment and hear the dimmed noises of anti-aircraft fire.

Dec. 8. 1991

Captain - Godwin, G.W.
Executive off. - Hillenkoetter, R.H.