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Interview with  
Kenneth Magee  
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Place of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_  
Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello  
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Oral History Collection

Kenneth Magee

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Watauga, Texas                      Date: October 5, 1976

Dr. Marcello:        This is Ron Marcello interviewing Kenneth Magee for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on October 5, 1976, in Watauga, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Magee in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was at Hickam Field during the Japanese attack there on December 7, 1941. Simultaneous with the attack at Hickam Field, the Japanese were also attacking Pearl Harbor and the other military installations on the Island of Oahu.

Now Mr. Magee, 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. Magee:        I was born in Staten Island, New York, on September 9, 1914. We moved to Niagara Falls just before my fourth birthday, and I grew up in Niagara Falls. In fact, I enlisted in Niagara Falls, in the Army Air Corps. I

graduated from high school, and I have since over the years gone to two trade schools. That's about the extent of my education.

Marcello: When did you enter the service?

Magee: January 4, 1940.

Marcello: Why did you decide to enter the service?

Magee: Well, times were rough. I was unemployed, was the main reason.

Marcello: You know, this is a standard reason that a great many people of your particular generation give for having entered the service. In other words, times were tough; jobs were hard to come by; and the service offered a certain amount of security. The pay wasn't great, but at least you were getting three square meals a day, and you had a certain amount of security. Now why did you decide to enter the Army Air Corps as opposed to one of the other branches of the service?

Magee: The strange part of it was--I always loved to ride horses, and I first asked about the horse cavalry (chuckle). The recruiting sergeant told me that was in past days. There was no more horses. Then I was always interested in aviation, and it looked like the best chance to learn a trade, was in the Air Corps. That was probably the strong point that made me go. I'm glad now that I did go in the Air Corps--that there was no cavalry.

Marcello: How hard was it to get in the Air Corps at that particular time?

Magee: At that time, it wasn't hard. You just needed a high school education, was all they asked for.

Marcello: Did you have a waiting list or anything of that nature?

Magee: No, he signed me up right away. In about two days, I got sworn in in Buffalo (chuckle).

Marcello: Now at the time that you entered the Air Corps, were you keeping very closely abreast with current events and world affairs?

Magee: Well, I used to keep an eye on how the war was going in Europe and things like that, of course.

Marcello: In other words, if the country did get involved in some sort of a foreign war, you were under the assumption that it would probably occur in Europe and against Germany in all probability.

Magee: Yes.

Marcello: Where did you take your boot camp?

Magee: I went to Fort Slocum for two weeks, and then they sent some of us to Mitchell Field. That's where I spent it until I boarded . . . they took us by Army truck to Fort Totten, put us on an Army barge, and took us to Brooklyn Army Base. We boarded the U.S. Army Transport Republic. It's the biggest one but the slowest one. We went down through the

Panama Canal. We got robbed; we didn't get any shore leave at either Cristobal or Balboa. We went up the Pacific Coast to Fort McDowell on Angel Island. Then we spent one night there; then we headed for Hawaii and got to Hawaii about March. I can't tell you the exact date, but it was March.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of going to the Hawaiian Islands?

Magee: Well, when I enlisted there was only three places open--the Philippines, Panama, and Hawaii. I had heard of hula girls (chuckle) in the tropics, so I figured that of those three places, Hawaii was the best. That's what made me choose it.

Marcello: Now I would assume that you perhaps took the bulk of your basic training and so on when you arrived in the Hawaiian Islands?

Magee: Yes, that's true. We still had . . . we hadn't completed basic training, so we had to complete it in the Hawaiian Islands there at Hickam.

Marcello: You went directly to Hickam Field when you got to the Hawaiian Islands?

Magee: That's correct.

Marcello: Describe what Hickam Field looked like from the physical standpoint at that particular time.

Magee: Well, Hickam Field wasn't finished. The rumor was that it was going to be the biggest Army air base Uncle Sam had. Up until then, McCord Field in the State of Washington was Uncle Sam's biggest air base. It wasn't finished. In fact, we lived in "Tent City" for a while. The main barracks weren't finished. So it was still in the primitive stage, you might say. The men were living in the barracks, but the consolidated mess wasn't ready yet.

Marcello: What was life like in "Tent City?" Describe the living conditions there.

Magee: Well, being summer all the time, it wasn't bad as far as a running around. It . . . well, it wasn't too bad. I really don't know how to say it. We had a barber shop in the tent; we had to go to a certain mess hall because of "Tent City" and things like that.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk a little bit about the basic training that you received there at Hickam Field. How would you describe the training? Was it thorough? Was the pace slow? Were things picking up? Talk a little bit about basic training there.

Magee: Well, every morning they called us out, and we used to go out for a close order drill on the runways. Then in the afternoon, we always probably had details, you know--take weeds out of the officers'; yards and out of the parade

ground and details like that. Of course, there was always K.P. and those other details that we hate (chuckle)--things like that.

In fact, I remember a fellow in my squadron. . . he was digging weeds out on the parade ground, and he was figuring out his pay out of twenty-one dollars a month. He got to the deductions. We had a one-star general there. He come along and said to him, "Soldier, how much do you think you'd be worth on the outside?" He says, "Not very much, sir." He said again, "How much would you be worth on the outside?" He said again, "I don't think very much." (Chuckle) He kept asking him this question. This friend of mine was burning up inside, but he didn't dare, you know (chuckle), express himself because he caught him napping while he was supposed to be weeding (laughter).

Marcello: Did there seem to be any amount of urgency to your basic training? In other words, was there a general feeling that the country might be very soon getting into war and this sort of thing?

Magee: Not at that time. We didn't seem to be then.

Marcello: What sort of combat training were you receiving during your basic training?

Magee: Well, they took us all the way through. We fired the .45 automatic. I believe they took us out and taught us bayonet



drill one time. In the Air Force, you didn't get too much military training. It was almost always skill, but until you went to school, you didn't get much skill.

Marcello: How long did basic training last at that particular time?

Magee: Well, they counted the time we had in the States, so we only had a couple of weeks. They took us out one day for a close order drill, and they stopped us. The sergeant said, "All the men from here down, right step!" We went over, and he stopped and he marched us over and put us in the 31st Bomb Squadron (chuckle). I guess they put the other men in other bombardment squadrons. That's how it wound up.

Marcello: In other words, after you got out of boot camp, you were assigned to the 31st Bomb Squadron.

Magee: That's correct.

Marcello: Okay, what happened at that point? Were you able to go to any sort of school or get any sort of technical training? Describe what happened after you got out of boot camp.

Magee: Well, we had to wait our turn to go to school. They used to send two or three men out of the squadron every couple of weeks when the rest graduated. In time I got a chance to go to air mechanics school. That's where I learned my mechanical training. Then, of course, we picked up the rest of the flight line, as they called it, like on-the-job training. You learn from sergeants and so forth.

