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Charles Witt
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Oral History Collection

Charles Witt

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Duncanville, Texas Date: September 28, 1977

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Charles Witt for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on September 28, 1977, in Duncanville, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Witt in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was aboard the battleship USS Maryland during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Now Mr. Witt, 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. Witt: Well, I was born in Texarkana, Texas, and incidently about, oh, a half a mile from the Arkansas border. So just by chance I was a native Texan. I was born on January 7, 1922. And we stayed there in Texarkana just a short time. And most of my youth and my schooling and so forth and so on was in Kilgore, Texas; I attended most of my schooling there.

And then after attending the senior class there at Kilgore High School, I just happened to notice an ad out in front of

the Post Office for the Marine Corps. And so I dropped in and asked them, you know, if they thought they'd be interested in me. And they said, "Well, we might." So actually they gave me an application and so forth and so on, and I took this and mailed it in, and it wasn't long before I was in Dallas, Texas, reporting for my physical and not long after that on the train to San Diego to boot camp training. And from there, of course, after boot camp training and sea school, they transferred me aboard the USS Maryland.

Marcello: Okay, let's back up here just a minute. When did all this take place? That is, when did you enter the service?

Witt: Okay, the date of entry into the service was April 6, 1940.

Marcello: Why did you select the Marine Corps as opposed to one of the other branches of the service? Was this just by chance?

Witt: Just the chance of circumstance. They happened to have the right advertisement at the right time--the large picture of a U.S. Marine in his dress blues and underneath it said, you know, "travel, romance, adventure." So I was about ready to leave the nest, and that happened to be the opportune thing in time and place, I guess.

Marcello: Why did you decide to enter the service?

Witt: Well, like I said, I wanted to get out on my own more or less, and this happened to be just a good way to do it, it seemed like.

Marcello: How hard was it to get a job at that particular time?

Witt: Well, I had a job. I was a messenger boy for the Postal Telegraph Company there in Kilgore. As such, I rode a bicycle quite a bit, you know, and was in pretty fair physical condition when I enlisted in the Marine Corps, although I was a lightweight. I think I weighed around 135 pounds when I went in, and after, oh, six weeks of boot camp training and so forth and so on, I went up to about 150, 155 pounds.

Marcello: At the time that you entered the service, how closely were you keeping abreast with world affairs and current events and things of that sort?

Witt: Well, unfortunately, probably like a lot of other people in the United States particularly, I wasn't too interested in . . . I was interested in seeing the world, and that's one of the reasons, of course, I joined the Marine Corps actually. That's what they said would happen to me, you see, but as far as knowing about the politics, I was pretty naive, I feel sure.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you took your Marine boot camp at San Diego. Is there anything eventful that happened in boot camp that you think we need to get as part of the record, that is, other from the fact that you gained some weight while you were in boot camp?

Witt: Well, there's a couple of incidents I might recall--at least one. You know, there are certain things that stand out, it seems like,

in your mind that you retain better than others. One thing was that we had a very strict drill sergeant, and, of course, they're all supposedly very strict. But this particular one, his name was C.X. Landry, Sergeant C.X. Landry. And what he did was, he took us down in what they called the "boondocks" and had us form a circle and march around and around and place our rifle at our right foot, and then we marched around and around again, and what he did then is said, "Fall out and fall in with your own rifle!" Well, of course, you know, you didn't know where your own rifle was. And then the thing was that after we did find our own rifle and return to the barracks, he said, "Okay, fall out and there will be an inspection in thirty minutes." (Chuckle) So this was just typical of the type of training, you know, that they would give you in the Marine Corps.

Marcello: How long did boot camp last at that particular time?

Witt: To the best of my knowledge, six weeks.

Marcello: Refresh my memory once again. When did you say you entered the service?

Witt: This was April 6, 1940.

Marcello: In other words, there still wasn't really a sense of urgency or a national emergency really associated with your training at that time.

Witt: Oh, really none whatsoever. Of course, I could refer to most any day of my diary aboard the ship here, and recently I was just

looking at this page here for Monday, September 29. Of course, that would have been 1940, but it says: "Still in Pearl Harbor. Nothing unusual today. Took one-hour sunbath and getting pretty tanned. I wonder where I shall be at this time next year."

Marcello: For the benefit of the people who read this transcript later on, I should mention that you did keep a diary for a certain part of your military career. Now I assume that after you got out of boot camp that you then went on to the Marine sea school, as you mentioned previously.

Witt: That is correct. It was about a month or a month and a half of that.

Marcello: Why did you decide to go to sea school?

Witt: Well, actually, they, the people in charge--you might say the sergeant and possibly the commanding officer--would select a certain few from each platoon that was being instructed and ask the people if they would not like to attend sea school and possibly go on and be aboard ship. And at that time, the setup was this--that if you went to sea school, you were to spend two years or twenty-four months aboard the ship, and then you would be transferred to some land unit or Marine Corps detachment or Naval base. That was the setup at that time.

Marcello: Why did sea school appeal to you, particularly?

Witt: Well, I think it was the dress blues (chuckle). You see, actually, the dress blues are associated more or less with sea-going Marines, and although most Marines were issued dress blues, very few of them ever wear them unless they are in a parade or something or unless they are aboard ship. And then, of course, aboard ship it is a standard uniform for the cooler climates.

Marcello: How long did the sea school last?

Witt: There was about a month to . . . little over a month, I'd say.

Marcello: What does a Marine do in sea school?

Witt: Well, you learn more or less what the sailors might be learning.

Marcello: In other words, it's more or less like a seamanship course.

Witt: This is correct. You learn the nomenclature, you might say, of the ship itself, and the make-up of the ship or ships and the life aboard ship, you know, what you might expect when you do go aboard ship.

Marcello: Now did you go directly from sea school to the USS Maryland?

Witt: Well, actually, no. We were transferred from the San Diego base there to Long Beach, California, to wait for the Maryland, and as such, we went aboard an aircraft carrier. I think it was the Enterprise, but I'm not real sure about that. But anyway, it was one of the larger aircraft carriers. And we stayed aboard the aircraft carrier for just a few days until the Maryland arrived from wherever it was coming from at that time. And then I was transferred directly to the Maryland.

Marcello: Describe your initial experiences aboard the Maryland. In other words, to be more specific, what sort of a reception does a Marine out of sea school get when he boards a vessel such as the Maryland or any other battleship?

Witt: Well, let me just say this, that a battleship in itself is just like a city. You have just about . . . you would have just about everything aboard the ship that you could find in a small town at least, you know. Just to mention a few, you have your own bake shop, and your own carpenter shop and, of course, your laundry and drugstore, some groceries . . . and like a hotel or motel or whatever. It was just so big and so huge that it does take a while really to realize what you're on, you know. The tremendous size of the things . . . for instance, the Maryland weighed 35,000 tons and was a huge ship, you know.

Marcello: Were you rather awe-stricken by the Maryland, since you were a young boy from Texas and that sort of thing?

Witt: Yes. It was the first ship, of course, that I had ever seen. As a matter of fact . . . well, no, it wasn't the first time that I seen the ocean. I went to Florida a couple of times via the "thumb" route before I joined the Marine Corps, but it was the first time that I'd ever seen a large vessel like this, and quite naturally I was probably all eyes actually, you know, at the time. And the old hands around there, they always received the recruits

with a few expressions like, "you'll be sorry," or, you know, this sort of thing (chuckle). But in the Marine Corps particularly, you know, you have that spirit of comradeship and togetherness and so forth and so on, so you fit right in pretty quick.

Marcello: What sort of a relationship exists between the sailors and the Marines that are aboard a battleship such as the Maryland?

Witt: Well, of course, there's always a lot of fun-poking, you might say, you know, and, of course, the Marines would call the sailors "swabbies" and "swab jockeys" and so forth and so on; the sailors in turn would call the Marines maybe "leathernecks" and "bellhops" and this sort of thing. But actually, you know, in most ships it is mostly in just fun, you know.

Marcello: For the most part, did the Marines and sailors live in separate worlds of their own aboard ship?

Witt: Yes, particularly aboard the Maryland. I can't answer for all the other large ships, but aboard the Maryland the Marines, of course, had the two sides of the upper deck, you might say--the five-inch broadside gun sections--and they were the starboard watch and the port watch, one on either side of the ship, and they were detached quite a bit, really, from the rest of the crew.

Marcello: Describe what your quarters were like aboard the USS Maryland.

Witt: Well, it was about 99 per cent steel to start with. Of course, it would have to be, you know, but you did have a teakwood deck

and . . .but the gun emplacement is in the same place that you would sleep. For instance, it took up about 50 per cent of your sleeping quarters, and you slept--we did at that time aboard the Maryland--in hammocks, and some of the old hands would sleep in cots on deck.

Marcello: Describe what it was like to sleep in a hammock.

Witt: Well, actually it is real good sleeping, particularly underway because, you know, as the ship would roll and pitch and so forth and so on, the hammock would stay pretty much stabilized. And it almost is like a water bed probably, you know, inasmuch as you had that sensation of rolling around you, but yet you're staying pretty much in the same position. And it was very comfortable after awhile--after you learned how to get into it.

Marcello: What sort of living space did you have within your quarters?

