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Interview with  
Robert D. Duvall  
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Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello  
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Oral History Collection

Robert Duvall

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Lewisville, Texas                      Date: April 12, 1976

Dr. Marcello:        This is Ron Marcello interviewing Robert Duvall for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on April 12, 1976, in Lewisville, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Duvall in order to get his reminiscences and his experiences and impressions while he was aboard the USS California during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Mr. Duvall, to begin this interview, would you 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. Duvall:        Well, I was born in McKinney, Texas, in Collin County on a farm out by Ray's Mill, and we lived in that vicinity until 1925 when my father went to the oil fields. In 1925, my father moved to the oil fields in Pampa, and there I stayed until 1940, graduating from Pampa High School.

Marcello: When were you born?

Duvall: 1920.

Marcello: Okay.

Duvall: And my father moved back to Grapevine in 1940. I had graduated from high school and decided to join the Navy. So I went into the Navy in August of 1940.

Marcello: Why did you decide to enter the service?

Duvall: Well, I'd always wanted to be in the Navy. I had a dozen buddies in the Navy already that had graduated from high school the previous year, and they had all went into the Navy. At that time, oil field jobs were hard to get at the age eighteen or seventeen. You almost had to be twenty-one to get a job, a decent job, in the oil fields, so I felt I'd make a run at the Navy and maybe come back and go into work in the oil fields.

Marcello: At the time that you entered the Navy, did you have any idea that the country might be shortly be plunging into war? In other words, were you keeping abreast of current events?

Duvall: Well, they had enacted the draft in 1940, and so eventually that was when . . . I wasn't being pushed or anything, but it was coming up soon, and jobs were pretty scarce around here at the time. My father was running a dairy and barely making ends meet on

that, and I felt that I had to find something that would support myself and maybe even help him out some because he wasn't too well at the time.

Marcello: You know, economics is the reason that a lot of people of your particular generation give for having entered the service. Jobs simply were hard to come by.

Duvall: They were hard to come by, you bet, without experience, and to get experience you had to have a job, so it was one of those terrible situations to where . . . well, the summer before I went into the Navy, I harvested vegetables on a truck farm. That will put you to looking for any kind of a job. Anything is better than that.

The pay was only twenty-one bucks a month, but I felt that I could better myself if I could get in, and I could soon get better pay than that. That was net, and at the time I wasn't netting twenty-one bucks a month, so I joined. And I wanted to see the world and see some of the . . . get the experience and the schooling that the Navy offered.

Marcello: Where did you take your boot camp?

Duvall: I was at San Diego all through September, and at the time, they were bringing the complement of the fleet up to war standards. In other words, they had been

on skeleton crews on all the ships, and they were bringing them up. So they took all of the recruits off the West Coast and put them on the old Saratoga, the old USS Saratoga, the aircraft carrier, and they lacked a few of having enough, so they grabbed my company and put us out. We left . . . I was in San Diego only four weeks and four days.

Marcello: Incidentally, was the boot camp being hurried up at that particular time?

Duvall: Not as a standard routine, but they accepted us the way . . . we never got into the North Unit actually. We left South Unit right on . . . I never got to go ashore in San Diego. I spent my first liberty in Honolulu.

Marcello: What were the difference in North Unit and South Unit?

Duvall: Well, normally in the South Unit you stayed three weeks, and then you spent about three months in the North Unit and then you got through with your boot camp, got to go home, and kind of graduated. They had a parade and a review and all that stuff, which we missed.

In the middle of the night, they got us up, loaded us on a "can", took us to San Pedro, loaded us on a ship, and five weeks and five days after I was sworn in the Navy, I was in Honolulu going aboard ship.

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

- Duvall: Well, really it all seemed like, "Boy, here I've got a good start. Five weeks and five days and I'm already this far along." Unfortunately, I never did get much farther either.
- Marcello: Where were you assigned when you got to Honolulu?
- Duvall: I was assigned to the USS California. Each major ship in that area got two to three hundred, and most or a big proportion of my boot camp company went aboard the USS California. We had Billy Joe Dukes from Denton was in my group. He got killed during the attack, by the way. He had a brother in the service, also. I think he was on the Yorktown and, oh, the Boxer and a few others, and I think he lives in California now. I don't think his family is still around. He and I were in boot camp together and went aboard ship together, and then he got killed there at Pearl.
- Marcello: What did you think about the idea of going aboard a battleship?
- Duvall: Well, you know, I was a country boy, and I'd never seen a ship let alone what kind of a ship. It's kind of like the guy that asked me what I wanted to be when I got on the ship, and I said, "A sailor." He said, "Well, I mean, what do you want to do on here?" I said, "What the hell kind jobs are there

available?" I don't really know too much about the Navy, and I said, "Well, just put me up there washing decks until I can see what else is going on. I can't intelligently answer that question because I don't know enough about a ship."

So I was on the deck force and on an antiaircraft crew. That's one of the reasons I stayed aboard this ship after the attack, that I was a sight-setter on the antiaircraft at a secondary battle station. I was in the main battery at the time of the attack, but I had been to school on the antiaircraft guns, and so I stayed aboard and was a sight-setter on the guns even after they moved them and put them in cane fields and that sort of thing.

Marcello: Well, from what I gather, then, that is, on the basis of what you said, most of the training that you received was more or less on-the-job training aboard the battleship.

Duvall: On the battleship. Yes, sir. That sure was. I joined the crew and took the bottom as far as training on the ship, and we did train. We trained hard.

Marcello: I was going to ask you what sort of training you received aboard the California.

Duvall: Well, of course, see, we had a loading machine and then we'd have to go out and have tracking exercises and



all the theory--all that you can do really in theory. Then we did do some firing on range, but it's an expensive operation--keeping a ship at sea and firing, too. There was a limited amount that they could do.

Marcello: I assume that at that particular time the senior petty officers who were training you usually had a good many years in the service, did they not?

Duvall: That is correct. Most of them had, oh, from eight to . . . oh, the first class petty officers usually had eight to twenty years in, and the second class had four to five years, so you were doing pretty good if you could make third class during your first cruise.

Marcello: What was the morale like in that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy?

Duvall: Well, I think it was good. I don't know. I was satisfied, you know. I didn't have much money, but I had all things it took to . . . I was saving what I made and that helped. I was getting ahead a little in order to come home.

I would have really been in China at the time if I had had a leave before then. If I had a leave before then, I'd have been in China at that time. A buddy of mine, he joined the Chinese fleet, but I wouldn't go with him because I hadn't been home yet since I had joined the Navy, and the ship was coming . . .

and they came back shortly after I got on the ship. Let's see, I got on the ship in October, and then in January of '41, we went back to Long Beach. It was the ship's time to go. The ship had been away from Long Beach for eighteen months, so they shipped the ship back for liberty and recreation, which for me was kind of a lost cause because I hadn't been aboard long enough to be needing liberty and recreation.

Marcello: What was the food in the quarters like aboard the California during that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy?

Duvall: I guess the food was good. I gained eighty pounds the first year I was in the Navy and grew an inch, so the food was excellent. Our ship was good. We had lots of good, fresh vegetables. The food was excellent. There was no doubt about it. Our cooks were conscientious. We had pies and cakes, and . . . I don't know. We had a helluva good crew. We couldn't complain about the food.