Marcello: Okay, now how would you describe the schooling that you received to become a mechanic?

Magee: Well, the school was really good. In fact, it was supposed to be the best school overseas outside the forty-eight states. Each class had two instructors, and they mostly were sergeants. A few were corporals. I remember our first one. He had about ten or fifteen years in the Air Force. He used to tell us about the old biplanes (chuckle) and things like that. Then you'd go one week to one course; the next week, you'd move up to another; the next week, to another one. Like you had engines; you had instruments; you had propellers; you had electricity; then hydraulics; then you had teaching you how to fill out the forms. We had some real old planes. In fact, they had an old B-12 to teach us on. We had an old plane they used in the Spanish Civil War (chuckle) that they were teaching us on and things like that. Then we had an old plane you had to handcrank when they taught us to start engines. So it was on that order, but school was pretty good.

Marcello: Why did you decide to become an aircraft mechanic?

Magee: Well, I always figured if I did go in I wanted to become a mechanic more than I would a radioman or armorer. Radio was going to be my second place if I couldn't make mechanics.

Marcello: You brought up an interesting point here, and I'd like to pursue it just a little bit further. You mentioned that cadre, that is, the people who were training you in this particular school,

had a good many years in the service. This seemed to be a general rule, was it not? There were a lot of old-timers in there.

Magee: Yes, yes. That seemed to be the rule.

Marcello: Okay, now you mentioned that. . . well, let me ask you this. How long did this schooling last? Was it longer than your basic training?

Magee: Oh, yes, yes. It's hard to say now--I've been out so long--but I'd say it lasted a month and a half at least, if not two months.

Marcello: Then from there you were put out on the line?

Magee: Yes, yes.

Marcello: Okay, describe what the on-the-job training was like here at Hickam Field.

Magee: Well, when I got to Hickam, Hawaii only had B-18's--one of the twin engine planes.

Marcello: In other words, this was the forerunner of the B-17, is that correct?

Magee: Yes. These were only twin engines. The Philippines were worse off. They only had B-12's (chuckle), and they were even older.

So they put us to work on it. The crew chief would tell you, "This has gotta be done." If you didn't know, there was always a man to help you. We used to do this. Of course, until we got ranked, we always still had the details like KP

and barracks police. But that's where you really picked this training up. Now when these B-17's come in, of course, we had to adjust. They didn't send us back to school, but the men who knew it showed us the differences.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that these B-17's were coming in. Were they staying there, or were most of them going to the Philippines?

Magee: Well, at first the only ones that came over were B-17D's. They didn't have a tail gunner yet. We kept them for a while. Then things with Japan was getting very hairy, to say, and they were worried. So they flew a lot of them. . . they took a lot of men out of each squadron--both pilots and enlisted men--and took them all to the Philippines. Then the day of the attack, those B-17E's were coming in from California, with the tail gunners.

I'd like to mention this. The British and the French had tried to tell us for years to put tail gunners in our planes. But the "Big Brass," they weren't Air Force men, and most of them said, "Well, the planes in formation will protect each other's tail." We found out the hard way the British were right.

Marcello: Well, I'm sure you had some interesting stories to tell about those B-17's when they came in on December 7th. We'll talk about that a little bit later on. Now by this time, had you moved out of "Tent City?"

Magee: Oh, yes. As soon as I was put in the 31st Bomb Squadron, we were put right in the barracks. The only thing that wasn't finished was the consolidated mess. We used to share a wooden mess hall with another bomb outfit. That's where we'd eat. In fact, the food was much better there than it was later in the consolidated mess (chuckle).

Marcello: Okay, describe what your living quarters were like here at Hickam Field after you moved into the permanent barracks.

Magee: They were very modern; the barracks were brand new. Being summertime all the time, the windows were screened. There was no glass. In the latrine, the mirrors for shaving were really tin or aluminum. They were around in a circle. Of course, it was a mess because there was so many men. On the first floor was the orderly room and our dayroom and the first sergeants' room and the supply room. The first three graders stayed on the first floor--the single ones. Then we were upstairs on the second floor. Some other squadron was on the third floor above them.

Marcello: In other words, I gather this was a pretty large barracks, was it not?

Magee: Yes, yes. They were going to build another one just like it (chuckle) when it was time.

Marcello: How many people were in this barracks altogether? You might have to estimate this.

Magee: Let's see. I know there was. . . there must have been 1,200 to 1,500, at least, you know, probably more. It's kind of hard to say.

Marcello: What kind of working hours and so on did you have here at Hickam Field after you got out of boot camp and after you got out of school and after you began to work on the line itself?

Magee: Well, the first call was 5:15, and then, of course, we got up and we had to dress and go to breakfast. There was calisthenics for fifteen minutes. Then when we got finished, those going to the hangar line were marched to the hangar line, and those going to school were marched to school--always in formation. Those on details, of course, stayed in the barracks (chuckle). Then they marched us over to the hangar line, and then we were assigned to planes accordingly. After awhile, when you did get finished school, you were assigned to one crew as a rule. You usually stayed with them unless something caused a change--maybe you got rank and they made you a crew chief or something, I believe.

Marcello: What was the morale like during that period prior to the Pearl Harbor attack here at Hickam Field?

Magee: Well, the men seemed pretty well pleased. Of course, the twenty-one dollars a month kept us from going out too often (chuckle), but the morale was very good. They used to let us play ball and stuff like that. I know some men tried

suicide in the other branches of service--what we call the line outfits--the infantry, artillery, and signal corps. In fact, a few used to jump off the Pali. I remember one day one fellow jumped off the Pali for suicide, and the wind was so strong he only floated down--only broke his wrist (chuckle). It was on the front page of the Advertiser.

Marcello: But I assume this sort of thing was the exception rather than the rule.

Magee: Yes. You didn't see many suicides at Hickam that I can recall. I never heard of a suicide at Hickam. There were more in the, like I say, the line outfits.

Marcello: How do you account for the high morale in that pre-World War II period?

Magee: I don't know whether it's because we were technicians, you know, and the work. We were learning a trade. I don't know whether that had a lot to do with it or what, you know.

Marcello: It could have been the fact that all of you were volunteers at that particular time. In other words, you were there because you wanted to be there.

Magee: Yes, that could be.

Marcello: From what you said, the food was fairly good. . .

Magee: Yes, yes.

Marcello: . . . so that could have been a factor that may have been responsible for the high morale, too.

Magee: Yes, that could have done it, too.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you got out of school, you were put on the line servicing the B-18's and so on. What were these B-18's being used for at this particular time?