Witt: Well, primarily we lived in , . . I think there was probably at least 5-inch broadside guns on either side of the ship, and they protruded out of casemates there, you see--openings--and we pretty much lived around that. We did have a central area in the central part of the ship there where there were no guns and where we had a lot more room to move around. Other than that, we were pretty much living right there with the guns, you know.

Marcello: Were your quarters cramped, or was there plenty of space?

Witt: No, there wasn't plenty of space, actually. We had a full crew, and as such. . . I forget the number of people per gun, you know, but the people that actually fired that particular gun lived in that particular quarters. As far as sleeping though, you see, you would put up your hammock at night or string it up on the overhead and sleep, and then the next morning you get up and roll it up and take it down below to the hammock locker and stow it down there. So you didn't have this situation where you had to walk around cots or under hammocks or anything like that during the day. They'd be secured down below, you see.

Marcello: How large a Marine complement are we talking about aboard the Maryland?

Witt: Oh, this is something I can't tell you exactly. I just have to hazard a guess, really. I'd say we had in the neighborhood of seventy to eighty and possibly as much as a hundred.

Marcello: What was the food like aboard the Maryland during this period?

Witt: Actually, it wasn't that bad. We had such things as real butter, for instance. On Saturdays chow wasn't too good, and this was due to the fact that every Saturday we had an inspection of sorts, and every Saturday morning, for instance, for breakfast we had beans and cornbread. Of course, in port you'd have real milk, and then on occasion, though, if you were out to sea, sometimes we'd get into a situation where you'd have powdered milk

and powdered eggs and this sort of thing. But when you're in port, though, we were fed real good, actually.

Marcello: In general how would you describe the morale among the Marines aboard the Maryland during that pre-Pearl Harbor period?

Witt: Well, I'd say it was quite good, because we did engage in such things as sports, you know. We'd go to shore and play one of the other ships. We'd have a ball game, and also we went on what they'd call a "beer bust" and go to the beach and do some swimming and do picture-taking, and, of course, we had liberty quite often. And I think it was real good.

Marcello: You mentioned sports a moment ago. From everything that I've heard, athletic competition played a very, very important role in the service during that pre-Pearl Harbor period.

Witt: It really did, and there was quite a bit of competition between ships. In other words, the Maryland would take on the West Virginia, for instance, you know. And it is just like a Dallas Cowboy and a Detroit Lions game, really, at the time, because really they put their heart and soul and body into it, you know.

Marcello: I gather that the band competition among the battleships was very, very keen, too, during that time.

Witt: Yes, it was. We had a very good band aboard the Maryland. . . and such things as whale-boating. They had whale boat, you know, competition, and they had some skeet shooting and baseball and basketball and this sort of thing.

Marcello: Now how shortly after you boarded the Maryland did you head for Pearl Harbor?

Witt: Now you're getting into thirty-six years ago (chuckle). I'd say it was probably within three or four months at the most. Other than that, we spent some time at San Francisco and Long Beach, but there is a possibility that it could have been a month, you know. I just can't pin it down that close.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of being based on a more or less permanent basis at Pearl Harbor in the Hawaiian Islands?

Witt: Well, the island itself is very enchanting from a distance particularly, you know. The first thing you see when you're aboard a ship, of course, is Diamond Head, and then as you get closer to the island itself, then you can see . . . or at that time you could see the two tremendously big hotels. I won't try to call the names.

Marcello: The Royal Hawaiian and the Ala Moana.

Witt: The Royal Hawaiian and the Moana, yes. The Moana I'm particularly familiar with, because that's where we stayed when we went back, you know, on our twenty-fifth anniversary. We went back over there and stayed at the Moana Hotel; we really enjoyed that.

But getting back to the original thing, there's a distinct, different smell, of course, and appearance, and the water is so much different as far as color. The people were so much different from what we were used to seeing, you know--the Asiatic and

the . . . what would that be? The Polynesian-type people and some Micronesian, too, I guess. It was just so different that it was like another world, really.

Marcello: Now was there ever any information given to the Marines as to why the fleet was being sent to the Hawaiian Islands on a more or less permanent basis? In other words, did they, that is, the officers and so on, did they fill you in on the world situation and why you were going there and things of this sort?

Witt: No, not really. Like I said, being a private in the Marine Corps doesn't give you much. . . entitle you to much information in the overall picture, you know. But as I understand it, actually from reading as much as having been there myself, at that time I think Admiral Kimmel was given the control of the Pacific Fleet more or less, and I don't know whether it was his decision or whether it came from Washington itself to base the fleet there at Pearl Harbor, and, of course, the Maryland happened to be part of his fleet. That's the reason we were at Pearl Harbor. Now there might . . . I'm sure there were circumstances which I had, you know, no idea about or information of that was the reason for the fleet being at there at that time, but it is just a guess on my part.

Marcello: I assume that Battleship Row was a rather impressive sight when all of the battleships were anchored there in Pearl on any given occasion. It was rather impressive, was it not?

Witt: Yes, it really was due to the fact, of course, to the size of the ships mostly, and it was a practice to berth them two alongside --one alongside of the other--so when you get two of those monsters there together and then several of them lined up around the place they had for the anchoring of the battleships, well, you had quite an impressive . . . and then, of course, there were quite a number of other ships in the vicinity, so it was a sight to see.

Marcello: Why did they tie up the battleships two together?

Witt: I think this is probably conservation of space if nothing else, because, you know, like I said, they were tremendously big ships, and Pearl Harbor is not all that big. It was large enough to accommodate them all right, but when you have the size and the shape and the dimensions and so forth and so on of the battleships, I think it was almost necessary that they double them up in order to conserve space.

Marcello: And I gather that that harbor was simply a beehive of activity after the Pacific Fleet moved out there and with all of the ships moving in and out of the harbor.

Witt: Quite a bit, yes. There was an awful lot of activity, and, of course, there would have to be inasmuch as you have, oh, say, 1,400, 1,500 people aboard a ship, and you've got eight ships. And you have to feed them, for instance, and clothe them and, you

know, fuel, and then there's a lot of activity as far as recreation and so forth and so on. So you did have a lot of activity there.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk a little bit about your particular function aboard the ship, and perhaps I should begin by asking you about the on-the-job training that you received aboard the Maryland during this period.

Witt: Well, as far as on-the-job training, we were given specific positions or jobs relative to the function of the ship, you know, and the Marine Corps, like I said, did man the 5-inch broadside guns. But my particular battle station, for instance, was up in the aftermast of the battleship Maryland, which was about approximately, I think, about ninety feet up, and in that particular area we had range-finder for the 5-inch broadside guns. And, of course, we were given quite a bit of intensive training, actually, to handle our particular job, you know. Everybody aboard ship has a particular job where you have an alert situation or a battle station, you might say. So it was necessary for me to climb this aftermast which had a ladder right in the middle of it, right straight up to the what you might call the "crow's nest," up on top where the range-finders were located.

Marcello: And the range-finders were located up there for the 5-inch broadsides?

Witt: That is correct. We would decide the range and so forth and so on for the broadside guns to the target.

Marcello: And I assume that you communicated with the gun crews by means of telephones and so on.

Witt: That is correct. Well, they had headsets, yes. You plugged in, you know, and you could talk directly to the guns themselves, because you'd have to give them the range and that sort of thing, you know, elevation.

Marcello: From the picture that we're looking at, I assume that the Maryland had the cage-type mast at this particular time.

Witt: That is right. At that time, yes, they did. Of course, that was changed later, and they did away with that and put in place a platform with some 20-millimeter guns, for instance. Now they had another way of . . . radar, you know. Radar came into play after awhile. Now they had this sort of system to direct the gunfire.

Marcello: Did the Maryland have radar prior to Pearl Harbor?

Witt: No. No radar. No, that is correct. It really didn't have . . . it was all more or less visual, and as you can see from looking at my picture here, we had three planes aboard the ship.

Marcello: Yes.

Witt: And, you know, a person wouldn't think that a battleship would have planes aboard, but what they did there. . . they had a ramp

that they would explode more or less the plane off the ship--a light plane--and it might be compared with a crop duster. And they could land on very short space and fly at a relatively slow speed, and then they would be picked up by the ship itself by means of a rope and grapple and so forth and so on out on the side of the ship there, and a crane'd hoist it back aboard the ship on the ramp there, you know.

Marcello: I have interviewed several sailors who were members of launch crews for those planes, and we have gone into a great deal of detail concerning those particular operations. I think that's a phase of the Navy that's probably gone forever with the coming of radar, helicopters, and things of that nature, and I think it was necessary to get it as a part of the record.

Witt: Well, that is true, and we'll never see this again because we'll probably never have a battleship again, you know.

Marcello: That's true.

Witt: They're just outdated and outmoded, and they're just a sightseeing attraction now.

Marcello: What other functions did a Marine perform aboard the battleship, other than manning the various stations for the 5-inch broadsides? In other words, what was your routine like aboard the Maryland?

Witt: Okay, the Marines themselves, they'd "turn to," and, of course, the daily routine would be to clean up their own quarters.

Marcello: Yes.

Witt: And this took some part of the day every day, and then other than that, we had like a captain's orderly, executive officer's orderly . . . and incidently that was my job. I wonder if I could read you a little something at this time in connection with that.