Marcello: And you said you gained eighty pounds?

Duvall: I gained eighty pounds the first year. I weighed 130 when I went into the Navy, and a year later I weighed 210. I was tall and skinny. Of course, I stayed aboard. I didn't have no money to go ashore, so I actually lived aboard.

I very rarely . . . oh, I'd go to a movie maybe

or to Honolulu a few times to just see it. I went around the island, and it don't take long to look over Oahu. It's two dollars in a car, and you go around it. Oh, we went to all the points of interest, and after that, why, there was really not much of a reason to go to town.

We had everything. We had an ice cream stand, and we had a ship's service store, cobbler shop, and all that. A battlegon is pretty self-contained, particularly when they can get to where they can supply themselves. At that time, the fleet had supply ships there and the supply depot and that sort of thing. We really didn't go off for anything, really.

At that time we were all volunteers, so you're not complaining. You knew you were going to leave home when you volunteered, so there wasn't a whole lot of complaining. Then the crew all worked good together, and that helped, too. They were not trying to prove anything other than keep the ship clean. This was our home, and we had it fixed up nice. It was clean and spotless, really.

Marcello: Well, all of these things that you've mentioned, I think, would go toward explaining why the morale was relatively high. You mentioned the fact that the food was good, the ship was clean, and you were all volunteers.

All of these things would have played a part in making the California a good place in which to live.

Duvall: We had ship's pride, too. We had the admiral aboard. In the fleet competition, we had the best band aboard. We had an excellent band that played an hour or two every day up on the weather decks. Of course, our weather decks was white teak and covered with white canvas awnings, and there was a cool breeze blowing through, and the food was good and they played music. It wasn't all that bad.

Of course, we trained hard. It's hard work training . . . and boring, too. Using that dummy ammunition over and over and over again got rather boring, but that's part of the game, too. But our morale was good.

Marcello: What were the quarters like aboard the California, that is, your living and sleeping quarters?

Duvall: Well, they were clean. Our ship had bunks. Everybody had bunks and lockers. We didn't have any hammocks or sea bags. Oh, I think there were a few when you first . . . you might have to sleep a few days in a hammock until they could get you a bunk, but basically our ship had bunks. And you had an adequate locker. It wasn't big. It had

all your gear in it. You could get it in there if you put it in there right.

Marcello: Where were your living quarters located on the California?

Duvall: Well, of course, the crew's quarters on the California were forward. On some ships it's aft. We had the first and second decks and a few on the third deck. Those that stood a lot of night watches and long watches, like the radiomen, the signalmen, and a few of those, stayed way down in the hold on the third deck. But my living quarters were on the main deck right close to . . . just one hatch up, and we was on topside. Rarely did I go below. I just didn't go down into the deep dark pits of the ship.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk a little bit about the training in which the California was engaged prior to December 7, 1941. What was the training routine like? In other words, when did you go out, and when did you come in? Discuss that sort of thing.

Duvall: Well, alright. I think we were scheduled to be at sea 50 per cent of the time, which they usually cut down a little bit on account of the economy. We averaged, I think, three to four days a week at sea. Sometimes we'd be gone three or four weeks at a time, but we averaged about 40 to 50 per cent of

our time at sea.

While we were at sea, we'd have antiaircraft drills and main battery tracking drills and loading drills and minesweeping routines--put all the mine-sweeping gear out--or two drills--towing another ship --and taking on fuel from tankers at sea. Then you'd have . . . everybody would . . . you'd have a helmsman, a lea helmsman, and a trainer that would be there to . . . and then, of course, you'd have duty officers, and he'd need to have a junior officer. He'd be trying . . . so it was a massive schooling affair because you had . . . and when you got, you know, 2,000 men aboard, they can't all learn to do it all. There's just no way that you can be expected to know all there is to know about all the things that your particular rank calls for. There's just no way of doing that. But basically, we'd have air raids, and we'd have planes come out. The Army used to surprise us once in a while and have a little air attack and this sort of thing at sea. And we were pitifully and poorly manned so far as guns. We weren't adequately gunned by any means.

Marcello: Now when you say this, I assume that you are referring to antiaircraft weaponry?

Duvall: Yes. Well, yes, antiaircraft. Of course, we never did change our main batteries. We're talking about antiaircraft. . .

Marcello: I guess this was probably one of the most expensive lessons that the Japanese learned that the United States Navy during the Pearl Harbor attack--just the fact that those ships were going to have to have more antiaircraft guns aboard them.

Duvall: Well, we right away would see what we were up against. Now the Japanese . . . one of the pitiful mistakes they made was they only attacked the major ships.

Marcello: Well, we're getting ahead of the story. We'll get into this a little bit later on.

Duvall: Yes, that was an error in their judgment. But anyway, at Pearl it wasn't the lack of training that made us have such a poor showing there. It was the lack of experience. Now our damage control . . . we had simulated compartments getting flooded and that sort of thing, and if it was the same amount of damage a year later, we'd have never sunk. With the very same amount of damage, we'd have never settled to the bottom. We had aboard some more pumps, and we had that wonderful thing, experience, to tell us, "Now look, we're in a jam, and instead of everybody running around . . . and I don't particularly put the

blame on anybody other than . . . the total crew was valiant. They fought well. They did everything they knew to do, but they didn't have the experiences to call on to say, "Now look, I know what that'll do. Now we got to get a pump in that forward hold, and we got to get that exhaust out." All the errors that we made in salvaging the ships and in battle damage later on in other fleet actions, then we knew what to do. It's just telling a bunch of people . . . the experience of getting hurt is just terrible. It's just a hard thing to do.

Marcello: In other words, what you're saying is that during this period before Pearl Harbor, you had a lot of theory, and you even had a lot of on-the-job training, but it was that battle experience that was lacking.

Duvall: True. And that's for the whole gamut of the whole crew from the captain on down, from the captain on down. He was no more experienced, although he was three years my senior, but he'd never been damaged in war.

Marcello: Incidentally, where was your battle station aboard the California?

Duvall: Well, my battle station . . . at the time of the Pearl Harbor, I was a trainer on the main battery. Well, we'll get back to really what happened at



Pearl. My division had to do church duty that day.

Marcello: Well, we're getting ahead of the story once again.

Duvall: Well, my battle station was a trainer, and there is where I went when the attack started. As it started, that's where I was. I was in the second division in turret two, and I thought, "Oh, boy, I'm just safe. I've got all that armor over my head." I come to find out later that when it hit on top of that, it went on through it.

Marcello: Now normally, when the California went out on its training exercises, when did it normally leave? In other words, what day of the week did it normally leave? Or could this vary?

Duvall: I'd say that would vary. I don't really remember it as a particular day, but I was just a seaman, so I don't remember. I do know that we spent about 40 or 50 per cent of our time at sea.

Marcello: Would you usually be in on the weekends?

Duvall: No, not necessarily. No, not necessarily and it wasn't really all that important either because just a few of the officers got to go ashore and stay. If you had someone who would invite you and tell you that you had a place to stay, you could get an overnight pass or liberty in Honolulu, and that applied

to the officers and the crew. They had to have a place to stay in order to spend the night in Honolulu.