Magee: Well, they used to take them out on practice bombing missions. They used to. . . they had an island there someplace where they used to drop the bombs. I was only a private, so I never got to go out on them (chuckle). They'd take them up to what's called "swing the compass." Of course, the pilots had to get their time in. They'd go over to the other islands --the big island where Hilo was--and land, and they'd go to Kauai sometimes and then Maui or Molokai and things like that. Then, of course, all first three graders were entitled to flight pay, so that meant they got four hours a month. So they had to arrange flights for these men. Even the supply sergeants got four hours a month. The flight pay was extra money, and everybody wanted that. Now the radiomen and the armorers, they were luckier because they didn't have as many radiomen, and they didn't have as many gunners. But with us mechanics, there was so many of us that unless you got stripes, you didn't get flight pay. You didn't get to go up so often.

Marcello: Were they ever using any of these B-18's for reconnaissance and things of this nature during the pre-Pearl Harbor period?

Magee: Well, they used to go out, and I imagine they were reconnoitering. Of course, we were at peace, and they didn't really expect



anything. I don't know whether they called them reconnaissance missions or not, to tell you the truth. They used to do one thing. They used to try out parachutes from the B-18's. They'd come over Hickam, and they'd drop a whole bunch of them, you know, and land. I'd see one or two not open. I used to worry about that (laughter). Because, see, the B-18 could have never made it to the States or anything. Its range wasn't that big, so they couldn't go much farther than Hilo, you might say--that would be the extent--and back, you know.

Marcello: Now I gather these flights for the B-18's--whether they were engaged in training or bombing practice or reconnaissance or whatever--were taking place constantly.

Magee: Yes, everyday there was missions for somebody.

Marcello: How about the weekends?

Magee: Well, I don't think there was much flying. We used to have close order drill Saturday mornings--even the first three graders. That used to be the extent of it, usually. And on payday, too, there wasn't too much flying. They'd go up in the morning, and they'd come down. On payday afternoons you'd go off unless you were on one of these details.

Marcello: How long a day would you put in when you were on the line?

Magee: Well, it was about the equivalent of an eight-hour day, but I'd say it was easier (chuckle) than the civilians' eight hours, you know. We had an hour for lunch and things like that.

Marcello: What time would you usually knock off at the end of the day?

Magee: About four o'clock.

Marcello: You brought up the subject just a minute ago, and I'll pursue it a little bit further. When was payday?

Magee: I think it was the first weekday of the month. It was always only once a month in the Army.

Marcello: You got paid once a month?

Magee: Yes. You know, that's the thing now, the point. . . we used to get paid in the dayroom. We had two halls going to the dayroom. We'd go down one hall when they'd call your name, and you'd get your money. Of course, if you owed for pool or anything, you would use these other tables. They took it away from you. Then you'd come out. At this other end was always this Salvation Army line, see (chuckle), with a tambourine. You know, you could contribute if you wanted. I used to think, "If they're doing that in every squadron at every base, they must be picking up a lot of money." (laughter)

Marcello: By the time you got from one end of the line to the other, or from one end of the hall to the other end of the hall, how much of the twenty-one dollars would you usually have left?

Magee: Oh, probably about fifteen dollars (chuckle). See, they took \$1.50 out right away for laundry and fifty cents for the Old Soldiers Home, so you know two dollars is going to be out of the twenty-one before you even started (chuckle). Then they had canteen checks in those days.

Marcello: In other words, a canteen check is a booklet with coupons in it, isn't that correct?

Magee: Yes. You could use them, you know, because you'd usually be broke. You could use them at the PX or anyplace else.

Marcello: In other words, you would buy those canteen checks on payday to make sure that you had a sufficient. . .

Magee: No, you could get them anytime. They were against your next pay. It was like a credit, you might say.

Marcello: I see. Okay, so payday occurred in the first working day of the month. Describe what the social life was like for a young airman at Hickam Field during that pre-Pearl Harbor period.

Magee: I guess we all went to Hotel Street (laughter).

Marcello: Well, let me just back up here a minute and say this. How far was Honolulu from Hickam Field?

Magee: Well, as I told you about Hotel Street, that was the street that had the house that H. G. Wells called the "Sisters of Mercy." (laughter) The "hali" girls were three dollars; then there were the girls of the mixed nationalities, and they were only two dollars (laughter).

Marcello: Okay, let's just go back here a minute now. There were the "hali" girls. . .

Magee: That's what the Hawaiians called the whites. "Hali" is the Hawaiian term for white people.

Marcello: Oh, I see--and what was the second group called?

Magee: Well, I don't want to say "gooks" because they're become our friends since the war. But that's what they were-- girls of mixed nationalities.

Marcello: But what was the term you used awhile ago for them?

Magee: "Gooks."

Marcello: No, I think before that.

Magee: Oh, I said girls of mixed nationalities.

Marcello: Oh, okay.

Magee: Although there were some Portuguese--pure-blooded Portuguese --working there.

Marcello: And I assume that Hotel Street was frequented quite a bit by the services at that time.

Magee: Oh, yes. Every branch--Navy, too (chuckle).

Marcello: Evidently, on a weekend, especially after the Pacific Fleet was moved out to Pearl Harbor, Honolulu downtown was wall-to-wall bodies.

Magee: Yes. Payday, of course, it was very crowded. It didn't pay to frequent the places on payday (laughter).

Marcello: I've heard a lot of people say that they would actually stay away from downtown Honolulu on weekends mainly because of the fact that there were so many sailors in there, and there were wall-to-wall bodies.

Magee: That's ture. They told us once the fleet came in, right after we got there. . . and I thought they'd never left because of we'd see so many sailors (chuckle). You see, we could go

downtown in an aloha shirt and slacks--once you got the money to afford them--because that way the MP's wouldn't bother us. They had no way of knowing we were GI's. But the sailors, they couldn't go off base in uniform. They had to go downtown and rent a place and change, so they were usually in uniform.

Marcello: Now normally when you went to Honolulu, did you stay overnight, or did you come back onto the base?

Magee: I always came back on the base.

Marcello: Was it mainly because of economics?

Magee: That's true. Yes.

Marcello: Also, I've heard it said that there weren't exactly too many places you could stay in downtown Honolulu.

Magee: Well, there was room in rooming places, but I didn't know them because I never bothered to stay. But I know fellows took three-day passes and stayed--those that had the "wampum," you might say (chuckle), to do it with. So there must have been places.

Marcello: Okay, now the next question I'm going to ask has a great deal of historical bearing, and I want you to think about it and answer it carefully. Most people say that if the Japanese were going to attack Pearl Harbor and the other military installations, the best time to have done it would have been on a Sunday morning, the assumption being that Saturday nights were a period of drunken debaucheries, revelry, this sort of

thing. Consequently, the services would be in no shape to fight on a Sunday morning. How would you answer that assumption or that statement?