Marcello: Go right ahead.

Witt: This I wrote from my diary here on Friday, December 5th. I said, "Ah, yes! Still in good old Pearl Harbor. I had the watch again today. The old commander is sort of mad about something of late (I wonder why)." And to me that's kind of indicative of the fact that there was something brewing, and I just kind of feel like that he, you know, had some inkling that something was going on. What he knew or how much or what, I don't know, but it just gave me an indication that he was upset about something.

Marcello: This is getting a little bit ahead of our story, and I do want to come back to that November 28th date later on because I think it is important.

Witt: Right.

Marcello: We talked a little bit about your on-the-job training. Now at this stage then, why don't we talk a little bit about a typical training exercise or maneuver that the Maryland would carry on during those pre-Pearl Harbor days. In other words, when did you go out on one of these exercises? How long did you stay

out? What did you do when you went out there? When did you come in? Now I've given you a series of questions there, and let's grapple with those for awhile.

Witt: Yes. Well, I tell you what. If you don't mind, I'd still like to come back to my diary here, because I think I've made some notations here that really would help us. I'll not give the date or anything unless it's important, but I wrote on this particular day: "We left the harbor about 0600. Manned the broadside battery until 0915." By manning, of course, we mean that actually we stood by ready to fire, you know, or we were up in our control tower, you might say. "Then secured for captain's inspection at 0930." I made a little notation that morning that said, "Another Navy run!!!" In other words, it was just an expression, you know, at that time--a "Navy run." "Had school this afternoon--a lecture on advance guard by Lieutenant Roycie. Guess we will be underway for about a week, and the turrets will fire night battle practice."

Then, of course, that was one day, and the next day would give us another indication of what we were doing. "We are still cruising around not far from Honolulu. Went into condition watch last night at 0000." That is twelve o'clock midnight. "I had the four to eight watch in foretop. General quarters went at 0530, and we had breakfast of rolls, eggs, cheese, and bread in foretop. Secured about 0630." That was 6:30 in the

morning. "The sea is certainly choppy today. This doesn't seem like a Sunday morning."

So it just gives you an idea as to what we were doing at that time. We were out and . . . for instance, we went out and fired night battle practice, and this means that we went out and fired the 5-inch guns at night, which would be quite a bit different from the day because at night aboard ship there's a lot of light, you know. We don't have neon lights and overhead lights and this sort of thing, you know, to help us out. So actually they did have to have some night battle practice so that they would be able to fire the guns at night.

Marcello: Normally, when did the Maryland go out? On what day of the week?

Witt: Well, there was no particular day. How that was determined, I'll never know. It could be Friday or Monday or even the Sunday; we got underway nearly every day of the week, for instance.

Marcello: On a normal training exercise, how long would the Maryland stay out?

Witt: Well, I would say probably a week to ten days.

Marcello: Would you be working with other battleships and so on?

Witt: Yes. Actually, here again, it says, "We fired night battle practice last night. It was a very beautiful sight to watch the three battleships fire their main and secondary batteries."

The main battery, of course, is a 16-inch gun, you know, and along that line let me just say that as far as the noise is concerned, a 16-inch gun can make a lot of noise; and if you have four firing at the same time, you have a terrific amount of noise, but it wouldn't hurt one's ear or eardrum or whatever as bad as we experienced aboard ship there with what we called a 5-inch antiaircraft gun, which had a short, cracky-type barrel, and quite a few of the fellows there experienced some trouble with their eardrum.

But anyway, to get back to your question, we did have the three battleships on this particular training exercise, and we fired the main and the secondary batteries.

Marcello: Now as one gets closer and closer to December 7, 1941, and as conditions between the United States and Japan continued to deteriorate, how did your training routine change? Or did it change?

Witt: Well, it didn't change drastically, but it did seem like we were having more and more training exercises; and we had one occasion there where we were out to sea, and we were having these exercises and battle practice and so forth and so on, and a sub was reported.

Marcello: Now when was this?

Witt: Now this was on Friday, November 28th, which, well, actually-- what--put it about nine days before the actual attack. And I

wrote in my diary at that time, "A sub was reported by the battle lookout, so we had condition watches all the time until we entered Pearl Harbor. Held field day today and did not have to make coming to anchor quarters. I don't know just how long we are to be in port this time, but I believe that I should have drawn enough money to send Mother . . . " There's some superfluous stuff that I wrote in there that really wouldn't be of lot of interest, maybe. But that would just give you an idea that nine days before the actual attack, we did experience an alien submarine or a periscope in our vicinity, and it makes one wonder, you know (chuckle).

Marcello: How far outside Pearl were you when this periscope was detected?

Witt: Oh, possibly ten to fifteen, twenty miles--not too far out, really.

Marcello: What actions did the ship take after the periscope had been spotted?

Witt: We more or less went . . . not only went to . . . but we were nearly already on our condition watch or battle watch, you might say. People were in their places where they would have to go if hostilities did break out at the moment, for instance, or if somebody'd fired at us or whatnot. So there wasn't really a lot to do other than . . . I guess the people in charge--the admiral in charge of the exercise--determined that the best thing to do would be to send the ship back into Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: What sort of scuttlebutt did this cause aboard the Maryland?

Witt: Quite a bit, actually. We were wondering just why we hightailed it back into Pearl for one thing, you know. But evidently it didn't create. . . I don't want to get too far ahead in the story here, but evidently it didn't create too much of furor because, at the time of the attack, we still had our ammunition, and so forth and so on locked up down below. It wasn't ready, so we weren't put that much on an alert. Let's put it that way.

Marcello: During this period, that is, when you went on these training exercises, how much time was devoted to antiaircraft drills?

Witt: At times we would have none, and other times, if we were out . . . if we were going to be out, say, for a period of a week or ten days or possibly longer, and they were doing a certain particular kind of exercise, then they would use the planes. Of course, they were used for scouting purposes primarily, and almost solely, you know, and it was their own built-in aircraft carrier, you might say, and that was strictly for patrol purposes. They did have to give the pilots, of course, some training and exercise to keep them efficient, and also the crews that halped launch the planes and helped retrieve them, you know. They had to keep those people trained and on their toes. So actually, I'd have to hazard a guess there again. I'd say it was approximately every three or four exercises that they would use the planes.

Marcello: Did you get the impression, however, that not too many people really understood the full potential of airplanes? Did people actually realize how important the airplane was going to be in future naval warfare?

Witt: Not really. Of course, it goes back to--what was it--Rickenbacker or whatever his name was that . . .

Marcello: Billy Mitchell.

Witt: Well, there's another fellow there; I'm sorry I can't think of his name. But anyway, he was telling them that the day of the battleship, and the cruiser and so forth and so on was just about over with because of the fact that you did have the aircraft carrier, and as such the aircraft carrier could really destroy all those other ships, you know. So the importance of the plane was realized, I feel sure, but it hadn't been demonstrated as much as it should have been, maybe.

Marcello: To make another observation, I would assume that the Maryland had many more antiaircraft weapons aboard it after Pearl Harbor than it did before Pearl Harbor.

Witt: Quite a few. Really it did. Primarily, we had the 5-inch antiaircraft gun, which would shoot the larger 5-inch shell, and then we had the heavy .50-caliber machine gun aboard ship, and we also had at that time--and hadn't had really too long--what they called the 1.1. I think it was the Oerlikon Swedish gun, and it was sort of a pom-pom gun, and it was a

1.1-inch type shell, and that was it as far as antiaircraft guns. But, yes, after the attack, of course, we did get some 40-millimeter, 20-millimeter, and different types of a 5-inch guns, and we were much better prepared.

Marcello: Okay, we have talked a little bit about your training exercises. At this point let us turn to your liberty routine. What was your particular liberty routine like when the Maryland would come in off one of these maneuvers?

Witt: Well, I wish I had marked a page or two here in my diary. For instance, on one occasion we took the whole, say, starboard watch, which I was connected with there, and went ashore, and had what we called a "beer bust." As such, why, we had plenty of cold beer to drink, and we went right out on the beach there and did a lot of swimming and romping and playing, and took the baseball bats and balls and gloves along and played a game, ate pretty good. Just had a real good time--enjoyed it.

Marcello: Ordinarily, when the Maryland was in for a weekend, how much liberty could you expect to have?

Witt: Okay, normally in peacetime, you might say, what would happen is you'd have liberty after captain's inspection on Saturday morning, and, say, this would run around, oh, 0900, ten o'clock, something like that, and would expire, though, that evening. You'd have to be back aboard ship, say, by 2000, which was about

eight o'clock, you know, in the evening. There was no overnight liberty . . . very little overnight liberty, actually.

Marcello: Why was that?

Witt: I really don't know. I guess, for one thing, the town was pretty crowded, you know, and like I said before, there was a pretty good-sized fleet there. I guess they didn't have the place for them all to stay in town for one thing. But then on the other hand, I guess it was a good idea, because, you know, most of the fellows go over and they "tank up" a little bit, you know, and kind of over-do it, and it was better to try to get them back aboard ship and let them try it again next time, you know, rather than let them just go two or three days possibly.