Marcello: Why did the Navy have this particular rule? I've heard all sorts of reasons given for it.

Duvall: Well, you couldn't turn that many sailors loose just to spend the night in the park.

Marcello: Is this what would happen a lot of times? They'd simply sleep out in the open in the parks?

Duvall: Well, they'd go down to the park or on the beaches or up in the woods--this sort of thing. They could have. I don't know. It might not have happened, but I think that was basically the rule that was given for our liberty, that all the sailors should be inside somewhere. It really wasn't a difficult task to get a pass.

Marcello: But normally speaking, if you didn't have a place to stay, you had to go back aboard the ship by midnight?

Duvall: Correct, correct. That is correct . . . or earlier than that usually--ten o'clock. See, I think the buses and stuff stopped running from Honolulu, and you're a long way from Pearl Harbor to Honolulu. I don't know, but it's twenty-five minutes, I think, by bus or so. I know now that it's all town, but at the time, you went out into the country to Pearl

Harbor. It was a pretty good amount of country in between Honolulu and Pearl Harbor at that time.

Of course, that's not so now. It was then.

Marcello: Now getting back to the routine once again, did this routine begin to change any as relations between the United States and Japan continued to deteriorate, that is, as one moved closer and closer to December 7, 1941, did your actual training routine vary any?

Duvall: I wouldn't think so. I don't think so. I think they had . . . when we were at sea, we were training hard, and when we come in, we'd have maybe a short loading drill or two in the morning. The rest of the time we probably . . . in the afternoons, why, we'd knock off pretty early from the routine house-keeping sort of stuff. No, I wouldn't think that . . . I don't think that we were any more aware of the fact . . . we were aware that the relationship was not good, but we were very confident, though, that we could handle that situation in real quick order, too, not being too informed. I don't know. I'm speaking for the peons. I'm not talking about the powers that be because I don't know what they was thinking. But we were confident that we could handle the situation.

Marcello: Did you ever hear any of the old salts talk about

the capabilities of the Japanese Navy? In other words, had any of the old salts aboard the California ever been with the Asiatic Fleet, where they may have come into more contact with the Japanese?

Duvall: But they didn't come in contact as much with the Japanese as they did the Chinese. They went on maneuvers, but it was always with the Chinese. See, we had bases all over China at the time--at Tsingtao and Shanghai and Peking and the whole works. Well, there was some Naval bases all over, and, yes, we had a whole bunch of men that had been in the Asiatic Fleet, and they'd say that we'd have our hands full if we got into it. We'd have our hands full. Of course, they had seen some of the Japanese fleet, but not very much of it. Let's see, there was some . . . the Astoria, a cruiser, took the remains of a dignitary to Japan in '34 or something, and we had quite a few of the crew that was on that ship at the time, and they said they had a pretty good-sized fleet. They'd seen part of their fleet at the time.

Marcello: At the same time, how safe and secure did you feel at Pearl Harbor in case there ever would be any sort of a conflict with the Japanese?

Duvall: Well, I didn't have no trouble sleeping. You know, I wasn't too much worried about it because there was

no one aboard that could give you that real first-hand information about how severe war is or how damaging or how devastating an attack can be. We didn't have any pictures of it because it hadn't happened since Jutland, and that was a surface-to-surface engagement. You know, there were only sporadic surface engagements or naval engagements besides submarine attacks. Ships that had been sunk or damaged by submarines was the only ones that we had any experience with whatsoever. And you're talking about air attack and the damage that they could do, and it's something that you just can't visualize until you've seen it or at least seen a colored picture of it, which we didn't have none of either. You know, it was just that total void of . . . that experience was just not there. You don't dread a python or, you know, a mamba or something if they ain't around, so you don't think about their bites. You know, it's one of those things that you haven't experienced any of, so you cannot visualize it without some means of smell or touch or seeing or something to give you more than that.

Marcello: At the same time, of course, Japan is a long way from Honolulu also, and maybe distance would have given you that feeling of security.

Duvall: Well, I think the security section felt that we felt that we had as good of a battle capability as there was in the world. We were number one, and we were well-trained, and we'd get out there, and we'll all go to general quarters, and we'll get on our stations, and the airplanes will come, and we'll shoot them down--sort of thing. It didn't happen that way.

Marcello: Now when you thought of an individual Japanese, what sort of a person did you conjure up in your own mind?

Duvall: Well, you see, the only Japanese I'd ever had any association with was all that . . . the Island of Hawaii at the time was 90 per cent Japanese anyway, and they were as nice as they could be to you. I mean, you couldn't have found a cleaner, nicer bunch of people. At the skating rink, I skated with some and this sort of thing. So as big, mean monsters, no, we didn't have them conjured . . . that wasn't what we were . . . we knew that they would fight their hearts out if we got into it, but as fanatic as they were, we were not aware of that either, I don't think.

Marcello: Okay, so when the California did come into Pearl after being on maneuvers, where did it usually dock?

Duvall: Fox Three.

Marcello: Now were you out there by yourself? You weren't moored up to one of the other battlewagons usually, were you?

Duvall: Well, sometimes we moored double, but sometimes we didn't. We had the admiral aboard, so we were out in the front. We were the first quay that we tied to. Now a quay is a large man-made pier-type thing that we tied to. We had two quays that we tied to which was, oh, say, a hundred foot square that were anchored and that kept us from getting up close enough to . . . oh, I guess, we were fifty or a hundred yards from Ford Island. I don't know. And all of them . . . they all lined up in a row. Fox Three was ours, and Fox Four was the Tennessee, and the Mississippi and the Oklahoma and all of them lined back of us. But we were the number one because we had the flag aboard. We had the admiral.

Marcello: What sort of difference did this make in your ship's routine, that is, the fact that you had the admiral aboard? Did this mean that you perhaps wore spit-and-polish outfits more than the other battleship crews or anything of this nature?

Duvall: Well, not necessarily. Of course, we were more routine and more spit-and-polish and more regulation than the lesser ships. We were a major ship. We were the show-place. When you went up topside, you had to have on clothes completely repaired. If you got any clothes ragged, you'd better mend them, and so if you were caught on topside with a hole in your undershirt or your ragged clothes on, why, you were just put on report because we

were the show. If you were down below, why, that's something else, but you just know that you had to be shipshape and you had to be clean and well-repaired and orderly, and everybody looked alike when you went on topside. That was just part of the game. The destroyers, they wouldn't . . . in other words, depending on their captain, they had their routine. But when we came in . . . of course, we had an inspection every Saturday, and you get used to that, too. It's part of the routine of being a sailor, and you get used to it, and you want it. You go aboard somebody's ship and say, "I'd hate to be on this old tub. Look at how dirty it is," and that sort of thing. We were regimental. We were in the Navy for sure, and we knew it. Our boats had to be cleaner and everything.

Marcello: When you had liberty, what did you usually do?

Duvall: Well, we'd go to town and drink a few beers. You didn't have a helluva lot. You didn't make that much money.

Marcello: When was payday?

Duvall: Fifth and twentieth. You always tried to leave a little on the books there because you were going to get back to the States one of these days and need a little money. I didn't go to shore too often there. We went to . . . oh, you could go to the . . . they had



a recreation center over at Ford Island, and beer was about half the price there as it was in town. I went roller skating a lot. I'd take my roller skates and "hook 'em" to the roller rink.

Marcello: I would assume that a great many of these crew members frequented Hotel Street and some of those places?

Duvall: Yes, they did. If they could afford it, they did. Remember, money was pretty scarce; but things was cheap, too.

Marcello: Now if you got paid on the fifth, that meant that you would have probably had a substantial amount of money on that weekend of December 7. Is that correct?

Duvall: No, not really. Twenty-one bucks a month split half in two is how much? And you paid eighty cents for hospitalization, so ten dollars a payday is what I got paid, and if you call that a substantial amount of money, why . . . and I was sending fifteen dollars a month home, so I got about four or five dollars. The money that I spent on liberty was made by washing somebody's socks or standing watches or mess cooking for them. There's always a way to fill in and make a little extra money.

Marcello: Well, what I'm saying is that obviously on the fifth of December you would have had more money than that what you would have had, let's say, on the fifteenth of December.

Duvall: Probably.

Marcello: Simply because payday had been pretty close to the seventh.

Duvall: Yes. Of course, payday is like . . . when you're overseas that way, most of them were not drawing anymore than they just had to get by. They'd been to town, and maybe they'd draw enough to make one liberty and say, "Well, I'm going ashore one time every two weeks." The rest of it they left on the books so when they got back to the States, they'd have a couple or three hundred dollars to go home on. It was no use to get back to the States if you didn't have any money when you got there because then you ended up standing watches for somebody else while they're "hooking 'em" home.

Marcello: Generally speaking, when crew members from the California did go ashore after they had been out on maneuvers perhaps all week, what sort of condition would they be in when they come back aboard that ship? This is kind of a leading question I'm asking you, and I'll explain why I have asked this question after you respond to it. But what sort of condition would they usually be in when they came back aboard the California, let's say, if they had a Friday night liberty or a Saturday night liberty or something like that?

Duvall: That's really hard to generalize, you know, because, you know, you're talking about 1,500 men and all of them different. All of them are like a covey of quail. When you flush them and turn them loose, they . . . you always have that bunch that go to church, and then you got that other bunch that go to the bars, and some go to the beaches, and some go roller skating. The places where they have that many coming ashore have that many facilities to take care of that many men, and so the beer garden will be full and the skating rink will be full. There was just so many different facets that they fall into that . . . but generally speaking, money takes care of that. Not very many of them could afford to go ashore to just get drunk. It just didn't happen, that's all.

Marcello: Well, this is the answer that I was pretty sure that you were going to give. I had to ask the question because whenever people talk about the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor, they usually will say that a Sunday would have been the best time for the Japanese to have made that attack because everybody aboard those ships would be hungover from the raucous time they had the Saturday night before.

Duvall: I disagree with that violently. I disagree with that violently. Our crew was 100 per cent aboard and

100 per cent efficient. They did all they knew how to do at the time. I don't think there's anyone that didn't put out a superhuman effort to do whatever needed to be done at the time, and I disagree with that just totally. Their timing was good because no one expected it, but they wouldn't have been expected on a Tuesday morning either anymore than they were on Sunday morning.

We had very few officers ashore. Oh, you could have counted them on your hand--the officers that we had ashore. We had a hell of an officers' crew with the admiral and his staff and our captain. We had two or three captains aboard, you see, because we had the fleet paymaster, the fleet doctor, and we had . . . all those were captains. We had a dozen or so captains aboard, and they were all aboard. We didn't have but just a handful that could have been ashore, and they couldn't have had any effect on the outcome of the attack because, well, the way they attacked and the way it happened. The outcome just had to be what it was. We was lucky to get away with what we got away with--no more damage than we had.

Marcello: Well, I appreciate your answer because this is the answer that just about every one of the Pearl Harbor survivors gives. I think it's a very important point to me because it does dispel that myth about the Saturday

nights of drunken debaucheries and orgies and revelry and all that sort of thing.

Duvall: No, that's not so. In the first place, the bars were really not all that crowded in Honolulu at the time, and the houses weren't either. They had more than adequate service for those who wanted company there. I mean, they had big lounges and no hustle-bustle-type deal there either. After the war, then, it got to be a whole different story. But before the war, you could go shopping on Hotel Street if you wanted to and look around and in and out and around if you wanted to. Of course, it was an awfully good idea to have some money when you went down there, too.

No, I disagree with that violently. I don't buy that theory at all. It was that pure lack of experience, and "tell what I can do and I'll do it," sort of thing that we were all up against. On our particular ship, our first damage knocked out our electricity.

Marcello: Okay, I don't want you to talk about that yet because let's try and keep these things in order. What I want you to do at this point now is to go into as much detail concerning your activities of Saturday, December 6, 1941, that you can remember. In other words, what was your routine from the time you get up until the time you went to bed on Saturday, December 6, 1941? Go into as much detail as you can remember.

Duvall: Well, that's not going to be very much, really. Well, we had an inspection Saturday morning, so what I had to do was get up early on Saturday morning. We couldn't scrub our decks in Pearl because of the polluted water, so we swept down all of our decks. I think at ten o'clock we had Captain's Inspection, which means that we got through about 11:30 and had chow. If I'm not mistaken, we had a "battle of the bands" over in the fleet recreation center Saturday afternoon, and I went over there just for that.

Marcello: I'm pretty sure there was an activity of that sort that took place.

Duvall: I kind of think that us and the Pennsylvania and the West Virginia all had their bands over at the fleet recreation center, and I think that went on until about five o'clock. We drank a little beer and listened to the music there.

Then that night, of course, we went to the movies. We had a movie every night, so we went to the movies. I don't have no idea what was showing, but I know . . . well, we went to the movie every night unless we had seen it four times or five. Well, my division had movie duty, too, which meant that we had to carry the mess benches back to the quarter-deck and set them up for the movie and then take them up after the movie

was over.

That involved my day--a Captain's Inspection, a trip over to the fleet recreation center for the "battle of the bands," and then a movie, and then I turned in.

Marcello: Now, when the ship came in and the liberty was granted, was it usually a port and starboard-type liberty? In other words, would half the crew be aboard and half the crew ashore, or just exactly how did your liberty routine work?

Duvall: No, I think it was a section. I think we had section liberty. I think we only had a fourth of the crew eligible to go at a time instead of port and starboard. I'm sure of that.

Marcello: Yes, that's probably correct. Okay, that brings us into Sunday, December 7, 1941. Now for the most part, your Saturday was rather routine, I think we could say. Okay, now once more I want you to go into as much detail as you can remember concerning your experiences on Sunday, December 7, 1941.

Duvall: Well, Sunday morning . . .

Marcello: Let me break in there for a minute. According to the research that I have done, is it not true that the California was due for some sort of an inspection on Monday, and as a result the whole ship was almost wide open?

Duvall: I don't know. You see, I was a seaman at that time and wouldn't have been involved in any of that. I was also a deck sailor, so I didn't go below very often, so I'm not going to . . . I really don't know whether they had opened any of the voids or not.

Marcello: Okay, well, pardon me for interrupting.

Duvall: I wouldn't like to comment on something that I know nothing about.