Magee: Well, there's a lot of good times on Saturdays, but I would say that doesn't cover every serviceman that was on the island. Some didn't go to town. Some men don't go for that sort of thing, too, you know. We're made up of different religious groups and different personalities. There might be a few with hangovers and things, but I wouldn't say it was that bad. The Navy responded in about five minutes after the first attack. Of course, it was the best time because even during maneuvers we never did anything on Sunday. Sunday was a day of rest. There wasn't anything around except guards.

Marcello: Now as conditions between the United States and Japan continued to worsen during that immediate pre-Pearl Harbor period, how safe and secure did you feel in the Hawaiian Islands? Did you or your buddies in your scuttlebutt ever talk very much about the possibilities of being attacked there?

Magee: No. No one seemed to worry much about that, although a couple of things happened. Like, one Japanese from the old land, he went out in the cane fields to, I think, commit hara-kiri, and he started a fire, and it spread through the cane field-- this fire (chuckle). There were things like that. So they knew. . . in fact, I was downtown in an aloha shirt and slacks

one day in Honolulu--I had a pass for the day--and I noticed the artillery coming from Fort "Kam"--that's short for Kamehameha --coming to town with their truckloads of GI's, pulling these big guns. I said, "Well, the line outfits are having maneuvers. They're going up in the mountains." When I got back to the base, the guys at the base told me, "Report to your squadron right away." I reported, and they said, "We're on alert," and they gave me a .45 and two clips. We dispersed our planes in those days. So they had already got some kind of a warning. Nothing happened and I guess General Short was afraid of too many alerts, and when the time came that we should have been alerted, we weren't.

Marcello: Okay, we'll come back and talk about this alert in just a little while because I think that it's kind of important. As a young serviceman at that time, what sort of an attitude did you have toward the Japanese? In other words, when you thought of a typical Japanese, what sort of a person did you usually conjure up in your own mind?

Magee: Well, we'd always heard they couldn't see good, and I guess that was what made us secure (chuckle). We figured that if they bombed us, they wouldn't hit us--which happened to be a fallacy.

Marcello: In other words, one of the stereotypes that most servicemen had of the Japanese was that the person with Coke-bottle-type glasses and this sort of thing.

Magee: Yes. I guess we figured that with the slant eyes they wouldn't see us so good. No one seemed to be too worried, frankly. I guess nothing had really ever happened. You'd see Japanese downtown, but so many of them were Japanese-Americans that you didn't really think too much of them. They didn't . . . I think we had more trouble with Filipinos ganging up on us more than anybody else (chuckle).

Marcello: How was this?

Magee: Well, guys would go downtown and get in a fight. I never happened to be in one, but I saw a couple of servicemen being ganged up on by six or seven Filipinos. I think it was over girls, though, I'd say. Or the fellows of mixed nationalities sometimes would gang up on them. I could see some of them were probably part-Hawaiian. Because the Hawaiians--well, we always called them "Royal Hawaiians"--the full-blooded ones, they seemed to be a minority (chuckle). They had intermarried so over the years that they seemed to be a minority.

Marcello: Okay, you mentioned that during that period immediately prior to the actual attack itself and as conditions between the two countries--Japan and the United States--worsened, you were put on an alert. Now once more I want you to repeat some of the things you mentioned about that alert, and then go into more details about what you did, how it took place, how long it lasted, and things of that nature.



Magee: Well, as I say, we were downtown, and I didn't know we were on alert until I got back.

Marcello: Could you pinpoint the date on that?

Magee: No, I couldn't unfortunately. You know, being nice weather all the time (chuckle), that's what makes it tough to pinpoint the date, you know.

Marcello: Now was it a couple of weeks prior to Pearl Harbor--the actual attack itself?

Magee: It's really hard for me to say. I don't know whether it was a month or quite a while. It's hard now because the weather being summer all the time, I can't pinpoint a day now after all these years.

Marcello: Okay, so describe what happened then.

Magee: Well, then we dispersed our planes. We had an A-20 outfit on the base with us, too. They were down at the other end. We dispersed all the planes--the B-17's, the B-18's, and A-20's --and they set up tents for us to be on guard. They put us on guard--two men.

Marcello: Where were these tents set up?

Magee: Right by the B-17's. This was out in the hangar line, by the way, the flight line. This lasted a couple of days, and nothing happened so they called it off. The rumor going around--this may be irrelevant--the rumor was going around that there was a Jap man-of-war heading toward Hawaiian waters. That shows

you how rumors go. We were supposed to have an understanding with Japan that none of their men-of-war were to come into Hawaiian waters unless they were in trouble. Then, of course, they radio in for permission. That was the rumor, but I guess it was really what "Tora! Tora! Tora!" showed. They'd broken the code.

Marcello: Okay, you mentioned that this maneuver or alert may have lasted perhaps no more than a week at the very most.

Magee: That's true.

Marcello: And you also mentioned that the B-18's were dispersed.

Magee: B-17's.

Marcello: The B-17's were dispersed. By this time you did have B-17's there on the island?

Magee: Yes, we had the D's. We sent some to the Philippines, but we kept some ourselves.

Marcello: About how many of these B-17's did you have here?

Magee: We had about four in a squadron. We had five squadrons in the 5th Bomb Group and five in the 11th Bomb Group. Then the A-20's. . .well, they had all A-20's. They're only twin engine ones. They were attack planes.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that these planes were scattered. How were they scattered, and where were they scattered?

Magee: Well, all over--from way over at the far end of the field, way over in the grassy section way past the runways. They were spread out all over the place. So if a plane did come,

it couldn't have hit them lined up wing tip-to-wing tip.

Marcello: Now normally, I gather, the planes were lined up wing tip-to-wing tip.

Magee: That's correct.

Marcello: Why was that done? Why were they lined up that way?

Magee: Well, in peacetime I guess they figured there was no need to disperse them, you know.

Marcello: Well, how convenient would that be for you, as a mechanic, to have those planes lined up in that manner?

Magee: Oh, that was very convenient, in fact, for everybody--the pilots, too. They walked out of the ready room right to the planes, and we could go right out to our own plane and things like that.

Marcello: I assume they were easier to fuel, too, if they were all in a line. The fuel trucks wouldn't have that hard a job.

Magee: Yes, that's true.

Marcello: During these maneuvers, were the planes painted any different colors or anything of this nature? Were they camouflaged in any way?

Magee: Well, back in peacetime, we used to sometimes paint the bottom of the planes black. They thought that in the air at night they wouldn't be seen as readily. Then, I understand, they came out with the conclusion that that made them too heavy, and they stopped it. You know, the paint added that much weight.

Of course, as an enlisted man I got mostly rumors (chuckle)  
--what's truth or what's fiction (chuckle).

Marcello: But during this period of the alert, there were no steps taken to camouflage the planes in any way?

Magee: No. That would have taken a lot of work. They would have had to get paint and get painters. You know, it would have, I guess. . .they just did what they thought of first and scattered them.

Marcello: Okay, so what happened, then, after you came off these maneuvers, or off this alert, I should say?

Magee: We just went back to our normal procedure. We turned our .45's in, our clips, and just went back to normal routine work.

Marcello: Incidentally, did Hickam Field per se have any defenses in the event of an air attack?

Magee: Not really. See, Fort Kamehameha was on the one side of us, and they were to protect the harbor. Across the harbor entrance was Fort Wheeler, which is part of that. They had the big guns to protect. All our guns were always kept on the hangar line over in a room. The ones we had mostly was .45's.

Marcello: In other words, what you're saying is--if I'm reading you correctly--there was virtually no antiaircraft weaponry as such to protect Hickam Field.

Magee: Yes. The only thing you might say is the machine guns in the planes.

Marcello: What fighter protection Hickam Field was to receive, I assume, was to come from Wheeler Field. Is this correct?

Magee: Yes, Wheeler and Bellows.

Marcello: So in other words, if they knocked out Wheeler Field and Bellows Field, there would be nothing to stop them at Hickam?

Magee: Yes, that's true.

Marcello: Because I would assume that guns at Fort Kamehameha and at Fort Weaver were all Naval rifles pointing toward the sea.

Magee: Well, I believe they did have some "ack-ack" over there. I believe they did point skyward.

Marcello: Okay, I think this brings us, then, into the days immediately prior to the actual Japanese attack itself. What I want you to do is at this point, in as much detail as you can remember, is to describe what your routine was on Saturday, December 6, 1941. After you do that, we'll talk about Sunday, December 7th. Let's start with the sixth first of all.

Magee: Well, if I remember correctly, I had the sixth off, so I probably went to Honolulu (chuckle) for a good time. I then came back that night and hit the sack for the night.

Marcello: Let me ask you this. When you came off maneuvers, were those scattered planes gathered together and lined up in the nice, neat rows once more?

Magee: That's correct. They were.

Marcello: In other words, this was done probably on a Saturday or something prior to the time you went on liberty?

Magee: Oh, well, as I say, I can't remember how far ahead the alert was. I couldn't really say it was just before it or weeks before it, to tell you the truth. I do know that four or five guys were playing poker in the latrine all night, thinking they'd sleep in the next day, it being Sunday (chuckle). That was quite a blow to them because they were really sleepy-eyed (laughter).

Marcello: Okay, do you remember what you did that day when you went into Honolulu?

Magee: No, not really. I probably went to see the "Sisters of Mercy" (chuckle) and walked around town afterwards or something, you know.

Marcello: Do you recall what time you may have come back to the base that night?

Magee: It was after dark, I remember that--probably nine or ten o'clock. Because I didn't like hanging around Hickam too well unless we were playing ball or something like that, you know.

Marcello: Okay, you came back to Hickem Field on that Saturday night. Did you notice anything out of the ordinary there at Hickam? In other words, were there more drunks than usual that seemed to be coming in, or were there any disturbances, or was it mainly a typical Saturday night?

Magee: Oh, it was just a typical Saturday night. It seemed no different than any other.

Marcello: What time did you turn in?

Magee: I'd say about ten o'clock, as near as I can remember.

Marcello: Okay, this, then, I think, would bring us into that Sunday morning of December 7, 1941. Where was your bunk located in the barracks?

Magee: Well, it was not. . .well, the barracks. . . see, the lobby-like was in the middle with the stairway going up in the middle, and the two wings went out each way. I was in the wing nearest the parade ground. I was just about three or four bunks down. Over our windows from the second floor, we could see Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: In other words, there was just a chain-link fence that separated Hickam from Pearl, isn't that correct?

Magee: Yes, I believe it was. Well, there were buildings, too. There was the housing for officers and the first three graders. There were some other buildings that separated the two bases. There were ball parks and things like that.

Marcello: But you did have a fairly good view of Pearl Harbor.

Magee: Yes, yes, very good.

Marcello: Could you see the ships entering and leaving the harbor?

Magee: Oh, yes. You could see the tops of them, you know. There was too many buildings to see the decks, but you could see the masts and things like that. In fact, we used to go down swimming where Hickam had a dock for ships coming to Hickam. We used to go down there and go swimming. We also had a search-and-rescue boat that we called "Hickam's Navy." They wore

sailors' hats and sailors' coats, but they had stripes, you know. They had a rescue boat that they kept down there at the entrance to Pearl, too.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us, then, to Sunday, December 7, 1941. Once more I want you to describe your routine from the time you got up until all hell broke loose.

Magee: Well, I was assigned to barracks police that morning, and the CQ overslept. They used to close our mess hall early, and I got down there just in time for the guy locking the mess hall doors (chuckle), I think, for breakfast. So I was an airman first class, specialist. I was only private by rank, but the specialist gave me a lot more money. So I figured, well, when I finished barracks police, I'd go down to Honolulu and get my breakfast--pay for it.

Marcello: Now what does "barracks police" mean?

Magee: Cleaning the barracks, you know--mopping, sweeping, and stuff like that.

Marcello: Where were you going to go for breakfast?

Magee: Into Honolulu.

Marcello: Okay.

Magee: I was going to buy it myself. So I was sitting on my bunk, and I had a pair of civilian oxfords to wear to town because Army shoes were all high. I was shining one of them when I heard this large formation of planes coming over. You could hear them over Pearl Harbor. I figured, "Well, it must be



the Navy. But this is Sunday! They can't be having. . . nobody's going to have maneuvers on Sunday!"

Marcello: Sunday is a day of leisure. Is that correct?

Magee: Yes.

Marcello: Can you get up at anytime you want to on Sunday?

Magee: Yes. If you're not on detail, you don't have to get up. The CQ used to wake up the men in details--the charge of quarters, CQ stands for.

Marcello: Now at the time that you heard these planes, were there quite a few men still in the bunks yet?

Magee: Yes. Some were in bunks; some were walking around--some half-dressed, some dressed--just leisure, you know, like you went around the barracks. Some were. . . I think there were a couple outside, too. When the first plane peeled off, I thought he was going to practice dive bombing. So when he went down, he dropped that bomb, and with all this smoke and flame, I said, "Well, he failed to pull out! He hit a fuel tank over there or something and blew up!" Of course, we all rushed to the window, and I could see a plane coming towards me. When this second guy went into this dive--this is going through my mind in seconds, you know--I said, "He couldn't have crashed! What's going on?" Then a guy yelled, "It's the Navy!" because the Naval planes were blue, too.

Marcello: Now were these planes actually attacking Pearl at this time?

Magee: Yes. The first guy had dropped that first bomb that we saw the flames and smoke. Sitting down from my bunk, I could see the flames and smoke.

Marcello: What sort of a day was it in terms of climate and weather?

Magee: Oh, it was typical Hawaiian weather, you know--nice, sunny, sunshine, warm.

Marcello: What was visibility like?

Magee: Oh, you could see to the horizon (chuckle). So this guy banked to the left, and I could see that rising sun with the bright orange and white stripe, and somebody yelled, "That's the Japs!" We all headed for the stairs.

So we went downstairs, and by the side of the road was a company, and they were going to head them to the parade ground --most of them. I saw this command car, so first I dove under there. I looked up and I saw this gasoline tank. I said, "I better not stay here because if they strafe and they happen to hit the gas tank, I'm liable to get cremated!" (chuckle) So I run over to the parade ground, and I flopped down next down to a guy named Clint Sousa. I remember his name because it was the same name as the band leader. He spelled it just like the band leader. Of course, the Japs were all over. They were very low because there was no resistance, you know.

Marcello: Okay, by this time, they are attacking Hickam Field.

Magee: Oh, yes. They bomb our fleet, and then they come over and they strafe our planes, see.

Marcello: Now how far were you from the actual strafing when you went . . . first of all, let me ask you this. Why did everybody run out of the barracks?

Magee: Well, I guess they figured the safest thing was to get out and throw yourself prone in case they dropped bombs on the barracks, you know.

Marcello: Now unlike the Navy, you did not have a battle station.

Magee: No, no.

Marcello: What was your first thought? In other words, where did you think you should be besides being out of the barracks?

Magee: Save myself (laughter).

Marcello: In other words, you didn't give any thoughts at this time of trying to get to the hangar line or to the flight line?

Magee: No, at first I didn't think of that.

Marcello: Okay, so you go outside the barracks. Pick up the story from this point.

Magee: Yes, and then as I say, then I laid down next to this guy Sousa. The Japs went over, and they had belly tanks to give them range. Of course, they're shaped like a bomb for streamlining. Sousa says to me, "I thought that was a bomb, but it's a belly tank!" I thought to myself "He's been in the Air Corps since 1939, and I knew that it was a belly tank!" Just then a Jap dropped a bomb in the middle of our consolidated mess, and me and my warped sense of humor, I says, "What the hell kind of a belly tank was that?" (chuckle)

Marcello: Okay, how far are you from the consolidated mess?

Magee: Oh, we weren't more than. . .I don't think a hundred feet.

Marcello: Describe what it was like when that bomb hit.

Magee: Well, of course, going in there. . . they didn't carry the heavy bombs. We didn't either, you know. It didn't seem that. . . you heard the explosion and that, but it didn't vibrate to us or anything, you might say, outside. I understand that's the bomb that killed three cooks from our squadron.

Marcello: Now what sort of cover did you have?

Magee: Well, just laying prone on the parade ground.

Marcello: In other words, you were out in the open?

Magee: Yes. I saw the most amazing sight of my life. I saw about ten guys headed for the "Snake Ranch"--that was the beer parlor. I looked up at this Jap, and three guys were running. And when he dropped his bomb, I looked back and not one of those ten guys was in sight. It was like the earth had swallowed them. I don't know (chuckle) what they went behind or anything. I know the Japs didn't strafe us that first attack. They couldn't have gone under a building because the buildings were raised. I never saw ten men disappear so fast (chuckle). To this day, I don't know where they ever went. But I've never forgotten that (chuckle).

Marcello: Now you mentioned that these Japanese planes were coming in and flying low because they weren't meeting any resistance. How low were they?

Magee: Oh, gosh, they weren't. . .I don't think they were fifty feet off the ground, you know. It seemed to you like they were no higher than the ceiling of your room, but you know they had to be a little higher than that.

Marcello: Were they coming in at a fast speed, or were they kind of gliding in?

Magee: They were moving around fast, and they were all over the place. I'm surprised they didn't run into each other.

Marcello: In other words, there didn't seem to be any pattern to the attack that they were making on Hickam Field.

Magee: No. Just as I say, after they hit the fleet, they'd come over and strafe our planes. Then they went after other things. We had a wooden chapel, and I understand they strafed that and set it on fire, hoping to catch guys at church, I guess. We had a ball park that had all the water mains under it. The first plans drawn up. . . the fifth columnists saw it. They were going to put them all under one parade ground, but they changed it, and they bombed the hell out of the one parade ground (chuckle), which was a break for us, see.

Then after that attack was over, we went over by the barracks, and the high-level bombers come over.

Marcello: Okay, now how long did that first attack last by these planes that were strafing?

Magee: I would say about. . .

Marcello: I'm sure it lasted what seemed like an eternity to you, but. . .

Magee: Yes. It seemed. . . maybe ten or fifteen minutes.

Marcello: During that time, did the thought ever run through your mind that you ought to try and get some sort of a weapon or anything of this nature?

Magee: No. You know what I thought of? I said, "Oh, this is it! We're really at war now!" And the other thing was, "Wait until they hear about this back in the States!" That's the first (chuckle) two thoughts that went through my mind.

Marcello: Now how close were you to the flight line at this point?

Magee: Oh, I guess we were. . . we weren't too far--a hundred yards, maybe. We used to just march over there all the time. We weren't too far from the hangar line anyway, you know.

Marcello: In other words, you had a pretty good view of the planes being destroyed over there?

Magee: No, not that, because the hangars would hide. . . they were parked on the other side of the hangars.

Marcello: I see. In other words, the hangars were between the parade ground and the flight line.

Magee: Yes. In fact, three men from our squadron went over, and they grabbed a "tug" as we called it, and they started dispersing planes. Their pictures wound up in the Advertiser.

Marcello: Okay, you mentioned these Japanese planes were flying extremely low. Did you have a good glimpse of the pilots themselves?

Magee: Well, to tell you the truth, I didn't look so much at him as I did the plane. Some men said they saw them shaking their

fists at us, but I frankly **didn't** look at the men in the planes (chuckle) as much as I did that "meatball" on the sides, you know.

Marcello: Did you remain prone on the parade ground during that first attack?

Magee: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, so what did you do, then, when the first attack was over?

Magee: Well, a bunch of us went back to the barracks, and we were standing in the doorway. Right behind them come the high-altitude bombers.

Marcello: About how long after the fighters were through?

Magee: Certainly it wasn't five minutes, I don't think.

Marcello: How would you describe the reaction of the men at this point? Was it one of professionalism? Confusion? Panic? How would you describe the reaction?

Magee: I think it was more self-preservation. They were all trying to (chuckle) keep from getting killed, you know.

Marcello: Was anybody trying to bring order to the chaos that evidently was reigning here at the base? In other words, was anybody taking charge and telling you where to go and what to do and that sort of thing?

Magee: No, no, not in our squadron.

Marcello: Okay, so you went back to the barracks. . .

Magee: And we were standing in the doorway on the side facing toward Pearl Harbor. We could see the high-altitude bombers, and this time the Navy was firing back. They'd shoot "ack-ack," and we'd see that puff, and we says, "Oh, boy! They got them!" Then we'd see them come out the other side of the puff because they were exploding too low. Then I saw them all let their "eggs" go at one time. I was hoping, I said, "I hope they miss the ships and fall in the water!"

Marcello: Now were any of these high-altitude bombers hitting Hickam Field?

Magee: No. At that time, they were bombing the fleet. They were going after the ships.

Marcello: Okay, so what do you do at this point now, since Hickam Field evidently isn't being attacked?

Magee: Well, then we went to the hangar line. We were on the hangar line, and then the fighters come back--the Zeros--and they start strafing again--strafing us. So we ran inside. . .

Marcello: Now by the time you reached the hangar line, were most of the planes already destroyed?

Magee: Yes, quite a few of them.

Marcello: Describe the scene that you saw at that time.

Magee: Well, some of them were burning, of course. Then there were those B-17's coming in from the States, and they (chuckle) had no ammunition at all. In fact, one landed in the runway,



and the Jap hit him, and he caught on fire because I remember the guys jumping out the window. Right in the middle of the runway, he caught on fire.

Marcello: Describe the B-17's coming in and what happened. Were you an eyewitness to this?

Magee: Yes, because I was right on the hangar line.

Marcello: Okay, describe it.

Magee: Well, it'd be mostly like a B-17 coming for a landing anyways, but then, of course, you knew they were under this attack. He hadn't much more than hit the runway than the Jap Zero would come and strafe him and set him on fire. But I believe all the men got out because I saw them jumping out the windows and everything else--to save themselves.

Marcello: Now when the fighters came back. . .

Magee: Oh, yes. They start strafing. We ran inside.

Marcello: Inside the hangar?

Magee: Inside the hangar, in the ready room. We never kept a plane in our hangar--unless there was a major overhaul--where other squadrons did. The fifth column had this down pat. They didn't touch our hangars per se, but they dropped a bomb in the hangar next to us. See, we were all joined by a big hallway. When that went off (chuckle), we all head back outside--when the bomb went off in the hangar next door. About maybe fifty of us were trying to get out two doors at one

time. Oh, by the way, by then we had our tin hats--the World War I helmets.

Marcello: Where did you get those?

Magee: Out of the supply room.

Marcello: Were they issuing any arms or anything of that nature there?

Magee: We didn't get a gun yet, as I remember. We didn't get a gun--just the tin hats. In fact, they had to get a key and get over and unlock the room for all the weapons. The 72nd Bomb Squadron did set up a machine gun between the hangars. They got these four-by-four's and set it up. They got a Jap on his way to Fort Kamehameha and set him on fire. He crashed over near Fort "Kam."

Marcello: You mentioned the fifth columnists awhile ago and the fact that the Japanese seemed to know where the planes were and where they weren't and this sort of thing. We talked previously about those planes being lined up in nice, neat rows. Wasn't it true that that was done in order to protect them against fifth columnist activity and saboteurs. In other words, the planes were easier to guard when they were in nice, neat rows.

Magee: Well, I didn't know that until I saw "Tora! Tora! Tora!" General Short said that. That, I didn't know. I thought it was just because it was a peacetime thing to do, you know.

Marcello: But did you talk very much about the possibility of sabotage if there ever were war with Japan?

Magee: No, we didn't seem to be too worried about the Japanese-Americans, you know. They weren't so bad as the old country Japs (chuckle) were, really. They were the ones to watch. It didn't seem like there was too much worry. We had Japs working in the HAD--Hawaiian Air Depot--and things like that. In fact, one man was firing back from the B-18, and a Jap worker was passing him ammunition. They strafed that B-18, and he went down. He got cremated while he was still firing that machine gun at them.

Marcello: Okay, so you ran in the barracks when the fighters came back and began strafing. . .

Magee: The hangar.

Marcello: . . . ran back in the hangar, right. Then you ran outside again when an adjacent hangar was being bombed. What happened at that point?

Magee: Well, then we laid down on the concrete of the runway. Because I remember seeing a Jap come back from John Rogers Airport, which is now Honolulu's International Airport. I used to . . . from World War I movies, I was always afraid of losing my sight (chuckle), and I was down there with my head down and my arms around my eyes. But he evidently didn't strafe us. He was down more like by the A-20's.

Then when that attack eased up and they had to go back, of course, we got up again. Then we got our .45's. In the meantime,

they set up this other machine gun up on the parade ground, too, which I found out later.

Then when they come back and they bombed Pearl Harbor, I can remember they had a bi-plane--it must have been one of the reconnaissance ones they had--and he was coming over Pearl Harbor, and he was moving so slow that I thought he was hardly moving. Somebody over at Aiea hit him, and he burst into one ball of fire. Their planes were very flammable.

Then I remember another Jap fighter's right wing was smoking, and he'd wiggle and it would stop. My heart would drop. And it would start to smoke again, and he'd wiggle it and it would stop. Then it would start to smoke again. That's what he was doing the last time I saw him. He got behind buildings. I doubt if he ever got back to the carrier like that, though.

Marcello: Did you observe people trying to shoot at these Japanese planes with .45's and things of this nature?

Magee: No. The only ones that I saw shoot back was those guys from the 72nd Bomb Squadron with a machine gun. Because you wouldn't have done much with a .45.

Marcello: From what you've said, I gather that you observed at least three separate attacks here at Hickam Field.

Magee: Yes.

Marcello: The fighters, the high-level bombers, and then the fighters again.

Magee: Yes. The high-level bombers, though, seemed to hit Pearl Harbor more than us.

Marcello: Okay. What did the field look like now in the aftermath of the attack?

Magee: Well. . .

Marcello: Describe it as best you can remember.

Magee: Well, you know, it's strange. I remember the barracks better. They were pretty well smashed. They weren't busted, but you could see the scars of bombing and strafing. Oh, by the way, when the Japs used to go by our flag, they strafed it. It had a tear in it about twelve inches long, but it never came down. It seemed like they wasted ammunition on that.

Marcello: This is one of the symbolic pictures that one usually sees in the aftermath of the attack--this tattered flag still flying on the flagpole.

Magee: Yes. In fact, it was in the December 7, 1942, edition of the Advertiser. The next day in the paper, they had a picture of the flag on the Arizona still flying.

Marcello: Okay, now describe what sort of emotions you had in the aftermath of the attack.

Magee: Well, gee, now it's kind of hard. . . I can remember seeing a fellow by the name of O'Brien. If you ever saw the look of fear in a man's face, he had it. Oh, the fear (chuckle) was really personified. We had a first three-grader that was

"stewed" [drunk], and he kept saying, "They'll be back! Mark my words!" I wanted to hit him (laughter). That's all I needed, was for somebody to tell me they'd come back! Those two things, I can remember.

Marcello: Did you observe very many casualties?

Magee: I went back to the hangar, and on the way back to the hangar, they were picking up bodies. They had three American Sanitation Laundry trucks from Honolulu there, and they were picking up bodies and putting them in the back of them to take to the morgue. I saw that. Then I saw one of the fire trucks, and it was like a cinder. It could move, but it was all black from the bombing. It went by.

Marcello: Now were you receiving any sort of orders or anything of that nature?

Magee: Not up until then, no.

Marcello: In other words, the attack's over, and you're still not receiving any orders. You're kind of freelancing. You're on your own.

Magee: Yes. I understand. . . I heard later that in the case of some of the men that were at the barracks, the line chief, Stanland, had told them, "Get over to the hangar on your own! Don't try to go over in formation!" He told them, "Don't try to go over in formation! Go over on your own so you're scattered!"  
Because the first sergeant at the air base unit lined the

men up, and they had heavy casualties, I understand.

Marcello: Now what did you do in the aftermath of the attack? What did you personally do?

Magee: Well, as I told you, I went back to the barracks that time, and I saw the men. I was upstairs in the barracks, and one of the fellows come up, and he says to me, "Did you see the body down there in the gutter with the blanket over it?" But I had come in the other entrance of the barracks, and I said, "No." I found out later that this fellow--he was an armorer; he had been in one of the line outfits--he used to always say when his hitch was up in Hawaii, he was going to become a guard at the Army prison in Kansas.

Marcello: Fort Leavenworth?

Magee: Yes, Fort Leavenworth. Because, you know, it was a good racket--you worked one day, and you had four off. Somebody said that he'd come up to the barracks and said, "They're setting up a machine gun on the parade ground. I'm going to go down and show them how to shoot it." I guess when he went down, a Jap plane must have strafed him. At that time, I didn't know it was him.

Then I went back to the hangar line, and somebody asked me. . . I remember this guy LeMarquend--Ed Le Marquend, from Greenpoint, Brooklyn. He was French. I remember a B-18. . . and way down the end of the field, four P-40's went over, and the last guy for some reason peeled off, and he buzzed

the runway, you know. Everybody in the field opened up on him (chuckle) because everybody was trigger-happy. LeMarquend had his back against the wheel, and I was laying on my stomach, and he says, "Is it the Japs?" I said, "No, it's a P-40." He said, "What the hell are they shooting at us for?" I said, "I don't know! They're probably trigger-happy!" (chuckle) Fortunately for him, they aimed at. . . you got to lead a plane so he flies into it, and they aimed at him. Why he ever did that, I'll never know. This was after the attack, and everything was quiet.

Marcello: Now are they firing at this plane with all sorts of arms?

Magee: Yes, anything. . . mostly machine guns--like the one on the parade ground--opened up on him.

Marcello: Were you given any specific assignments in the aftermath of the attack?

Magee: Well, afterwards, a fellow asked me to go over to the barracks with him, and I always regretted this because this first sergeant grabbed us, and they lined us up with men from the other squadron, and they took us all and they put us on like ground patrol--ground security--like infantrymen, I guess (chuckle). They gave us .30-06's. They took us way down the far end of Hickam where, you might say, the woods was almost, you know. We were there, and then they. . .

Marcello: How long were you there?



Magee: I was there for about a week like that before I got back to the 31st Bomb Squadron.

Marcello: I'm sure that that evening there were a lot of trigger-happy GI's around.

Magee: Oh, yes. Well, you know what happened? That night somehow, Pearl Harbor must not have got the word, and everybody in Pearl Harbor opened up, and you could see all the tracers going. It was really beautiful--like the Fourth of July (chuckle)--except for the morbid part of it.

Marcello: In other words, this was when those airplanes were coming in off the American carriers.

Magee: Oh, no. They used to come over during the attack--those planes from the carrier. Nothing came over at night. I know one . . . it might have been our squadron commander because I understand we had the only plane that was flyable, and it was a B-18. They told him that all the bombers were going to go out and find the Jap fleet and bomb it (chuckle). We had a twin engine B-18. But they didn't find the Jap fleet.

Marcello: Describe what it was like that night.

Magee: Well, they'd load us on trucks and took us up to relieve all the guys on guard. When they got through, I was left over, so they took me back. Then they wanted to get some ammunition up in the hills. I rode up there in the hills, and because of the blackout they put the lights out for a while and turned

them off; then turned them on; then turned them off--you know, the headlights of the trucks. We went up there and got ammunition, and we'd come back.

Marcello: Could you hear a lot of sporadic firing taking place?

Magee: No, things. . . I guess they realized after all these hours that the Japs had gone, you know. We come back and. . . the tough part was that I had no protection against mosquitos because we guys were outside. We had no mosquito nets. We always had the screens on the windows. That was the toughest part of that night.

Marcello: Did you have very much of an appetite that day?

Magee: Why, nothing ever affected my desire to eat (chuckle). I always could eat even after operations, you know, so it didn't bother me there so much.

Marcello: How did your attitude toward the Japanese change in the aftermath of the attack?

Magee: Well, naturally, I hated them for what they had done, you know. They had killed some guys from our squadron and that, and then I knew we were in for a long war and so forth. So naturally, I didn't have much like towards them (chuckle).

Marcello: Well, Mr. Magee, that's all the questions that I have. Is there anything else that you think we need to discuss and get as part of the record? In other words, can you think of any funny things or heroic things that you observed that particular

day that ~~we~~ ought to bet as a part of the record?

Magee: The only funny thing I can think of is Sousa (chuckle)--about that belly tank. No, I guess that's about it for the actual attack.

Marcello: Okay. Well, I want to thank you very much for taking time to talk with me. You have a very good memory, and you've said some very important things that I think historians are going to find relevant someday when they write about Pearl Harbor.

Magee: Well, thank you for interviewing me.