Marcello: Now how much liberty would you get on a weekend? Would you get the full weekend, or would you get either Saturday or Sunday?

Witt: Sometimes we'd get one day and then the other. The starboard watch would have a Saturday, and the port watch would have a Sunday or vice versa, you know. I think you tried to keep about half of the crew aboard ship at one time and just make it on a starboard watch, or if they let both sides go at the same time, they would let about half of the crew go on Saturday and the other half on Sunday, for instance.

Marcello: What did you personally do when you went on liberty? Now you did mention that one instance in your diary, but normally what would you do when you went on liberty?

Witt: Well, we did a lot of picture-taking, of course, you know, the "tourista"-type thing; and then we'd go to the show, and we'd also, of course, frequent the place where we could get some refreshments or stroll along the beach and just kind of eyeball the place, you know, because it is so different, really.

Marcello: I assume that Hotel Street and Canal Street and so on were very, very popular with the fleet at that particular time.

Witt: This is true. You could find most any type of entertainment, you might say. It was kind of like the strip, you know, and you . . . like I said, you could be entertained along in that area just about any way, you know. So quite a few of them did frequent that particular part of town, right.

Marcello: Many people say that if the Japanese were going to attack Pearl Harbor, the best time to have done so would have been on a Sunday morning. What these people are assuming is that Saturday nights were times of a great deal of partying and carousing, and consequently the fleet would be in no shape to fight on Sunday morning. How would you answer that assertion?

Witt: I'd say that pretty well is correct. Also, given the fact that possibly at that time there might have been quite a few--and actually was quite a few--of the officer personnel not aboard. . . in other words, say, take the captain and the executive officer and the supply officer and the gunnery officer, they could and possibly were on most ships off of the ship at that time, and I think they knew that, of course. I'm sure they had their information, you know.

Marcello: Also, it's true, is it not, that Sundays were days of leisure so far as the crew members were concerned?

Witt: This is true. Right. Yes, you didn't have your normal routine. It would be very unusual if you did on Sunday, and, like you say, it was a day of relaxation. For those that went ashore, of course, whatever their, you know, thing was . . . for those that stayed aboard, of course, you had your card game, or you had sunbathing or just taking a nap, you know, out on the deck in the cool wind blowing across you there or just sitting around and "shooting the bull," as they say.

Marcello: When you thought of a typical Japanese, what sort of a person did you conjure up in your own mind during that pre-Pearl Harbor period? Obviously, there were a lot of people of Japanese ancestry in the Hawaiian Islands.

Witt: Yes. Well, of course, they all looked a little short, and I think my own personal thought was. . . I wondered why they

all have such short legs, you know (chuckle). It seemed like that nearly all of that particular race do have real short limbs, you know, and . . . but other than that, that was kind of fascinating, of course, just like I was with the typical Hawaiian beach boy, for instance. You know, you had the brown-type fellow out there with the big-barreled chest, you know, and robust looking and very good, wonderful swimmers, you know. They were just about as good as you would find anywhere. And they were very fascinating, and, of course, all the women are very attractive, you know, particularly the young ones, and they all have such dainty-looking features as far as their facial features are concerned. So they were just so unusual. But as far as the Japanese, I hadn't really had that much association with them to have even formed an opinion about them.

Marcello: As conditions continued to worsen between the two countries, how safe and secure did you feel there in the Hawaiian Islands? In other words, did you ever give very much thought to the possibility of the Japanese ever attacking the installations in the islands?

Witt: Not really. For instance, I could go back to my diary, and, you know, refer to it, and I think in places I would just probably say something like: "Well, just a usual routine day. Saturday inspection was 4.0 this morning. I slept all

afternoon." Actually, that's what I wrote on Saturday December 6th. I just happened to find it here in the diary. I said, "Inspection was 4.0 this morning. I slept all afternoon." Now this was on the day before, so obviously I and the others weren't too excited or agitated or stirred up, as you might say, because, I mean, you just wouldn't do things like that if you were.

Marcello: Did you ever hear any of the "old salts" talk about fighting prowess of the Japanese Navy? Now I'm referring to those sailors who perhaps had served with the Asiatic Fleet in previous years.

Witt: Well, actually, we had a couple of Asiatic Marines aboard ship, and although they weren't particularly talking about fleet situations because they were based on at in Shanghai. The Shanghai Marines, they called them, you know. I'm sorry I can't answer that question, because we just didn't have people around us that had been associated with the Japanese that much, I guess, in my particular case, anyway.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us up to the days immediately prior to the actual Japanese attack, and in order to form some sort of logical chronology here, why don't we start with that episode on November 28th. Now you mentioned it briefly in reading from your diary, but I gather that it was on November 28th that the submarine periscope was spotted.

Witt: Friday, November 28th, right. And do you want me to more or less read?

Marcello: No, that's the last thing I want you to do, is to read from your diary.

Witt: Yes, I see what you mean.

Marcello: Okay, so you mentioned that you saw the periscope, and orders were given that the ship was to go back to Pearl Harbor. What happened at that point?

Witt: Well, like I said, we entered the port, and we didn't have an inspection. It was kind of routine, and, of course, they just tied up the ships, you know--come to anchor, which took some doing in the case of a 35,000 ton battleship. You don't just . . . it's not like a bass boat, and it took, say, three or four hours to get the thing anchored, you know, and once we did, why, of course, they tied it down to the, oh, I think, the stanchion or whatever they call those things they tied the battleships to. It's been so long ago that I forget the terminology now.

But then, like I said, they'd put one beside the other, and so you would have two anchored there together. As a matter of fact, our, you might say, shipmate there, as far as a battleships was concerned, happened to be the Oklahoma, and she was tied up right next to us. The people could go

from the Oklahoma across the gangplank to the Maryland and across the gangplank to the island, you know, and this was possible. So this is the reason that they had to stack them one beside the other. It was the conservation of space, I think, mainly, you know.

Marcello: But after you had spotted that submarine and had come in, you then more or less reverted to business as usual.

Witt: This is correct.

Marcello: Now I assume that you did not go out during the following week.

Witt: No, we did not. I made some notation in my diary, wondering how long I would be in port this time. Well, actually, it turned out to be a little bit longer, you know, than they probably had planned; but I think actually from about, oh, the 28th . . . say, around the 23rd of November to about the 21st of December we were there actually, you know.

Marcello: Now I've heard it said that there was a certain amount of gripping when the Oklahoma came in and tied up next to the Maryland because it then cut off the Maryland from a lot of the sea breezes and so on and so forth and made it a little bit hotter aboard there.

Witt: That would be true, and this was due to the fact that it was the practice to put an awning all over the after part of

the ship, say, aft of the main battery to the stern of the ship, and this like you said, prevented the Maryland from getting some of the sea breeze, you know. But as it turned out for us, it was very fortunate.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us in, then, to that weekend of December 7, 1941, and let's get back to the liberty routine again. When did you have liberty during that weekend?

Witt: Well, let's see now. Memory doesn't serve me that well. If I can just take one second and kind of refer to my diary here. . . in other words, on December 5th, I was aboard ship.

Marcello: This would have been Friday.

Witt: That would have been Friday, and now on Saturday I evidently was aboard ship because that's the day I made the notation about sleeping all afternoon, you know, and I'm sure that was aboard ship. So prior to the . . . it must have been at least, oh, ten days or maybe two weeks prior to the time of the attack as to when I had had liberty.

Marcello: Now do you recall anything from that Saturday evening of December 6, 1941? I'm referring now to people coming back aboard the ship and so on and so forth after having been on liberty. Was it a rather routine night again?

Witt: Evidently it was. I recall nothing unusual, really out of the ordinary, and the only thing that you might have had that

would've been a little different is--I'm just saying could be--that you might of had an extra brawl or two between the sailors and the Marines on the way back (chuckle) from the landing to the ship by a motor launch, you know. That would have been the extent of it, really. There's nothing unusual, out of the ordinary, or anything that would give us any indication of what would take place the next morning.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us in, then, to that morning of December 7, 1941, and what I want you to do at this point, Mr. Witt, is to go into your routine as best you can remember . . .

Witt: As far as my own experience?

Marcello: As far as your own experiences are concerned on December 7, 1941. Let's start from the time that you get up until all hell broke loose.

Witt: Okay. Well, actually I can't recall, you know, whether I got up off of the right side or the left side out of my bunk or anything of that sort, but I'm sure, of course, we got up at regular time, which would have been around 0600, I'd say, you know. The thing was then to go ahead and shave and brush teeth and clean up and put on the uniform of the day, which would have been khakis and/or skivvy shirt possibly inside . . . as long as we were inside the casemate, it might have been khaki trousers and skivvy shirt and no hat. We didn't have

to be covered, as they say, inside the casemate. I would have done that until chow was being served, I'd say, between 0700 and 0730; and it was being served down below, I'd say, on at least the main deck about midships or possibly the second deck, you know, and this was done in cafeteria-style. You would get your tray and your utensils and go along, and the mess cook would plop whatever he was serving on your tray as you went along, of course, you know. And then you'd go to a table that had been set up for that purpose--for feeding at breakfast.

Marcello: Do you recall what breakfast consisted of on December 7th?

Witt: I have no idea, but I'm sure it was probably a better meal than we'd had on Saturday morning, let me put it that way. Saturday morning was beans and cornbread, you know. But anyway, we did have . . . I particularly had breakfast and was headed back up to the casemate, going up what we called the ladder, which people would call steps, you know. This is when actually I heard the explosion--the first explosion.

Marcello: Describe that moment.

Witt: Well, I stopped about, say, halfway up the ladder, and I could see out the porthole, and I did. I looked out to see what was going on, you know, because it was such a terrific explosion.

Marcello: Now did it jar the Maryland?

Witt: I didn't feel as much motion or jarring as I did the noise the first time.

Marcello: I assume that we're talking about the first of the torpedoes that hit the Oklahoma.

Witt: It very well could have been, and it might be then. . . but there was some explosions going on over on Ford Island, and it could have been there. Now I'm not quite sure about that, but when I did look out, I could see that there was an explosion on Ford Island. And there was a lot of smoke and debris and so forth and so on.

Marcello: What were your thoughts at that time?

Witt: Well, of course, you know, it's just like anything else. You don't begin to think about something until actually it's over with, and you wonder mentally whether there must have been an accident, you know. That's the first thing you think--some accident--but as it turned out, of course. . . do you want me to continue as to my experiences from there?

Marcello: Yes.

Witt: Okay. Well, then, of course, the next thing is that I did continue on up the ladder and was heading towards the casemate there where the 5-inch broadside gun was. About that time, of course, they did come on the loud-speaker with the fact that this was no drill, and they gave the bugle call for battle stations.

Marcello: Now was this unusual to use the bugle for battle stations, or was this standard procedure?

Witt: That was standard procedure, yes.

Marcello: Okay, so general quarters sounds.

Witt: Right, and they had a clanging, too. They had a clanging noise, you know, for that particular name, but then . . . and then you had a boatswain's mate, you know, that would get on the loud-speaker and give instructions. Of course, you had different bugle calls for different things. You had liberty call, chow call, and general quarters.

Marcello: What did you do at that point?

Witt: Well, now I was just going to mention something here. It would be a little difficult, really, to find anything humorous about any part of this, but on the other hand, the thing that I did particularly was run to my locker, and I got my hat and put it on because I knew I was going to have to go outside, and I knew I couldn't go outside without my hat. So in a way it's comical because the hat I'm talking about is an overseas cap, and it's made out of khaki, and it had nothing to do with protection. You see, in a way it's kind of humorous.

Marcello: Now did you know that an attack was taking place at this point, or were you still thinking in terms of a drill?

Witt: No.

Marcello: That's right. You mentioned that the boatswain's mate had mentioned that it wasn't a drill.

Witt: He had told us it was no drill; it was the real thing, and we should man our battle stations.

Marcello: How long does it normally take you to get up into that crow's nest?

Witt: A very short time. I was, you know, at that time quite young and very agile, and actually I could go up and down the thing like a monkey. I'd go straight up, and I'd hit about every third or fourth rung, you know; and then coming down, I would come down backwards and slide down half the way. So really it took a very short time. I'd say within a period of a couple of minutes I'd be up at the top, you know, or less.

Marcello: Okay, now in the meantime, has the Oklahoma been hit yet?

Witt: Would I be allowed to refer to my diary?

Marcello: Sure. Go ahead.

Witt: Okay. It says. . . do you want me to go ahead and read? I have two or three pages that I could read now. Would it be a good time to do this? It would answer your specific question there, because actually what I did when I got up to

my battle station. . . "That was followed by general quarters on the 'Mary' and my running up the mast to man my battle station. While up there I saw the Oklahoma take two torpedoes (which were launched by low flying planes flying across the channel)."

Marcello: Why don't you describe this incident in more detail. You mentioned that you did see the Oklahoma take these two torpedoes. Describe the planes as they came in and what took place as the torpedoes hit the Oklahoma.

Witt: Well, of course, you have a thought in your mind right away that here is something very unfriendly, you know. When they tell you that your manning your battle stations--to defend yourself, more or less--then you look up and here are the planes themselves, and they're coming towards you but actually can't get to you due to the fact there's a 35,000 ton ship in the way. . . but I did actually see them launch their torpedoes, and the torpedoes then make their runs and actually hit the side of the ship, you know. Of course, when it hit the side of the ship, there's a terrific amount of water, for one thing, that goes straight up, you know, because they had them set to explode at just about the waterline. They were set for that depth, you know, and so when the torpedoes hit, there was a considerable amount of water spout, you might say, shooting up and a lot of noise. Of course, from then on it got a lot noisier (chuckle).

Marcello: Did the Oklahoma jump any or move any when those torpedoes hit it?

Witt: Oh, yes. They had quite an explosion there. "It took only one of two torpedoes to put the Oklahoma on side." Now I'm reading again from my book. But the two torpedoes themselves . . . and like I said, the ship was of tremendous size and had a tremendous amount of protection there from torpedoes or whatever, you know, as far as the amount of metal that we're talking about.

Marcello: Describe the Oklahoma turning over.

Witt: Well, of course, that's a fact that, I guess, really and truthfully you just have to see it. You know, like they say, you'd have to see it to believe it, you know. Something that size not being in the position that it's supposed to be is just unreal, you know. All of a sudden the thing is lying on its side, and, you know, you really can't comprehend and understand it for awhile.

Marcello: Now when those torpedoes hit the Oklahoma, how did that affect the Maryland? In other words, were you jolted any up there in the crow's nest on the top of the mast?

Witt: I'd say that we were rocked a bit there because due to the fact that the wash, you know, or displacement of water and so forth and so on. That would cause a little small tidal wave, you might say, and would cause the Maryland to rumble

around a little bit and move back and forth a little bit.

Marcello: In the meantime, I assume that they were abandoning ship over on the Oklahoma prior to the time that it turned over, because. . . well, most of the crew from the Oklahoma got off the ship, and I assume that they headed over for the Maryland.

Witt: Quite a few of the people did. Now after the first two explosions, then I think possibly it started to list, and then I think that's when they made their move, realizing, of course, that the ship would go on over, you know. And in a situation like that, it doesn't take you long to cover some ground. So there were some, yes--quite a few of them that did manage to get over to the Maryland--and others, of course did have to jump into the water or in between the ships more or less or slide off the side of the ship as it went over, you know, this sort of thing.

Marcello: Now I would assume that the two Japanese planes that launched those torpedoes were actually lower than your position up there in the crow's nest. Is that true?

Witt: They were. I was looking down, yes. You see, they had at that time perfected those low draft torpedoes for the particular reason to destroy or greatly damage the fleet at Pearl Harbor, and they worked exactly like they wanted them to.

Marcello: Okay, what were you doing up there in terms of your particular battle functions at this time?

Witt: Okay, there wasn't really a lot we could do insofar as we couldn't fire the 5-inch broadside guns. They couldn't elevate those enough to fire at the higher-elevated planes, and they couldn't fire them at the lower ones because actually it'd do more damage to the facilities there at Pearl Harbor and possibly Honolulu itself, you know. So what happened there was that after we spent some time up in our battle stations there in the aftermast of the battleship Maryland, we were directed to descend again down to the deck and give aid to the sailors in loading the 5-inch antiaircraft guns.

Marcello: Now during this period that you were up there in the aftermast, would it be safe to say that you were experiencing a period of helplessness? There was really nothing that you could do up there.

Witt: That is correct. It was most frustrating to see the ships and planes and all the destruction going on around. For instance, I'm not quite sure that the Airzona had taken its damaging blow before or after we left, but it didn't really make a lot of difference. Since there was so much noise and confusion, it wouldn't have made that much difference anyway.

- Marcello: Am I to assume, then, that you were simply more or less a spectator during this period while you were up there in the aftermast?
- Witt: Yes, I had to be because, like I said, there was just literally nothing we could do.
- Marcello: Do you recall anything else that you saw going on around you? We described the Oklahoma's situation in a certain amount of detail. Did you see anything else that stands out in your mind now thirty-six years later?
- Witt: Well, not necessarily, since it was all kind of confusing or, you might say, thrown in together after just a few minutes, you know--the turmoil and the noise and the activity and the smoke and even the smell, you know, and so forth and so on. It was just so tremendous and so big that you really couldn't just look at one particular thing. You just had to kind of consider the whole thing at one time. So I guess really and truthfully, I just couldn't, you know, say that there's any particular thing that stands out too much.
- Marcello: Let us back up a minute. What sort of a day was this in terms of weather, and climate?
- Witt: I think possibly that it was quite cool and maybe even a little damp. I think I made a notation here just a few days before that the weather was somewhat like Texas in that it was cool and possibly a little damp, you know. I'm pretty

sure it was pretty cool at that time: "The weather tonight is most unusual for Honolulu--rather cool indeed!! It sure reminds me of the weather in Texas."

Marcello: I have another question that I should have asked you earlier. How would you describe the initial action of the crew aboard the Maryland when general quarters sounded? Was it one of professionalism? Panic? Confusion? How would you describe the initial reaction?

Witt: I'd say it was pretty much professionalism due to the fact that, you know, in the service you're trained. Going back to that hat situation, I was told to never--but never--I should go outside without a hat, so the first thing I did was run to my locker and get my hat, you know. Now, of course, I didn't understand the scope of the situation. If I had, I probably would have forgotten the hat; and if I didn't have any trousers on, I probably would have forgotten them probably, you know. I'd say that overall the performance of the people was pretty much in a professional manner. Of course, it was bound to have been a lot of confusion, because this is something that didn't happen every day, you know, training every day maybe, but not the real thing.

Marcello: How soon was the Maryland beginning to put up resistance?

Witt: Well, actually, very soon due to the fact that we had one sailor up on . . . I guess it would have been the port crane,

I think. We had a .50-caliber machine gun up there. He was sitting up there writing a letter and happened to be right there at the right there and loaded the gun and got him a plane. So it was very, very soon in the initial part of the onset that he did that.

Marcello: Now when was it that you got out of the aftermast and went down to help the 5-inch gun crews? Was this still during the first attack, or was this during the lull between the two attacks?

Witt: No, it was during the first attack, and we were still trying to get ammunition due to the fact that most of it was still down below, you know, and it had to be sent up by hoist to the 5-inch antiaircraft gun. They were still trying to get people, enough people, to get the ammunition over to the guns, you know. I'd say there were three or four on either side--5-inch--maybe five. That's what we did immediately. The people that came down from my battle station immediately went over and helped get the powder and the bullets, you might say, you know, over to the guns. I mean, well, actually, it was all in one piece on the antiaircraft gun, but what we did was just carry them over.

Marcello: How many of these, would you estimate, did you carry over to the gun?

- Witt: Oh, I'd say eight or ten possibly, until such time that it looked like that maybe and possibly our ship was, you know, getting in bad shape. We thought that due to the fact that there was so much smoke, so much noise, and we'd already seen the Oklahoma, you know, and we knew it could happen to us, you see. So the thing was that at that time, I think, a few of us got over and actually got underneath the turret for the main battery, trying to protect ourselves more or less, you know. So after we saw, though, that nothing drastically was going to happen to us in the next few minutes, we went back out and started helping again and keeping the ammunition flowing.
- Marcello: In other words, you were handling this 5-inch ammunition out in the open.
- Witt: Right.
- Marcello: Somebody else was down . . . in other words, this ammunition was coming off the hoist, and it was being relayed from one man to another over to the guns.
- Witt: That is correct--either that or one guy would get it and run over and run back and get it, you know, depending on how many we had there. Right, they were passing it and in some cases just running it back and forth.
- Marcello: Now at some time in here, the Maryland itself is ultimately hit by two bombs, one of which was an armor-piercing shell

fitted with fins. Do you recall when the Maryland was hit?

Witt: I have no idea. I have no recollection of that. That was . . . it happened, actually, up forward, and I think it was probably forward of even the main battery turret, you know, and went down through possibly the second or third deck in what we would call the head section, I think, you know, where the . . . the restroom section.

Marcello: Now the other one hit the forecastle and set the awnings on fire. Do you remember that one?

Witt: No. Like I said, it's such a tremendous, huge ship, you know, and I was separated from that particular area, I'd say, by approximately 100 to 300 feet, you know, or there about.

Marcello: And I assume that there was all sorts of superstructure in between, also.

Witt: Yes, you have your main battery turrets out there, you know, and we were paying a lot of attention to what we were particularly doing, you know, so I really have no recollection of the ship being hit there.

Marcello: This is an interesting point that you have brought up here. Under these conditions, you really don't get a chance to see the entire event. You have a specific job to do, and you do it.

Witt: Right. We had our own little corner of the war going, and, of course, later on what we did, a few of us would go up and man the 1.1 gun, and . . . I don't know. Let's see, I've got some notation in here.

Marcello: How long were you handling ammunition for that 5-inch gun?

Witt: I would say in the neighborhood of an hour, hour and a half.

Marcello: Where was it located?

Witt: That would have been on the port side of the ship, and about . . . well, not necessarily. It would have been about midships, but a little aft or behind midships in that particular gun.

Marcello: Okay, what did you do after that? You mentioned that you did this for about an hour and a half.

Witt: Well, it gets a little confusing, you know, as to what you did unless you go back and really kind of refer to your diary, you know, and I think maybe if I could just look here just a second, and here we go . . . let's see . . . of course, the main battle, you know, lasted, according to my diary here . . . it could be off a little bit, but it says 0800. I think it was about five minutes prior to that, just before the raising of the flag, you know, and it lasted until about 1700 in the afternoon. And I made a notation in my diary here that "they had been coming in every since in small groups.

I am standing four on and four off on the 1.1 antiaircraft gun number three."

And that would have been on the port side there, and there's an interesting thing about that. We had a big fellow aboard ship there in the Marine Corps that was . . . oh, he was considered more or less a loner. He liked to eat, you know, and when he'd go on liberty, for instance, his thing was to go to a bakery and possibly a "geedunk" shop, you know, and this sort of thing. And I don't recall the fellow's name really, but they say that during this attack, and on that particular gun there--prior to the time I got on it, I guess--he loaded that thing as fast as it had ever been loaded, you know (chuckle). It kind of goes to show, you know, that you can't really prejudge a person, and we had no idea that this particular person would come through like that, you know.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you had gone up to one of the 1.1-inch gun mount. Were you actually firing that gun during the attack, or were you a member of a crew that was firing that gun?

Witt: As I recall, I was loading. You know, you had a certain number of shells in a clip, and actually we just put the clips into the gun, and somebody else was doing the firing. But I did actually see that particular gun shoot down a plane, which made you feel good.

Marcello: Describe that incident.

Witt: Well, in that particular case, we were firing the 1.1 . . . I think there were four barrels, if I'm not mistaken--a pom-pom type thing, you know--and we had to load it pretty fast. On that particular occasion, that plane came around . . . I guess he was trying to launch a torpedo probably. It was pretty low, and the gun was trained on that particular plane, and so we knocked it down.

Marcello: What sort of a feeling did you and the other crew members have?

Witt: Oh, of course, we gave a little cheer, you know (chuckle). That's what it's all about, you know. If somebody's trying to do you in, of course, you beat them to the punch, you know.

Marcello: About how long were you working with that gun crew?

Witt: Well, I don't know. From here on, I kind of have to hazard a guess as to the amount of action that I stood on that particular gun. I would say probably I was there at least an hour or an hour and a half, you know. And other than that, when we weren't, of course, we would be back off in some protective area within the ship maybe to get a drink, you know, or possibly this sort of thing, and somebody else would take our place. I mean, we weren't there from eight in

the morning until five o'clock in the afternoon--no, not straight through.

Marcello: Now during an experience like this, is there a lot of yelling and shouting there at one of these gun mounts, or is there a great deal of silence? Now obviously there's all kinds of noise around you, but how about so far as the crew itself is concerned?

Witt: Well, there was a little combination of both, depending upon whether the target was within view, you know. If there was no target that one could see, there was no noise; but if and when the target came into view, why, then, of course, there's a little shouting and hollering as to where it was and, you know, load her up and all this sort of thing. The regular instructions as to the handling of the gun called for a certain amount of verbal, you know, orders--load, commence firing, or cease firing, this sort of thing. But other than that, there was very little noise or hollering from the people themselves.

Marcello: Now was any of the fire and so on from the other ships coming around or surrounding the Maryland? I'm referring now to burning oil and things of that nature from the West Virginia or the Arizona and things of that sort.

Witt: It seemed to be very close by, and this was another reason that there was a period of confusion there after

the initial attack in my own section there where I was located, due to the fact that there was so much smoke. I'm sure quite a bit of that was coming from the oil on the water and the fire from that water.

Marcello: Do you recall the band on the Maryland playing during the lull between the two attacks? According to my notes, the band actually played.

Witt: I don't recall it personally, but I'm sure that they probably did. I've heard the same thing, you know, and I'm sure that it's quite possible since they were already there. They probably . . . the bandmaster probably figured that they needed a little help morally, so I'm sure that that probably took place alright.

Marcello: I was going to ask you what you did in the immediate aftermath of the attack, and I think you've more or less answered my question. You were working four hours on and four hours off the gun mount. Is that correct?

Witt: Yes, that is ture. Then after that, I had more or less about the same watch, you might say--four hours on and four hours off on the gangplank. This was with a Brown-ing Automatic Rifle--a B.A.R., you know--and to protect the ship from . . . of course, we knew that there was the possibility that somebody may come aboard and try

to sabotage the ship, you know, so for that reason we had to arm ourselves and stand watch on the gangplank.

Marcello: During a situation like that, do you experience thirst or hunger while the action is going on?

Witt: Very little. We would probably think very little about our own personal desires, except for the fact that we would like to be in a little safer place, you know. That's the main thought at the moment unless we were actually operating a gun or something. Then, of course, the thought would be directed totally . . . but I say, no—very little desire for food or water as such, you know. If you were relieved of your duties for a little bit and the water was there, sure; and I'm sure that you would, you know, want water, but while you're actually there on your battle station, no. I'd say no.

Marcello: Is there a distinguishable silence in the immediate aftermath of the attack? Now obviously during the attack itself, there's all sorts of noise and explosions and so on and so forth. Is there a noticeable silence?

Witt: I'd say there's more or less a calming effect there, yes. A slackening of actual activity and also of intent, and for that purpose, for that reason, I guess there would be a definite. . . probably almost a complete lull after the last known attack, you know. Say after a period of

a half-hour and there'd been no shooting, at that time I'd say, yes. We experienced that sort of thing.

Marcello: What sort of rumors did you hear in the aftermath of the attack?

Witt: Well, gosh, I'm telling you the rumors were flying, and I have made notations of that in here, but I think I'd probably have to make a little research in order to answer particularly. But we heard, of course, this, that and the other. . . like there possibly was an aircraft carrier down in Honolulu, you know. Oh, yes, here we go. It says, "I am standing four on and eight off on forward gangway. An awful lot of scuttlebutt going around these days. For instance, they reported an enemy sub in the harbor. . ." Of course, that actually turned out to be true, but this is before I found that out. ". . . and a captured Jap carrier in Honolulu. Things are really getting hot over in Wake Island and the Philippine Islands. Hope I come out alive."

Marcello: Now all of this, however, is occurring some days after the attack.

Witt: This is December 14th. Yes, this is a week later.

Marcello: Do you recall the planes off the Enterprise that tried to land that night of December 7th?

Witt: No, not personally. I didn't see this. Of course, I did see the picture Tora! Tora, Tora! and, of course, things that I knew took place I surely saw in a movie just like anybody else, you know. But there's a lot of things, of course, that I wasn't aware of and didn't see.

Marcello: Describe what the harbor looked like the next day when everything had calmed down, you had a chance to look over the damage that had been done.

Witt: Well, I think, there again, you almost have to see something like this to see something like this, you know, to understand it. But, of course, ships were in disarray and all damaged and torn up, and there were oil slicks all over the place and still maybe a little patch of burning here and there. Some bodies, you know. . . every once in awhile bodies would be floating in the water close to where you could see it, you know. Motor launches were running back and forth, and there was a lot of activity like a beehive or an anthill, you know. Of course, the thing they wanted to do particularly was to get things in order as fast and as efficient as they could, and, of course, that's what most of the activity was directed towards. For instance, they were still trying to get the people off of the Oklahoma, say, as

much as two or three days, maybe even a week or ten days after. I'm not real sure how long. In the Arizona, of course, I guess you've heard figures and statistics and all, and there are, I think, something like 1,176 or 1,180 or right along in there--people who are still, you know, down in the Arizona. They had tried to get them out pretty soon after it happened, but they kept running into these gas pockets, and they had two or three explosions in trying to get into the ship itself, and so they determined that there really was no point in it, you know.

Marcello: How did your attitude toward the Japanese change?

Witt: Well, you know, when some guy picks up a stick and starts hitting you on the head (chuckle), you really can't argue too much, you know. But, you know, as far as personal feelings, I had no reason to hate anybody. It was a combined and a total thing, you know. We knew that we were in the right, or felt like we were in the right, and we knew that they were in the wrong, and it was just a . . . you kind of developed a dislike for the people, for one thing, from the pictures that they might have put in the paper or from any pamphlet that you might have seen. They never did paint them very

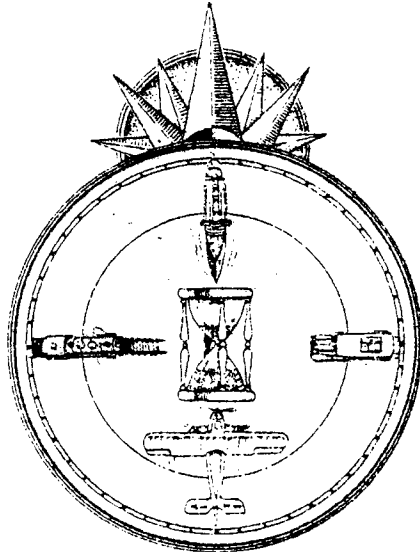
pretty, you know. They always had great big teeth, and they were grinning and saying "ah so" or something, you know. "So 'solly,'" I think, was the expression, "so sorry," you know. But as far as the people are concerned, I've met Japanese people since, you know. I met some even when I was over in Pearl Harbor in 1966 when we went back the twenty-fifth anniversary, and as people they're, you know, no different from Chinese or Monogolians or whatever when you come right down to it.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Witt, I want to thank you very much for having taken time to talk with me. You've said some very interesting and important things, and I'm sure that scholars are going to find your interview and the information in the diary quite valuable when they use it to write about Pearl Harbor.

Witt: Well, I'm certainly proud to be here and do my part, and I hope I have contributed something toward it.

Marcello: Well, you certainly have.

A P P E N D I X



"What I spent and where I went,
Motor, Boat, or Train-
Things to know, in case I go
Traveling again."

^{Elou Pitt}
F. C. *Chapman*

My Travel Memories

Presented to

Put. Chas. O. Pitt

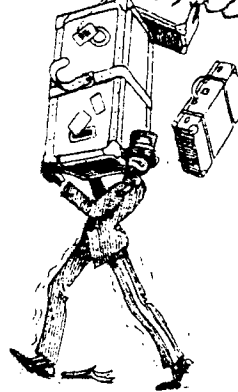
U.S.S. Maryland

By

319 St. 98th St.

Miss Maria Schur

Los Angeles
California
Christmas
1949



Companions

Samuel Patrick ^(Red) ~~Wright~~ St.
2071. ~~St.~~ U.S.M.C. ^{Yours} ~~St.~~ ^{St.} ~~St.~~

Jack Raymond ~~Case~~
Buy W. B. Litchhall
Don. Larry ~~Green~~
George ~~Smith~~ ~~Label~~
John ~~Ward~~ ~~St.~~

Gifts



7

My Travel Memories

Date Dec. 14, 1940.

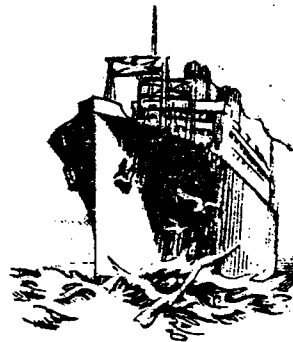
Stopped at Left Bremerton, Wash.
on Dec. 10th and travelled
four days and nights South
for Long Beach, California.

Where I went Sighted San Clemente
Island early on the 14th.
Reached Long Beach few
hours afterwards. Have
made few good liberties
in Los Angeles. Hope my
next trip will be home.

What I spent Spent about 90 dollars.

Things to know
when I go traveling again

Dec. 24 - I had the measles.
for six days while in
Long Beach.



My Travel Memories

Date Dec. 28, 1940

Stopped at Phoenix, Ariz., Tucson,
Ariz., El Paso, Texas and
Dallas, Texas. Went from
Long Beach to El Paso Texas
Where I went "by Air"

I had right down to go
home so started Sat. mite
from L. A. and reached
home at 7 o'clock Tuesday.
Did not stop at all.

What I spent:

Spent about \$20.00

Things to know
when I go traveling again

Next trip I take home
I want at least 30 days
and fifty dollars. I saw
all my friends and made
new acquaintances. Did
not go to Clarkana but
wanted to pretty badly.
Hav'n't been a store since
I got back and
probably want go
until 15th.

Next trip will maybe
likely be to the same.



My Travel Memories

Date Sept. 14 - Sunday

Stopped at Reveille at 0600.

I had the H-8 Time orderly
went on watch about 0630.

Came off watch had a
good breakfast as usual.

Where I went

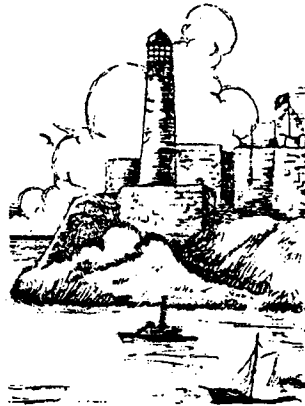
at 0930 had qts. for
muster but no physical
drill. Turned to and
answered a letter that
I received from Bella

What I spent

yesterday. Took 1 hr.
sun bath today then

Things to know
when I go traveling again
cold shower

302 DAYS
\$40⁰⁰



My Travel Memories

Sept 15^{11/10/07} Tuesday

Date

Stopped at

Had 8-12 Watch and
was relieved to receive
pay of 15.00. Owed

Where I went

1/2.00 and collected
\$1.00 from Cooper. Bought
writing tablet, soap
and Grotes. Watched
move from search
lights.

What I spent

301 Days

40 dollars

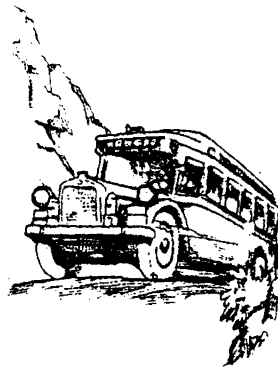
Things to know
when I go traveling again

Sept 16 - Tuesday

Did not have to make
pts for muster & phy.
drill. Worked all day
in No 7 casemate
painting etc. Saw
double feature of
movies.

300 days

40 Dollars



My Travel Memories

Date Sept. 17 - Wednesday
Stopped at Painted Staff Hammock
Meeting. Had to
relieve the 8-12 watch
for drill upon the
Where I went Gunny's notice. Had
to turn to in Crew R. &
after liberty call.

299 Days - Thank God!

What I spent

40 Dollars
Got underway Thursday

Things to know
when I go traveling again

Underway
T.H.

Sept 21, Sunday

Took a sun bath all
Sat afternoon. Slept out
on deck last nite was
quite windy. Preparing
to fire S.R.P. tomorrow
Will take sun bath this
afternoon if sun stays out.
Had one watch all this week
pretty easy ha! No
movies while under way.

295 days

40 Dollars



My Travel Memories

Date Mon. Sept 22, He fired short range
was up in the m. Mast about
Stopped at eight hours.

Tuesday, 23, I went into harbor.
took Cincus aboard. Had
one 12-4 gangway watch

Wed. 24 - Left Harl Harbor about
Where I went 0720. Manned wood sides all
morning took 1 hr. Sun bath.

Friday - Had largest maneuvers
since I have been aboard.

Wire bombing and smoke screens
prethrust sights. Held field day
Sat. Came into P. H. about

What I spent 0920 and didn't have to fall
out at all. not really
for Captain's inspection
and did not have any

Things to know
when I go traveling again

at the last moment as usual.
Have the 8.12 Gangway watch
tonite. Nothing to do this afternoon
except write and read. Still
saving money and staying
aboard. Rec. letter from Mother
and Oua.

289 Days
65 Dollars

Sunday Sept. 28, - Had 8.12 Gangway
watch. Took sun bath most
of afternoon. Saw "Shepherd of the
Hills" on the ship. Have all right
in the sack.

288 Days
65 Dollars



Anchored

My Travel Memories

Mon. Sept. 29, - Still in P.H.

Date Nothing unusual today.
Took 1 hr. sun bath - ah
Stopped at getting, pretty tanned. I
wonder where I shall
be this time next year

286 Days
65 Dollars

Tues. Sept 30. Went over
Where I went to drill at Mann's tracks
P.H. today. Fair day for
every body but the kid
Haw \$1.10 new. Paid laundry
\$1.25 borrowed \$2.00 from
Wym. No duty today
What I spent Will watch movie
tonite.

285 Days
65 Dollars

Things to know
when I go traveling again

Wed. Oct. 1 - Mustered with
the landing force. Had
12-4 and am secured tonight.
Rec. letter from Ova-Manning
three. Mather-Ova-Manning

294 Days

65 Dollars

Thursday Oct. 2, Nothing
unusual today except

Fri. Oct. 3. Held 1293 Days

65 Dollars

field day up until 2:30. Have
been disgusted all day.
yard workman working
in Casemat # 7.

Still at anchor

P. H. Tomorrow

is his day



My Travel Memories

Cont-

Date

for race. Am partly ready
for Capt's inspection. Have

Stopped at

H-8 in cack.

282 Days

65 Dollars.

Saturday, Oct. 4, I
had an admiral's inspection
this morning. Stood on g.t. deck

Where I went

About 2 hrs. Md. came in 4th
in whale boat race. Movie 'Barney
Bill' was showing but machine
went off as usual. Reading
good book - haunted husband.
Rec. Clippie letter from mother.

What I spent


Worked on Album today.
I want more pictures
to put in it.

281 Days

65 Dollars

Things to know ^{Dr. Factor F.H.}
when I go traveling again

Sunday Oct. 5, I actually
went ashore today. Went
to sub base to see Jensen
and from there to Honolulu
and show. Spent \$1.00 saw
movie on ship. Same
old stuff tomorrow I
guess. 280 Days
65 Dollars

Monday Oct. 6, Got out of
qt. for muster. Have 8-12
and went out to make chess
reel. I must be nuts
already and I still have
8 mos. to do. 

Signed for
for Dr. Factor

279 Days
65 Dollars

Still at anchor — P.M.

My Travel Memories

Tuesday Oct. 7, Stead 8-12
gangway. Rained all day

Date

Have felt bad today for
some reason. Wish I

Stopped at

knew why(???) Might
not sleep but tonight because
of rain. There certainly are
some stupid people around
here.

Where I went

$\frac{278 \text{ Days}}{65 \text{ Dollars}}$

Sunday Oct. 12, Got
underway Wed. night at
1930. Had G. V. W. go and
then manned 5 in port of
harbor that's the Navy
for you ha ha wa

What I spent

Things to know
when I go traveling again

supposed to have Captain's
inspection Sat morning and
just as we got all ready
to fall out they scudded
forped's defense. - Navy Run!!
This is Sunday morning
We are cruising around
some of the islands.

Lahaina in particular
Tuesday Oct. 14, Nothing
in particular
has happened -
lately, just



Oct. 14, 1941 - Underway - T. H.

My Travel Memories

Date routine work more
 or less. They fired the
 Stopped at A. H. 5 in. guns and machine
 guns today. Maybe we
 will go back to States
 in a month or two.

Where I went 271 Days
 80 Dollars

Thursday Oct 16. Was
 paid yesterday drew
 \$500 and naturally
 had it all spent.
 Trying to draw \$500
 down after payday.

Underway
Things to know
when I go traveling again

Cont - Had Constipation
watches since yesterday
but will secure today
at noon. Have heard
a lot of rumors about
us leaving for Staten
next Monday. Am finding
very hard time trying
to get along on 2 lbs
per month but am
gonna do it or bust.

369 Days

80 Dollars



ANCHORED - PEARL HARBOR
My Travel Memories

Oct. 19, 1941 - Came into
Date harbor yesterday with
usual routine in doing
Stopped at so. No inspection - tied
up to F-3 and Thewie
tied up along side us. Had
H-8 watch time orderly yesterday
and 8-12 tonight. Wish I
Where I went was going back with
the Great Virginia. The
day will come. I haven't
smoked a cigarette
for three days now.

What I spent

266 days
80 Dollars

ANCHORET - P.H.

Things to know
when I go traveling again

Monday, Oct. 20, 1941 - Had the
8-12 Kinn orderly watch this
morning and dozed off all
afternoon. Saw movie tonight.
Pretty great Western. I
haven't touched a cigarette
for four days!!! Guess
I'll turn in a good
some more sleep.

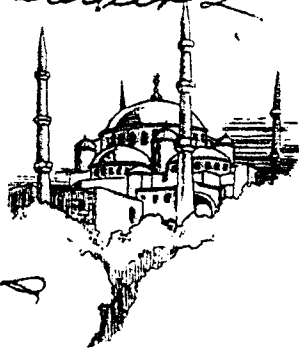
265 Days

80 Dollars

Tuesday - 21,

264 Days

80 Dollars



Anchored at P.H.
My Travel Memories

Date Wednesday Oct 22 - Has
rained all afternoon. I
went on Eric's orderly
watch today. It is ok.
Stopped at Went to Sick bay
this morning and
didn't make it.
Where I went The movie for tonight is
supposed to be Sartore
Poe but it is still
raining.

What I spent

262 Days

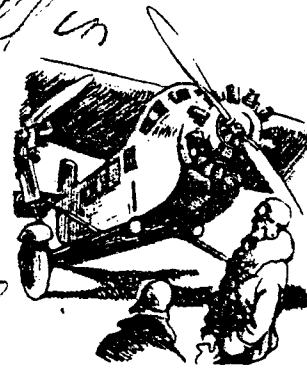
80 Dollars

Things to know ^{Anchored at P.H.}
when I go travelling again

Thursday, Oct 23, - It
has rained all day and
is getting a little cooler.
Rec letter from Maria. Good
Exc order today, was going
to movie but was rained
out. Haven't smoked news
for 8 days. 262 Days

80 Dollars

Sunday, 26 Still in
P.H. Went on
beer party
today. Had



My Travel Memories

Date woulds of fun
newsah... still

Stopped at feeling pretty good.
He had beer &
sandwiches. The

Where I went Sun is pretty hot
that day. Lucky I
was already pretty
brown. Paradise
beach is H.O.

What I spent
259 Days

30 Dollars

Honolulu

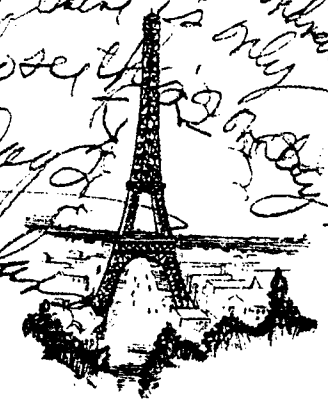
Anchored - P.H.

Things to know
when I go traveling again

Thursday - Oct. 30 - Well - Everything
going along pretty smoothly.
I like Eric's orderly fine handy.
Guess we are getting under-
way this coming Sat. Morning.
Hope so!! Boy! I wish I
was being transferred this mo.
like "Hap" is. One of these days
maybe. I have my first
on the books and there is only
200 to go. Hope to see the

255 Days

100 Dollars



One of the
25.75m
I would
of

UNDERWAY AT T. Hawaii.

My Travel Memories

Mon. Nov. 3 - Still underway
 Date on this date. We left Harbor
 Sat. Received 500 pay last
 Stopped at Friday and went to
 Honolulu. Had pretty good
 temp. Standing day on day
 Where I went watches. