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Van B. Cross  
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Place of Interview: Austin, Texas  
Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello  
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Oral History Collection

Van Cross

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Austin, Texas

Date: May 15, 1976

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Van Cross for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on May 15, 1976, in Austin, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Cross in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was stationed at Hickam Field during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor and the surrounding military facilities on December 7, 1941.

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

Mr. Cross: Well, I was born on August 15, 1920, in Burkburnett, Texas, you know, up in North Texas. And after I graduated from high school in '37, I was out about a year, and then I joined the Army Air Force in Randolph Field in '38.

Dr. Marcello: Why did you decide to enter the service?

**Cross:** Well, you're probably too young to know, but we were still in the throes of the Depression at that time, so there wasn't a heck of a lot more that you could do.

**Marcello:** You know, this is a standard reason that a great many people of your generation give for having entered the service. Times were tough, and the service represented a certain amount of security. You were receiving steady pay, as limited as it was, and three meals a day. So it looked pretty good.

**Cross:** Right. Well, of course, like I said, my family wasn't well-to-do, but they were comfortably off. Nevertheless, you know, when a man gets seventeen or eighteen years old, he's ready to go out on his own.

**Marcello:** Why did you decide to enter the Army Air Force as opposed to one of the other branches of the service?

**Cross:** I haven't the slightest idea, except that the Air Force appealed to me a lot more than, say, the infantry, which we had up in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, not too far from Burkburnett. We had Fort Sill.

**Marcello:** Where did you take your basic training?

**Cross:** Well, basic training at that time, we didn't have any.

**Marcello:** In other words, you went directly to your duty station and received whatever training you received once you got there.

**Cross:** Right. When I got in in August of '38, I think the

authorized strength of the Army, which the Air Corps was a part, was about 110,000 men, and I believe that the whole strength at that time was 97,000. So you were assigned a squadron, and you had what basic training they gave, and that was it.

Marcello: Where were you assigned?

Cross: At Randolph Field was the 14th School Squadron, and I was at Randolph Field and took a short discharge in September of '39, and I reenlisted for the Hawaiian Department and . . . let's see . . . I'm trying to think I went over to Oahu in May of 1940.

Marcello: Why did you decide to volunteer for the Hawaiian Department?

Cross: Well, there again, I guess it's all the adventure (chuckle) that goes with it, you know.

Marcello: At the time that you reenlisted, did you give very much thought to the possibility that the country might soon be at war with either Germany or Japan?

Cross: No. You see, this was in September of 1939. I took a short discharge because you had to have two years of foreign service. Of course, it just wasn't a matter of transferring on your current enlistment. You had to take a short discharge on what time you had--what they called a short discharge--and reenlist. So in September of '39, there was a little gumbling over in Spain, but, I mean, nothing that I'd pay any attention to. I'm sure the statesmen probably did.

Marcello: Okay, I assume that when you got to the Hawaiian Islands, you were sent directly to Hickam Field?

Cross: Yes, yes.

Marcello: Identify your unit, in full, to which you were assigned here at Hickam Field.

Cross: I was assigned to the 14th Bomb Squadron.

Marcello: And what was your specific function in the 14th Bomb Squadron?

Cross: That was a good question. While I was at Randolph Field, oh, I guess about the first year, I was a dispatcher on A-Stage, that is, the dispatcher that assigned the flying cadets for airplanes. Then I took this course in a Link trainer because . . . that's an instrument flying trainer, a ground trainer. It was named after the inventor, Mr. Link. They were expanding Randolph to be all basic training. At that time, we had . . . Randolph was booked primarily for basic flying. Then cadets went over to Kelly Field and got their advanced training and graduated. But they were going to make Randolph all basic training and then let the civilian contract schools do the training in the primary stages for the cadets. They had started the Air Force expansion at that time.

So I went over to the islands as a Link trainer instructor, and although I was assigned to the 14th Bomb Squadron, I was attached to the 11th Bomb Group as a Link

trainer operator or instructor. I think possibly in August or September of '41, they formed a 1st Provisional Squadron. My squadron commander was Captain Emmett O'Donnell, who later became, I think, commanding general of the Far Eastern Air Force or whatever it was. I believe it was in August or September of '41 that they formed this 1st Provisional Squadron and sent it to the Philippines at Clark Field in Manila. I wanted to go along, but Major O'Connell--a major at that time--told me, he said, "Well, Cross, we don't have anything in the T.O. for a Link trainer." So I was transferred to the 42nd Bomb Squadron under Roger Raney, and I was in the 42nd at the time of the raid.