Marcello: Sure. So let's talk about your routine, then, on Sunday, December 7, 1941, from the time you get up in the morning until all hell broke loose.

Duvall: Well, of course, six o'clock was reveille. It didn't make any difference whether it was Sunday or not; they still held reveille. We got up and "clamped down." That's a Naval expression for sweeping down and cleaning up the forecastle deck. Well, we had coffee first, of course. My division, my section, was not standing any antiaircraft watches at the time. We were security watches. We had the forecastle security watch, and that's in port. We were standing condition three watches at sea. But that Sunday morning, we got up and then had the coffee and cleaned up the forecastle. That was one time we could get away with wearing them damn "toe-togs." Everybody pretty well liked on Sunday morning to lounge around up on the



forecastle with their shorts and "toe-togs" on instead of shoes. We all basically had "toe-togs" on.

Like I say, we had movie duty the night before that, and that gave us the church duty also. So as soon as breakfast was over with, we got all the mess benches and set them up and went down to the chaplain's office and got the altar and . . . Father Kinney was our Catholic chaplain, but he also had Protestant services, too. We set that up and set up all the benches and was just kind of waiting for church to start.

And then we heard the planes, really, you know, which was really not an alarming thing other than we might in the back of our minds have said, "What the hell is that Army doing flying planes on Sunday morning?" Planes were coming in and out of Ford Island all the time. The aircraft carriers would get out at sea, and it would get rough and they couldn't land, so they'd send all their planes in. Before they came in they would send all their planes in. Then they had training flights leaving out of there and seaplanes leaving out of there, and it was . . . thousands of airplanes just didn't really . . . it was kind of like living next to an airport. You just don't notice the planes. But we heard them.

And I was sitting on a ballard there and looking over towards the . . . see, we were the forward ship. There wasn't nothing in front of us except the seaplane hangar and the fleet dispensary that's over there.

This plane, boy, it came screaming down there and shooting it up there, and he hit that hangar which was before we got hit. The first bomb, as far as I know, hit the hangar, and I want to say that that was one of the first to be dropped.

Marcello: Now was this over at Ford Island?

Duvall: It was on Ford Island. It was right ahead of us, and it was the hangar that had all the seaplanes in it, but they knew which one did and which one didn't.

Marcello: Okay, so what was your reaction when you saw those planes screaming down?

Duvall: Well, of course, then he rolled up there with them great big red balls on there, and you didn't have to have him sit down and talk to you, you know. What the hell is going on right there? There was no doubt about it that when the fire and pieces of airplane come flying over you, and them big red balls, we're into it, buddy. We're already into it. How severe it's going to be, we don't know, but . . . a seaman second class had sense enough to see what happened already, and so before they sounded general quarters or anything,

why, we went to our battle stations. We was all up there. When all the deck crews sitting up there they saw it, why, they went where they were trained to go. Not that that was the best place to go, but that's where you were trained to go.

Marcello: In other words, what you're saying is that the initial reaction was one of professionalism. It wasn't one of panic, fright, or anything of that nature.

Duvall: Right. War started and ships was going to be in battle conditions, and you get to your battle stations because that's where you're going to be. That's where they expect you to be, and that's where I went. Of course, we were just absolutely useless there.

Marcello: Okay, so according to the record, the first torpedo hit the California at about 8:05 a.m. Do you recall that experience when the first torpedo hit?

Duvall: You bet! (Tape turned off).

Marcello: I was asking you about the first torpedo there.

Duvall: Well, of course, the first one hit, and then it wasn't very long until that second one hit. I don't know, but it was only two or three minutes.

Marcello: What did it feel like when that torpedo hit?

Duvall: Well, of course, it really felt like we'd fired our main batteries, you know.

Marcello: In other words, a good jolt?

- Duvall: It was a good old shaking you by your teeth, you know. You jumped up and down a minute, and then we started listing, of course.
- Marcello: Now you were actually inside the turret. Is that correct?
- Duvall: I was inside the number two turret, right up on the top of it.
- Marcello: In other words, you could feel things, but you really couldn't see anything that was happening?
- Duvall: I couldn't see a thing. You're absolutely correct. I was a trainer, so I had on phones, and I was connected up, and I could hear all the comments from all the fire control units. I was hooked up to the main battery fire control, which in their comments was at the . . . they were at the same fire control tower that our antiaircraft was.
- Marcello: Well, evidently, it wasn't going to take too many hits to put the California on the bottom because, like I said, evidently there was going to be this inspection on Monday morning, and everything was open.
- Duvall: Like I say, I wasn't down in that part of the world so I really . . . we were a good long while sinking, and we had two torpedoes hit, and then we had a rupture from a near miss on that same side from the high level bombing.

Marcello: Now when you say you had a rupture from a near miss, you're referring to fuel tanks having ruptured?

Duvall: No, the side of the ship was ruptured. It probably was a fuel tank, but it was a rupturing in the hull forward.

Marcello: Did the power go out at any time during this torpedo attack.

Duvall: We lost power almost immediately after that, which really put us in a terrible shape. So we didn't have . . . we got no power, so you can't elevate your ammunition, and we hadn't got any up yet. We got very little antiaircraft ammunition up now.

Marcello: Well, in your position your guns would have been useless anyhow against airplanes. Isn't that right?

Duvall: That is exactly correct, and so as a consequence to that . . . oh, I guess it was nine o'clock or so, why, after we had got . . . well, I don't know what time it was because time was such a screwed up mess there that I don't know what time it was, but we lost power when we got those two torpedo hits.

Marcello: And that was very early in the game?

Duvall: And that was early in the game, and in a little while . . . well, it was not very long after the Arizona blew. Now I was out on deck when the Arizona blew. I don't know. What time did she blow? I

don't remember that. I ought to know that, and I don't know it.

Marcello: It wasn't too long after the attack actually got started. But since you brought up the subject, and since you were an eyewitness to it, describe the blowing up of the Arizona. But first of all, how did you get outside to begin with?

Duvall: Well, see, I was a trainer, and I wasn't deep in. The deck was under the turret, and you had to crawl under there to get up in there. It had kind of a hatch to get up into the turret.

Marcello: And you were in the number two turret?

Duvall: Yes, I was in the main . . . all we had to do was swing open our turret door and drop out on the deck, and which we did after we became aware of the fact that we were useless there. We were like everybody else. "What can we do to help?"

Marcello: Now by this time, was the first wave . . . had the first wave passed?

Duvall: Well, the torpedo planes had passed, I'll put it that way, and the torpedo planes was just kind of hanging around harassing more than anything else. Everytime we would get outside the turret they'd come along strafing us. They had discharged all they were going to do. All they were doing was hanging

around and machine-gunning with that .25 caliber machine gun. We didn't lose anybody, but we got about four or five men hit. They flew so slow that you could see them coming. PSHEW! Under the turret you'd go! "Here comes another one of the squinty-eyed, rice-eating son-of-a-bitches!" Under the turret we went (laughter). In fact, Petticoat. . . ain't that a helluva name?

Marcello: Petticoat?

Duvall: Yes. Anyway, he was in our division, and he and I got out of the turret. We were going to cut loose our life raft so that they might float some of that stuff aboard. It seemed like the thing to do. I don't know whether it was or not. But anyway, we were trying to get them damn things down, me and some other guys, and we looked up yonder, and here comes one of them damn torpedo planes. He wasn't very high, and he wasn't coming very fast either. Boy, I tell you . . . "Here he comes!" Under the turret we went (laughter). Petticoat panicked. He just froze and he just kind of stuck his hands up and turned his face to the turret and he stood there. Those bullets went "pip, pip, pip, pip, pip, pip," (shrill sound).

In a little while, I got up and looked all around, and Petticoat says, "You know, I picked up a piece of shrapnel!" I said, "Well, let me see." He turned

toward me, you know, scared to death and looking all around. That bullet was a burnt out .25-caliber tracer--just a little thin hull. We went back later, and on each side of him about a foot, an armor piercing bullet had hit and just nicked the tar out of that thing, and that one in the middle was that tracer that hit him, and it hadn't even broke his skivvy shirt. We just took and pulled the thing out. It just kind of seared it, and we just pulled it out of his skivvy shirt. The last time I saw that sailor, he was still carrying that thing right around his neck, and he said, "Buddy, the good Lord give me that one," (laughter).

Marcello: Okay, so you saw that you were doing no good inside that turret, so you got out of the turret, and I assume that you were going to assist the antiaircraft units.

Duvall: Well, in the meantime, we had took that . . . they had flew over with those armor piercing bombs, and we took one on the starboard side.

Marcello: What did it feel like to get hit with one of the armor piercing bombs?

Duvall: Well, it really didn't feel a helluva lot different from a torpedo because I didn't see it coming. It was just an explosion, and then it jarred us around a bit. See, by then we had taken all the excess crew



that wasn't doing something and put them to handling ammunition from that magazine up to the guns.

Marcello: And because you had no power, everything had to be hand carried?

Duvall: It was double-man shoulder-to-shoulder, two rows of men from the magazine clear up to the boat deck. That bomb hit right in the middle of them, and there's where almost all of our heavy, heavy casualties came. Not all of them because we lost some radiomen that didn't never get out of their bunks and some people trapped in the engine room and down below and overcome by fuel oil fumes and that sort of thing. But our heaviest casualties was that bomb explosion out among all those men, and all of them was either mangled or burnt to some degree, a flash burn.

And so then we got the word that we needed first aid men on deck. We had a lot of men that was needing all kinds of first aid. This was from severely wounded to minor burns and that sort of thing. I had gotten our first aid kit out of the turret, and I took it out on deck. We had a lot of that old burn jelly, and we started putting that on the severe burns. On some of those the skin was just, you know, hanging on them.

Marcello: Now were you actually ever in the lines handling the ammunition at all?

- Duvall: No. When that happened then, that started a fire. And we had then gotten a near miss on the port bow, and we had a hit and another near miss. I might be corrected there, but anyway, we had been hit once or twice with the high-level bombers, and that's the ones that broke the waterline going to Ford Island. That put us in such trouble for water.
- Marcello: Now by this time was the California already sinking on the bottom?
- Duvall: We were listing pretty heavy, and we were doing our best . . . we had dropped our anchor chains then. Part of us got to working on that and wrapped the anchor chain around the quay to keep it from flipping on over--trying to keep it from doing what the Oklahoma has done.
- Marcello: Okay, so just to put this thing in some sort of an order--and I realize that everything was happening very, very fast--when the Japanese initially hit, you immediately went to your battle station, which was in the turret, the number two turret of the main battery. After you saw that you were doing no good there, you got out of the turret, and this is when you started administering first aid to those people who had the burns.
- Duvall: That's right. We were also trying to get all of our

life rafts over so we could put . . . and the boats was starting to come by to pick up the wounded, so we started picking up wounded and putting them in the boats. They was trying to sneak them off over to the hospital. We left some of those off, and then we got involved in fighting the fires that the bomb had caused.

Marcello: So within this space of just a couple of hours, you had been doing many things.

Duvall: Well, anything we thought would help, you know. "We're in this thing. What do I need to do? Let's get after it."

Marcello: Did you have time to think about how horribly those crew members were burned and so on as you were administering that first aid? Or were things still going by so quickly that you weren't able to take notice to it or it didn't make that much of an impression right away?

Duvall: Well, gosh, you know, we're in a helluva shape here and we got to do all we can to kind of get organized, and if this thing will ever let up, we'll get organized to where we can take care of ourselves a little better, you see, and you had no choice. You could only do those things that you could do.

Marcello: How bad were the fires that were raging on the main deck?

- Duvall: Well, they were plenty bad because they were deep in the ship in the first place, and in the second place the Arizona had already blown.
- Marcello: You mentioned that you saw the Arizona blow. Describe the Arizona blowing up.
- Duvall: You see, main battery powder is a granule that's, say, three inches long and an inch across. And in the open, if you hold it like that and burn it, it burns like cellophane, so you have millions of those going through the air burning--just a big, big spew. Of course, after that it's just black smoke that . . . the fuel oil then was ignited, and the water was afire. The oil was so thick on it
- Marcello: As I recall, that burning oil started to drift toward the California, right?
- Duvall: Well, yes. The ships would come along and push it back out of the way with their screws and push it away from us, but there was a lot of oil right in on the inside of us, too.

It was not a situation where you couldn't cope, but you had to know two or three things to make you really jittery. The first thing was we had a fire, and we had ammunition in cans scattered all up and down that whole area in the first place. In the second place, it wasn't very far from one magazine to

the next magazine. Thirdly, fire in the magazine was just what had caused the Arizona to blow, and you didn't know whether you were going to be next. We had two things to worry about--whether you were going to blow or whether you were going to turn over. The two things that you would try to guard against was getting trapped down below because . . . being on topside, you could see what was going on. The fellow that's down in the hold, he don't know what's going on. Being on topside, we could see the Shaw. She had burned. The Arizona, she had blown. That tanker that was between us and the ocean was loaded with 55,000 barrels of aviation gasoline. It just took one damn spark, and that would have wiped out the whole works! All it had to have done was to hit it, and they could have done all that damage with one shot. Fortunately, the good Lord being with us, they didn't hit it. They didn't want it, and thank goodness, you know. We could almost throw a rock on it, and, of course, they were trying desperately to keep the oil from getting close to her.

Marcello: Okay, so what were you doing at this point now? The California was listing, there were fires raging on deck . . .

Duvall: Now a fleet . . . a fleet of tugs came alongside. I forget what the name of that was.

Marcello: The Vestal, wasn't it.

Duvall: No, the Vestal was a tender, wasn't it?

Marcello: Yes, it was a tender of some sort. Now I know there were . . . the Swan, the Swan.

Duvall: Well, I don't . . . it might be so, but anyway, a tug come alongside.

Marcello: It contributed some pumps or something, didn't it?

Duvall: Yes, well, it stood there, and . . . I took a hose from it. We went down in there, and I fought fire for a good long while, and then I got relieved of that for some reason or another. I don't know why I got relieved. I don't remember.

I went back up to do something else, and then is when they decided that the fire was going to get into the magazines, and the captain gave the order to abandon ship about 10:15 or so, give or take a few minutes.

Marcello: So what did you do at that point then?

Duvall: Well, I just like everybody else. I looked over there and said, "Look out, Ford Island, here I come!" And I left the ship at about . . . my watch stopped at 10:30.

Marcello: Okay, so describe exactly what you did.

Duvall: (Chuckle) Well, I'm not much of a swimmer or diver either. We had loaded all of the boats up and got most of the wounded off, and then they were yelling,

"She's going to blow! She's going to blow! You better get ashore!" And, oh, me and old "Deacon" and a few others were hesitating getting into the water. I laugh about this everytime I think about it. Old "Deacon," he was yelling, "I can't swim! I can't swim!" Somebody says, "You son-of-a-bitch, if you can't swim, you're going to fly because if this thing blows, they'll pick you up on the other side of the island somewhere!" Old "Deacon," he stood up on there with me, and, boy, me and him went. He never did go under the water. I'll swear, he beat me ashore.

Marcello: How far was it from the California to shore?

Duvall: It was about fifty to a hundred yards. I don't know, give or take a few. The route we took we tried to swim around from the oil. We did get into it, but not too bad.

Marcello: How long did it take you to get from the California into Ford Island?

Duvall: Lord, I don't have no idea in this world! It seemed like forever. That thing was going to blow and we just couldn't get overboard fast enough.

Marcello: So what did you do when you got ashore at Ford Island?

Duvall: We went over . . . I don't know how come us to do that. Oh, we caught a vehicle of some kind. So then over at the Army, they was issuing some machine guns

to pretty near anybody, you know. Anybody that was able, you could go get you a machine gun, and I thought that was an excellent idea. If they come back, I wanted to be sure I was shooting at them. So we went over there, and they had done issued all the machine guns they had.

I think old Petticoat was still with me at the time, and then we said, "Well, now what the hell do we do?" Of course, it's getting on up to . . . well, it must be noon, and by noon I think all of the planes had gone. So then we had oiled up pretty good, too, getting into Ford Island so . . .

Marcello: I was going to say that you were probably pretty scruffy-looking by that time.

Duvall: We got oiled pretty good, so we went into the bachelor officers' . . . I mean, there was some officers' quarters on Ford Island for the fleet units--the pilots. They were there. One of the ladies--bless her--she told us to come into her apartment and try to clean up. She got some hand lotion and stuff. We got most of the oil off of us, and she gave us a pair of his britches which they was about four times too big, but it didn't really matter by then. Anything you could get on was better than oil-soaked clothes.



Marcello: Did you have shoes or anything?

Duvall: No, we were barefooted. Of course, we started out with those "toe-togs" on, and that put us all bare-footed.

So then I guess it must have been one or two o'clock, and they had . . . the ship hadn't blown, of course, and they had gotten the fire under control somehow or another. I wasn't there so I don't know really how they had done that. It wasn't out, but it was under control, so we went back to the ship then. We didn't have anywhere else to go, so we went back to the ship.

I knew two boys on that tug. They were the Carpenter brothers from school that I had been acquainted with, and we went . . . I went aboard that tug and immediately got the bitter end of one of those fire hoses again, and back to the fire we went. So we fought fire, he and I, and relieved each other on one of those things for a good long while. Then they got some CO<sub>2</sub>'s and first one thing and another.

Marcello: By this time, The California has settled on the bottom?

Duvall: Well, yes, pretty much. Yes, I guess it had. I don't really know how long it took to settle, but they had decided by then that it was not going to turn over or explode either.

Marcello: They evidently did some counter-flooding so that it wouldn't turn over.

Duvall: Yes, they did that, and then they . . . of course, there were anchor chains around the quays, and we kind of slipped out away from the muddy, nasty bottom there, and it wasn't very deep. We had settled to the bottom, and still the boat deck was above. The quarter-deck was below, but the forecastle . . . I guess the forecastle was below water, too, but the boat deck and all that was above.

Evidently . . . how long was it that they got a field kitchen set up out there? Or was it the next day before we got to eat? I think it was the next day before we got anything to eat at all.

Marcello: Did you have any hunger in the meantime?

Duvall: Well, I don't remember it, you know. I don't remember actually getting hungry. But it might have been late that evening that they got the field kitchen going, but I believe it was the next day.

Marcello: So how long did you fight the fires aboard the California?

Duvall: Well, later on that evening then, they formed the anti-aircraft watch. They had brought aboard a load of ammunition over to us from someplace else, and that evening--I don't know exactly what time it was--why, they decided that . . . they did two things. They

started making up a survivors list and mustering who was there, and there was a whole bunch over in the hangars over there that really wasn't doing anything, not because they didn't want to but because they didn't know what to do, you know, that sort of thing. So I decided . . . I was there on the ship about six o'clock that evening, and I got assigned the twelve to six the next morning antiaircraft watch. We were manning all of the antiaircraft guns that night. I believe all of our five-inch twenty-fives . . . I don't know whether all or just half of them was still above water, but part of them was anyway, was still where we could man them. I got put on one of the crews for manning the . . . I had trained some on sight-setting on the antiaircraft guns, so although I was basically a second division man--I was a main battery man--I did take the sight-setter's job on the antiaircraft guns. How that happened, I don't know, but I stood the watch that night.

Marcello: There must have been some interesting experiences that night when the planes were coming in from the Enterprise.

Duvall: Yes, there was. They all . . . one of them guys, one of them pilots, swam aboard our quarter-deck.

Marcello: You might describe that particular incident.

Duvall: Well, of course, I wasn't too close to him, but I could tell from the tone of his voice that he was some shook up. You see, everybody and his brother had got them an antiaircraft gun. Big ones, little ones. Everybody had them a gun by then. If they were coming back . . . some say, "Well, if they would have only come back, they would have had it easy." Well, if they had come back, they would have played hell having it easy because everybody had them a gun, and they was ready to shoot anything that moved, you know. It was a helluva different story, and they weren't going to come back in there unnoticed.

Those two planes . . . or was it three? Two, I think it was, from the Enterprise that had failed to find their ship, and they came routinely back to Ford Island like they had many, many times. When they did, why . . . communications wasn't set up yet. Everybody that could find them a gun and got them a hole and dug it and sandbagged it up had done so, and if anything comes over, we're going to shoot it--that sort of thing. So when they got over the fleet or what was left of the fleet, well, all hell broke loose and down came both our planes, you know. It was a full moon. Fortunately, they

parachuted out, and we didn't lose either one of the pilots.

Marcello: Evidently, the sky was just lit up like the Fourth of July?

Duvall: Oh, yes, it was a lot of people shooting. It was mostly small caliber stuff, but they was throwing lots of lead in the air, and there was no doubt about it. People had woke up, and they wasn't going to . . . if they came in, they was going to get shot at. None of that coming in and dropping your bomb and then getting shot at.

Marcello: Did your particular crew fire even though you were on a five-inch battery?

Duvall: No, we did not. We did not because we at the time had radio communications, and we were in touch with . . . and we were one of the few that knew that they were our planes, so we didn't fire. I don't think any of the major batteries fired. It was all the small stuff that fired.

Marcello: And you say that one of the pilots did come aboard the California?

Duvall: Yes.

Marcello: Do you remember that incident?

Duvall: Yes. "What the hell is going on around here? Goddamn, here I come in, and I've worked all day, and then you

shoot me down!" The OD said, "Well, all I got to say is, you look around here in the morning and you'll ask no questions." He said, "Well, where am I?" He said, "Well, you just swam aboard the USS California and the rest of us are strung up and down there and yonder!" There, of course, were fires and smoke and stuff. When he got through . . . he, too, didn't have the power to realize . . . or maybe radio silence or something couldn't really tell him. . . it was dark. It was midnight, you know. He had no way of knowing the damage that was done, and, of course, them guys out in the "boonies," they had no way of knowing that they wasn't coming back to finish us off, so it was just an unfortunate thing. Fortunately, we didn't lose any one of the pilots.

Marcello: Okay, so . . .

Duvall: After that, why, of course, you see, I stayed with the antiaircraft battery then. I became a permanent watch. Those that went back to the ship that night and stood watches on the antiaircraft guns that night became the new crew of the USS California; and those that had not been on that duty list that night, in a day or two they started transferring them to other ships. So those that had been on duty that first night stayed with the ship, and I stayed with it until January, '45.

Marcello: What sort of rumors did you hear floating around in the aftermath of the attack as to what the next intentions of the Japanese were? In other words, did you ever hear the rumors that they were about to land on the island or something of this nature?

Duvall: Well, no, not really. Of course, I was on a ship, you know. We still had radio communications, and we were where we got a fairly decent true picture of what was going on, I think. I don't remember bracing ourselves for landings. We never really expected them to land. We felt that they would bring into play their bigger ships against our meager forces and bring them closer to Pearl Harbor than they did. They retreated back farther than we thought they would.

But as it turned out, the ships that they damaged and sunk were modernized and repaired before they were needed. I mean, they were really not needed until we started our big amphibious operations or offensives. After that, we had to wait a little and then hit, and then the stages of the war was that we'd hit and run, make attacks and run, slip commandos in and damage and run--that sort of thing for a year or so. Submarines went out trying to do as much damage to their fleet as they possibly could. Then the next stage was where we'd move in and bombard

and leave and really pretty severe air attacks and challenge them to come out. Then we started our amphibious forces . . . and by then, my ship was back in operation. It was two years later, but it was when we started our offensive, and we made Guam, Saipan, Tinian, the Philippines, and back. And we did, we revenged every bit of the damage they had done. I mean, we stirred them up.

Marcello: You brought up the subject, so let's pursue it just a little bit farther. How soon after the California settled on the bottom did salvage operations begin?

Duvall: It was two or three months, I guess. We stood watches on it for a couple of weeks, but just on the hull. They got in technicians in and poured foundations for it. Maybe it was longer than that; maybe it was a month. And then they took a battery at a time, and they set them up at Hickam Field and out at Ewa and over at West Loch. All those antiaircraft guns that the Navy had lost there shipboard, they set them up on the island and used them as inner-island . . . and we'd just manned them long enough for the Army to get a cadre out, and we'd check the Army out and get them to where they could operate them fairly decently. Then our salvage operations moved back, and we moved into "tent city" and started operations from right there, salvage operations.



Marcello: In the immediate aftermath of the attack, let's say Monday morning, describe what the harbor looked like as best you can recall. What sort of a scene was spread out before you?

Duvall: Well, of course, it was just a nasty mess. Everything was covered with black fuel oil because how many millions of gallons of fuel oil was turned loose out of all those ships, I don't know. I'd be surprised if they got that completely clear of that stuff yet. I assume they have, but it was . . . everything that was white and clean and pretty was covered with black oil, and, of course, the dry docks was burned. Shrapnel was all over everything. We had really . . . we had to go out . . . I think it was Monday or Tuesday. I got off watch . . . Goddamn, it seems like I stayed on watch all night. Somebody had to relieve me or something, and damn if I didn't have to go out and help them pick up the shrapnel off of Ford Island. We got a barrel of just . . . planes couldn't land on it. It was so covered with shrapnel and broken metal pieces and parts of the Arizona, and, you know, it was just . . . it was just a holocaust, really, and a helluva mess.

Marcello: What sort of emotion did you experience, do you recall, when you saw this scene before you? Let me be more specific and ask what sort of attitude did you now have toward the Japanese.

Duvall: Well, you know, I surprised myself on that. We hated them and fought them so hard and lost so many good buddies. I lost two or three real good friends. Our ship was damaged after Pearl, too. We were damaged in the Marianas, and we were damaged in Pelieu, and we were damaged in the Philippines. I had a longer of period with the same guys to get more acquainted and make dear friends. I lost some dear friends, and I just thought that I could never be a human toward those people. But when I got to Japan, it made a different story, you see. You had to say, "Well, they fought hard because they were convinced that they were right." I fought hard because I was convinced we were right, and I'd have to ask should they hate me because I was a good soldier or a good sailor. I'd have to answer that, "No, you should not hate people for doing a good job." The people there just was so nice to us and had suffered so, too, you know. You're talking to people who . . . at the end of the war, they were . . . not so now, but at the end of the war, they were wearing gunny sacks for shoes, and they were hard-put for any merchandise. Food was scarce and clothes was scarce, and they were a ragged, broken nation and burnt out. They lost an awful lot of their people, too, you know. They had been misled, and you look at

it that people that are here are really not guilty of the sole crime. What you're raised to believe, you know, and they were raised to feel that dying for their emperor was a good thing, and I guess that's just the way they was. They were good battle men. They fought hard.

Marcello: Well, getting back again to the question I asked . . .

Duvall: As far as I'm concerned, I was so glad it was over with, and I had hopes that we might find a way to live longer than twenty years in peace and harmony.

Marcello: Well, getting back to the question that I asked, in the immediate aftermath of the attack--at that time--what were your feelings towards the Japanese? Not at the end of the war or not now, but right immediately after Pearl Harbor had been attacked? Or did you have too many other things on your mind to think about?

Duvall: Well, I think we were too busy, really and truly too busy, in getting ourselves back in order to cope with the problems that this was . . . we were aware that this wasn't the end of the problem. It was the start of the problem, you see. Even us peons knew that we would just . . . we'd been knocked down, and now we got to get ourselves up off the mat and get ready to go with the real battle. And we were going to have to

give a good battle, or the whole world was going to be in terrible shape. I shudder to think what would have happened if the Japanese had won the war. The world certainly wouldn't be the shape it's in today.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Duvall, that's all the questions I have, and I want to . . .

Duvall: That's all the answers I got, too (laughter).

Marcello: I want to thank you very much for taking time to talk with me.

Duvall: You know, your feelings when you're that young and involved in really getting down to the nitty-gritty of taking care of the problem and knowing that you're only a small part of the answer to the problem in the first place . . . I don't know. I don't remember. To say we hated them would be one thing. I don't know whether that would be true or not. We were filled with revenge of saying, "You bastards will pay for this!" And a number of times we expressed that feeling when we was really tearing them up out there a time or two. "See what you did! We're giving you hell now!"

Marcello: Well, Mr. Duvall, I do want to thank you very much for taking time to talk with me. You've said some very interesting things, and I believe historians are going to find your comments valuable when the history of Pearl Harbor from the angle of the ordinary sailor is written.