**Marcello:** Okay, describe what Hickam Field looked like from a physical standpoint at the time that you arrived there. Was it in the process of being built?

**Cross:** They were just, you might say, putting the finishing touches on it. Well, actually, all of it hadn't been completed as far as the officers' quarters, you know, living quarters. Barrack-wise and hangar-wise, yes. But as far as a lot of the quarters and other things, it was still under construction. I believe that barracks--I don't know whether you're familiar with the barracks there at Hickam or not--was designed to house 5,000 men. Now how many we had at one time, I don't know. I don't think there was possibly 5,000.

Marcello: Were you able to move right into the barracks, or did you have to live in "Tent City" when you got there?

Cross: Oh, no, we moved right into the barracks.

Marcello: How would you describe the training that you received in that pre-Pearl Harbor Air Corps? Was it good? Excellent? Fair? How would you describe it?

Cross: Well, not having anything to compare it with, I don't know how you would . . . there was only one of the one thing--how would you know how good it is or how bad it is, you know. Just from my own personal observation, I think that the training then was a heck of a lot better than what you're getting now, as far as the discipline and regimentation are concerned. It seems to me now that it's nothing more than just an overgrown Boy Scout outfit.

Marcello: What was morale like in that pre-World War II Air Corps?

Cross: Oh, I think it was pretty high, really. Of course, anytime you get several hundred or several thousand men together, you're going to naturally have some . . . I don't know whether you'd say dissenters or not. I wouldn't say it's all one big happy family, but, no, I think morale was pretty high.

Marcello: How do you account for the fact that morale was so high?

Cross: Well, I never thought about it, really.

Marcello: I guess we could start by saying that everybody was a volunteer, so they were there because they wanted to be there.



**Cross:** Oh, true, true. Well, you've got to understand the age of the men involved, too. You know, we're talking about nineteen, twenty-year-old men as a rule. I don't know.

**Marcello:** What was the food like here at Hickam Field?

**Cross:** It was alright, not as good as it was at Randolph. It was served cafeteria-style. It was not as good as it was at Randolph, but it was alright. I never had too much complaints about the Army chow. We always had a mess hall to eat in, as opposed to some of them that always had to eat out of field kitchens, I think, you know, in the line outfits.

**Marcello:** What were the living quarters like here at Hickam Field? You mentioned that you had moved into these barracks. Were you satisfied with the living quarters?

**Cross:** Oh, yes. Of course, at that time, you didn't have individual rooms. As I understand it, they have them now with one or two men to a room, whatever it is. I don't know. At that time, we had what they called "bays." The "bays" would hold, oh, anywhere from eighty to 120 men. But that was what the Army was like. So that was what you started with, and that was what you ended with.

**Marcello:** Well, I think all of these things that we've talked about would contribute to the high morale. The food

wasn't bad; the quarters themselves weren't bad; everybody was a volunteer. Probably all of these things played a part in the high morale.

Cross: I'm sure they would, yes. It was all of them that go together and make the whole package.

Marcello: Okay, for you personally, what was a routine day like at Hickam Field prior to December 7, 1941? What did you do in a routine day?

Cross: Well, you know, as I told you, I was a Link trainer instructor. That's a ground instruments trainer. The pilots were required to get an hour or thirty minutes every six months in the Link trainer, which they usually waited until the last two weeks in June to do it. So that was about the only time I was busy. The rest of the time, there was not much to do, really (chuckle). So my days were pretty uneventful.

Marcello: How long of a day would you put in?

Cross: Oh, gosh, I don't know, say eight o'clock to four o'clock or something like that. I don't know really.

Marcello: I didn't know if you were on tropical working hours or not.

Cross: Oh, no, Hawaii isn't quite that tropical as far as . . . no, you had just regular hours like you had in the Mainland.

Marcello: As relations continued to deteriorate between the United States and Japan, and as one gets closer and closer to

December 7, did your routine change any or vary any?

**Cross:** Well, yes. As a matter of fact, we were on . . . we had had various alerts, you know. The base was put on various alerts from time to time because of the . . . evidently, because of the tension, you know, between them. Well, you understand, I was only a private. I don't know what the devil was going on (chuckle). I didn't read too many newspapers at that time, either. So that was about the only thing, like I say. The base would be on and off alert from time to time.

**Marcello:** When the base would be on one of these alerts, what would you personally be assigned to do?

**Cross:** It didn't make any difference, as far as I was concerned. Like I say, whether the base is on alert or not, I think, the only thing is that we just had extra guard duties and whatnot. But as far as me personally, it didn't make a bit of difference.

**Marcello:** In other words, you still continued your function as a Link trainer and acted as though nothing else happened. I guess this more or less leads me into my next question then, since we brought up the subject of alerts. What was the liberty routine like here at Hickam Field in the pre-Pearl Harbor days?

**Cross:** Oh, you came and went as you wanted it to. There was no problem. It was just like the motel here. You want to go

to town, so you walk out the door, get in your car, and go to town.

Marcello: In other words, as long as you didn't have the duty, you could have liberty?

Cross: Exactly, right.

Marcello: Under a routine like that, how many days a week must you have liberty?

Cross: Seven days a week.

Marcello: You could possibly get it seven days a week?

Cross: Now you're talking about all day, like a three-day pass or something like that?

Marcello: No, I'm talking about anything from one day or eight hours or whatever it might be. In other words, everytime you got liberty, it wasn't obviously a three-day pass.

Cross: Well, we didn't refer to it as liberty, like probably the sailors did because, of course, they operate under an entirely different system, naturally. No, with us it was just like it would be in civilian life. When you're through with your job, you go home or wherever you want to go until the next day.

Marcello: And you did not have to be back aboard that base at midnight?

Cross: Oh, no.

Marcello: How far was Hickam Field from Honolulu?

Cross: I'd say four or five miles.

Marcello: Was it very difficult to get from Hickam Field into Honolulu?

Cross: Oh, no. The buses ran just a shuttle every thirty minutes or so. It wasn't any problem.

Marcello: When you were off-duty, where did you usually spend your time? Did you go into Honolulu or just stick around the base?

Cross: Oh, generally I'd go into Honolulu. At that time, I think there was about 110,000 people there.

Marcello: What did you usually do when you went on liberty?

Cross: Not a heck of a lot . . . just go downtown and peek around.

Marcello: When was payday?

Cross: The last day of the month.

Marcello: In other words, the Army and the Air Corps only got paid once a month?

Cross: Once a month. The Navy, I understood, got paid twice a month. And I think the Army does now. I think they have for several years been paid twice a month. But at that time, it was once a month.

Marcello: How much were you, as a private, making at that time?

Cross: Well, I was a corporal. Well, see, a private . . . well, gee, I know when I went in, a private got \$21 a month. And, by the time they got your Old Soldiers Home and KP and laundry, you've got \$18.75. And in proportion to everything, I think I was probably making about \$30 a month (chuckle).

Marcello: Now at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack, were you a corporal? Or what was your rank at the time of the attack?

Cross: I think I was a buck sergeant at the time of the attack. See, I'd taken the cadet's screen test in the summer of '41. At that time, to get into the flying cadets, you either had to have at least two years or college or pass an equivalency exam, what you call a screen test. So I passed my screen test in the summer of '41 and, of course, then the physical, and I had gotten my orders in the latter part of November to come back to the States to take pilot's training on the first available transport, well, which would have been the General Grant.

Marcello: General Grant?

Cross: General Grant. It came in possibly about the fourth or fifth of December, and I think it was supposed to sail about the ninth or tenth. But anyhow, this raid took care of that for the time being (chuckle).

Marcello: Okay, now how did your liberty routine change during all of these alerts that you had prior to the actual attack?

Cross: It didn't. It didn't change any, really. As I say, they posted extra guards, and I'm sure they took other security measures, but as far as I was personally concerned, I didn't notice any difference, really.

Marcello: Did you or your buddies ever talk very much about the possibility of a Japanese attack of the military facilities in that area?

**Cross:** No, not really because, of course, I had been over on the islands, well, at the time of the raid, a year and a half, over a year and a half, I guess. I was all over the islands. With all the other Army installations there, it was . . . well, to think of a raid was just . . . it wouldn't ever enter your mind, really. With the Navy and their ships and their patrols and all of the flying that just went on, it was just very unimaginable to think that . . . even if somebody had suggested that the Japanese were going to raid, I'd have said, "Forget it!"

**Marcello:** When you thought of a typical Japanese, what sort of a person did you usually conjure up in your own mind?

**Cross:** Well, Lord only knows we had enough of them over in the islands. They called them the "melting pot of the world," and I think it was there in Honolulu, especially, in all types and sizes. So Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos, I mean, hell, they're all alike, as far as that's concerned.

**Marcello:** Did you know anything about any of the air reconnaissance that was carried on out of Hickam Field, or was this beyond your scope?

**Cross:** No, not really. Now after I got in the 42nd Bomb Squadron, which was, I believe, in about September, I got on flying status as any assistant engineer. At that time, we were flying . . . well, we had gotten in our B-17's earlier.

But prior to that, they had the old Douglas B-18. But I don't know whether we had any special reconnaissance or not because we had our routine missions, flying missions, which possibly doubled as both training and reconnaissance, I guess. But as far as actually doing any reconnaissance, I don't know whether there was or not.

Marcello: How long did you train in the B-17's?

Cross: Well, you might say that I just went along as a passenger or as assistant engineer and tail-gunner. That was about it. And that was the old B-17D, I believe it was, with the tail gun around the back. The gun turrets were . . . they were supposed to have this new gun sight on them, as opposed to the old ring and post thing. But, no, there wasn't any formal training as far as that was concerned.

Marcello: Okay, I think this brings us up to the days immediately prior to the actual attack on Pearl Harbor. What I'd like you to do at this point is to describe in as much detail as you can remember what your routine was on Saturday, December 6, 1941. Then we'll go into the 7th. But let's start with the 6th, first of all. Start with your routine from the time you get up in the morning until you went to bed that night or whatever.

Cross: Well, of course, on Saturdays . . . I'm just trying to think . . . there's hardly any duty on Saturday; there's no flying on Saturday. I think once a month we had a little drill



formation, just because we was in the Army. We had to get out and drill. I don't know whether we had drilled that Saturday or not, but it was, you might say, just like any other Saturday--nothing to make any note of.

Marcello: Did you have the duty on that Saturday?

Cross: No.

Marcello: But you did stick around the base?

Cross: Oh, yes.

Marcello: There's something else I forgot to ask you, and this might be a good place to put it into the record. All of the planes at most of these bases were usually lined up in straight rows. Why was that done?

Cross: Well, there is no reason not to, really. It was more convenient to have the ships parked, you might say, wing-tip to wing-tip than, as, of course, after the war, having them dispersed all over the flying area. So it's just like your parking strips out here in the lot. There's absolutely no reason to disperse them in any kind of a random fashion.

Marcello: I would assume they would be much easier to guard them that way, too, would they not?

Cross: Oh, certainly, yes.

Marcello: Is it not true that one of the major concerns of the Army was the possibility of sabotage by these Japanese on the island?

Cross: Well, not only by the Japanese, but from the inside as well, you know. Let's face it, regardless of what the enemy power's name is, very certainly it's only logical to assume that they're going to have some of their own agents in the service. So it's not only against, like I said, the Japanese saboteurs per se, but against any type of a saboteur.

Marcello: I've also heard it said that, of course, it was much easier to refuel those planes, also, if they were lined up in that manner.

Cross: Oh, yes, certainly.

Marcello: In other words, it was for convenience.

Cross: Oh, yes, convenience, practicality. That was the only thing.

Marcello: Okay, let's get back again to your routine again on Saturday, December 6. You may have some sort of a little exercise or little training. What did you do in the afternoon or the rest of the day?

Cross: Well, I went down to Honolulu that night, I remember that, but, gee, it was just another Saturday.

Marcello: Do you recall what time you came back, or did you not come back that night?

Cross: Oh, yes, I came back. It was probably, I guess, around midnight or one o'clock or so.

Marcello: Were you in pretty good shape when you came back?

Cross: Not feeling any pain. You know, not feeling any pain.

Marcello: Was this typical of people that would be returning to Hickam Field on Saturday night?

Cross: I'd say it was typical, yes. You're going to have an abstainer once in awhile, but they're in the minority (chuckle). I mean, when a busload of soldiers or sailors comes back in onto the base from town, they're a pretty happy group, as a rule.

Marcello: How would this have impaired your fighting ability on a Sunday morning?

Cross: Well, I'll tell you, it sobers you up awfully damn quick, so I don't think it was impaired a bit in the world.

Marcello: Okay, so you came in on a Saturday night, relatively early in the morning; you were feeling no pain, to use your words. This more or less brings us into Sunday, December 7th, 1941, and once again, I'll ask you to pick up the story and go into as much detail as you can remember what happened on that Sunday morning from the time you got up until the attack was over.

Cross: Well, our squadron was on the top or the third floor of the barracks on the wing that faced Pearl Harbor. And, gee, I remember the fellows wakening me up there by the window because the window is just one solid window without any window glass at all. There was just the screen there because they didn't need any, of course.

Marcello: In other words, you had a good view of the harbor itself?

Cross: Yes, the whole thing. Like I say, it was just like practically across the street over there.

Marcello: In other words, it was what--100 feet, 150 feet away?

Cross: Oh, no, more than that. It was probably, oh, a half a mile. But, I mean, you know, from that level you could practically throw a bottle over into it. And, these fellows up there at the window were talking, so I got up because there was several of them.

Marcello: How were you feeling?

Cross: Oh, I was feeling alright then. Understand, this was, as it turned out later, to be 7:55 in the morning, so I was feeling alright. Except I think it was just traditional that you slept late on Sunday mornings.

And so I got up and looked out the window, and I saw the oil storage tanks over there at Pearl on fire. I don't know how many there was, but there were several of them on fire. And I could see the planes going over and dropping their bombs. I said, "Well, hell, the Navy just got through trying to bomb the fire out, you know, over at the tanks, that's all."

I got back in bed and I just darned near got my head back on the pillow when a bomb hit the Hawaiian Air Depot, which is where they repaired, you know, aircraft. It was on down from our barracks possibly, oh, a couple hundred

yards. Well, I immediately knew . . . of course, I didn't know what it was but, boy, when it just blew me out of bed, I knew that something wasn't cricket.

Marcello: It actually blew you out of bed on the floor?

Cross: No, not much (chuckle). No, it wasn't quite that an explosive a force, but it sounded like it. And so I immediately got up and ran down the three flights of stairs, and I think I took one step per flight, really. I went over to the baseball diamond, which was just diagonally across the street from the barracks, and got in one of the dugouts with several of the other fellows. Like I said, you can't imagine that everything was in such a state of confusion because nobody knew what the hell was happening. Of course, we knew what was happening, but . . . I think that was just about it for the first wave which lasted how long? As I understand, the waves were what, about forty or forty-five minutes or something like that?

Marcello: During the first attack, were you strafed or anything of this nature there at Hickam Field?

Cross: Oh, yes!

Marcello: Well, describe what this was like. In other words, when were you strafed? Was it when you were heading from the barracks over to the ballfield, or when?

Cross: Well, no, this was after I was already in the ballfield, and other fellows were . . . well, I say we were running,

but we didn't know where we were running to, you know. But the planes were trying to . . . of course, what ships could were trying to get out. They were trying to get out of the harbor, and the Japas were coming over and trying to sink a ship, you know, and bottle up the harbor, and, of course, they just continued. . . because like I said, Pearl Harbor just went right along the perimeter there at Hickam Field, and they just continued right on practically at ground level at Hickam.

Marcello: Well, describe what strafing you did come under when you were in this trench here at the ballfield.

Cross: Well, gee . . .

Marcello: I mean, did the Japanese planes specifically strafe the area where you were located?

Cross: Oh, yes, yes, because, like I said, we were just all running out of the barracks and up the street and everywhere else, across the ballfield. Like I said, it seemed like an eternity, although I understand that it was only some forty minutes or so until the attack was over.

Marcello: Well, again, describe what it was like to be in that strafing. I'm not going to let you get off the subject. You know, here you are, you're running into this trench, and . . . by this time, had the Japanese bombed the planes that were already on the field?

Cross: Oh, yes, they were hitting the planes and the hangars, also. Oh, yes! Like I said, I mean, gee whiz, what the devil can you say, except that you're scared as hell.

Marcello: How close to you was this strafing actually coming? I mean, was it within a couple of feet or a couple of yards?

Cross: As close as that table there (gesture)--about two feet.  
Oh, yes!

Marcello: In other words, unlike the Navy, you did not have a specific battle station to go to?

Cross: Oh, no, no! There wasn't anything like that. Now I see what you're getting at. If we had been trained in the case of an emergency and certain things, as with the Navy, you know, in the case of general alarm or general quarters . . . they've got certain duties and certain stations.  
No, we did not have that.

Marcello: Even so far as protection of the base, I guess you were counting on Wheeler Field's fighters to protect you, and they had already been knocked out, too. Isn't that correct?

Cross: Well, we didn't know it at the time.

Marcello: But this is where your protection would have come from?

Cross: Oh, yes. They had . . . as you know, a big bomber is practically a sitting duck, even though you've got . . . what did we have--nine 50-millimeter guns on it?

Marcello: Fifty-caliber guns?

Cross: Yes, .50-caliber. If all of the gunners were like I was, they couldn't hit the side of a barn. Anyhow . . . oh, no, your protection, as far as that was concerned, would have come from the pursuit planes up at Wheeler.

Marcello: Okay, so what did you do, then, between the first attack and the second attack? There was a lull in there, and during the first attack, you were in this trench.

Cross: Oh, yes, and in just my undershorts. I remember that (chuckle). Well, you know, I mentioned that they were still completing the construction on Hickam Field, and the 11th Group Headquarters occupied what was supposed to have been a bachelor officers' quarters, so there was a lot of trucks and other types of jeeps and other military vehicles. I don't know whether there were any jeeps. No, I don't think we had any jeeps at that time. I don't remember. But there were regular personnel-carrying trucks and whatnot of that nature, and they parked behind the 11th Group Headquarters.

Marcello: In the meantime, nobody's telling you what to do?

Cross: No. Well, the only time was at . . . after the first raid, a major said, "Move these trucks first!" I guess he didn't want to draw attention, you know, to them. So I'd taken, oh, one, possibly two, trucks and had driven them toward Pearl. Now we had a boulevard. Now this was through the officers' quarters and down to the . . . and the end, of course, was the Officers' Club there on the channel itself.

And, gee, I'll never forget. I was going back up after another truck. From where I'd gotten the truck at the 11th Group to where I dispersed it was possibly, say, 300 yards. And so I was running back up the street



there on the boulevard to get another truck when the second wave started.

Marcello: Now these were high-level bombers coming in this time?

Cross: No, these were strafers again. This was ground strafing.

Marcello: They're strafing again?

Cross: Oh, yes! I think the only time we had the high-level was the initial part of a raid. Now there could have been others that followed that, but I don't know. Like I said, you've got other things on your mind instead of gazing up, really, to see if there's any high-level bombers up there (chuckle). You've got enough on your hands with the low-level ones.

But I was running back up to the boulevard to get another truck . . . I couldn't hear it, you know. I didn't hear it, but now why this pilot would pick on me to strafe, I don't know. But he had come over evidently, you know, and, of course, as I said, the first time they continued on over Hickam. It was possibly about as far as from here to that bathroom wall.

Marcello: We're talking about twenty feet, maybe?

Cross: Twenty feet. I saw the asphalt kicking up in front of me, so I kept on running, and, by gosh, it seems like the next burst got a little closer. I remember thinking, I said, "By God, I'd better slow down, or I'm going to run into it!" You know, you're not going to look back

to see where it's at (chuckle). So instead of slowing down, I just dived over in the middle of the esplanade in the boulevard under a palm tree.

And just a few moments after that, there was a captain. Well, he was standing on the porch of his quarters, and he had seen me. So he came out, and he motioned for me to come over, you know, which was right across the boulevard to his quarters there. Of course, I looked up that time to see if there was anything coming over and to see if it was safe to go. In his quarters, he had his wife and another officer's wife--in the quarters with him. Like I said, here I am in just my undershorts, you know, in GI shorts. Any other time, you'd have been embarrassed, but nobody thought a thing in the world about it. So after a few minutes, the captain asked me what squadron I was in, and I told him the 42nd, and, of course, you could see it was just all gone, the whole thing. And he said, "Well, you don't have anything to wear." So he went in his closet and gave me a pair of his coveralls.

Then I don't remember whether I stayed there during the rest of that second raid or not. I kind of think I did because I don't believe the second raid lasted as long.

And then I got back up to group. Then by that time, they were trying to get a little organization after the

shock had worn off. So I said, "Well, let's get the wounded up to the hospital." You know, forget about the dead and whatnot. "Let's just get the wounded to the hospital." And we were doing that during the third raid.

**Marcello:** Now what did the third raid consist of? Was it still strafing again?

**Cross:** About the same as the first and second. I'll never forget, we had a line chief, old Lefler, Master Sergeant Lefler. I'll never forget the old boy. He had sense of humor that you never knew whether he was kidding or not. Of course, he had been in the Army something like thirty years at that time. But I believe this was between the second and the third waves, or first and second, but anyhow, during the lull in between the raids, he said, "I wish those son-of-a-bitches would land so that I could surrender!" So I didn't know whether he was kidding or not (chuckle).

**Marcello:** So, anyway, you said that you were removing the wounded during this third raid?

**Cross:** Oh, yes. We started that during the . . . after the . . . now it may have been that they started it, too, I'm sure, even during the first raid because, like I say, without any organization, what else can you expect? There was just a lot of confusion. And it may have been that they started that during the first, or even between the first and the second raid. I'm sure they must have.

Marcello: In the meantime, did you see anybody putting up any resistance at all? Were they firing rifles or pistols or whatever?

Cross: Oh, yes. Like I said, you've got to realize this goes back thirty-five years. You just can't spontaneously recall these things that happened, you know. There again, this might have been during the second or the third raid. I know it wasn't during the first raid. It was possibly during the second raid. I believe it must have been because after the captain gave me the coveralls, I believe I did get back over to the hangar. Of course, at the hangar at that time, there wasn't a heck of a lot to do. Our armaments shack was under the . . . the hangar was built in an "H"-type, with your radio and armaments in the bar of the "H".

To get the guns, that is, our ground guns . . . the thing to get was . . . I think it was old Reuter. He was a radio operator. But we got this .50-caliber . . . or was it a .30-caliber? Thirty or .50-caliber, I don't know. It was a ground gun that was supposed to go on a tripod, but we didn't have a tripod for it. So Reuter . . . so we got a . . . I don't know what we made, what kind of a rag it was, something like an old GI blanket. The thing was that we were going to wrap it around the barrel, and Reuter would hold the thing under his arm there while firing. Well, you know, it sounded alright.

And we went out by the operations there at the side of the hangar, and it was probably about as far as here to the wall from the wall (twenty feet) to the operations building. And so we got into position, Reuter with his right arm cradling the barrel of the gun. I was behind him there, and I got off just one burst, one round, I guess. Both us and the gun ended up against the building, so we decided that wasn't any good, so we just left it (chuckle).

Marcello: So what else did you do, then, during the third raid? You were evacuating the wounded, and was that mostly what you did?

Cross: I believe that was just about it. As a matter of fact, there was so many wounded that we'd just take them up . . . you couldn't get into the hospital. We took them up and put them . . . they spread out Army blankets on the ground behind the hospital, and we'd just lay them down on the blankets there.

Marcello: What did the damage look like in the aftermath of the attack? Describe it as you remember it.

Cross: Gee, it was complete destruction as far as the airplanes were concerned. You know, as we talked earlier in the interview, the airplanes were just lined up like peas in a pod. I think possibly there were five abreast and a row of B-17's. We had a few B-18's, but most of those were phased out. And earlier that fall, we had an A-20 squadron,

which is an attack squadron join the group. They were flying these Douglas A-20's. And all of our B-17's were the, you know, the shiny aluminum. And these A-20's came in, and they were painted olive drab. They were parked, again, lined up like peas in a pod at the far end of the field. Now those were the only airplanes that weren't damaged. The rest of them . . . I think we lost . . . I believe it was ninety-seven B-17's and B-18's. You've seen the pictures--nothing but just the engines. The engine blocks were just a molten mass of metal. There were just four of them, and that was all that was left of the B-17's.

Of course, the hangar facilities was all shot out, as you well know. As far as the quarters . . . oh, the barracks, of course, they did bomb the barracks, hitting mostly the mess hall, which was the thing, I guess. They did a pretty good job.

**Marcello:** What sort of emotions did you experience or feel when you saw all of this damage that had been done, and all of the wounded and things of that nature?

**Cross:** Well, it's funny. It doesn't shake you up nearly as much --I mean, we're talking about a mass-type of thing--as it would if you had, say, come along a single automobile accident on the highway. That shakes me up a lot more than anything else, you know. Like I say, with hundreds of wounded and dead all around you, you just . . . I don't

know whether your senses are numb or whether you just become callous to it or what. No, there wasn't any hysteria, as far as that was concerned. Everybody was, I think, pretty darned cool, really.

Marcello: On the whole, would you have to describe the initial reaction of the men as one of confusion as much as anything?

Cross: Oh, definitely! I'm sure that prevailed in the Navy and every base, as far as that was concerned. Men are men and I don't think locale makes a bit of difference in the world. I think every base is just the same as we were at Hickam.

Marcello: What did you do in the aftermath of the attack, let's say, that evening and so on, or late afternoon and that evening.

Cross: Well, I was put on guard duty. There again, like I said, things were in such a real state of confusion. The major drove by in his jeep and said, "Get in!" Well, you know, I got in. There was the civilian housing. . . well, I say civilian housing project. There was a housing project that bordered Hickam Field on the right, or between Hickam Field and Honolulu, I'll tell you that. I don't know the name of the project, but it was for the, I believe, civilian workers at Pearl and at Hickam. Well, in the afternoon, of course, after the raid, they evacuated all of those people out of that housing project. I think

they took them up to the Punch Bowl or somewhere. Nevertheless, they evacuated this big housing project. I was assigned to guard duty in this project. We had a command post set up at one of the units there. That went on until, I guess, gosh, Tuesday before I got back to the squadron. I guess it was Tuesday evening.

Marcello: Where were you getting food and things of that nature? Was it being sent up to you?

Cross: Well, gosh, I'm trying to think because, you know, food is the least of your worries. I know we broke out the field kitchens, but I just can't remember what the devil we did. I'm sure we did something. I'm talking about the day or two following that. I just don't remember.

Marcello: Did you have very much of an appetite on the day of the attack itself?

Cross: No, no, no (chuckle). Like I said, food is the last thing away from your mind.

Marcello: I would assume that on that Sunday evening there were a lot of trigger-happy servicemen around.

Cross: Oh, right, because then, like I said, the fellows had their .45 sidearms. Then you wore them all of the time, naturally.

Marcello: Did you hear very much of sporadic shooting during the night while you were on guard duty?

Cross: That first night, right. Quite a bit of it, really.



Marcello: Were you jittery yourself?

Cross: Oh, everybody was jittery then. Like I said, we were guarding the perimeter of Hickam Field there. It went from the gate, you might say, around to Fort Kamehameha. That's where this housing project was. Yes, there were several random shots (chuckle).

Marcello: Did you personally ever fire any?

Cross: No, I never had any reason to, that is, on guard duty. No, I never had an occasion to.

Marcello: What were some of the rumors that you heard in the aftermath of the attack?

Cross: Well, I'm trying to think if there were some. I'm sure there must have been some.

Marcello: Had you ever heard of the one that the Japanese had already landed and this sort of thing? Or that they had dropped paratroopers?

Cross: I'm sure there must have been. Like I say, it's been so long ago, and things like that . . . I'm sure there must have been an abundance of rumors, but I can't recall even a single one right now.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Cross, I've kind of run out of questions. Do you have anything else that you think we need to add and get as a part of the record?

Cross: Not that I can think of. Like I said, I'm sure practically everybody had just about the same experience. No, I

I can't think of anything else. Later on, I'll think of a thousand instances that happened, you know.

Marcello: Okay, well, I want to thank you for taking time to talk with me. You've said some interesting things, and they will ultimately prove to be valuable. I'm sure that historians will be able to make a great deal of use out of your comments.

Cross: Well, hopefully so.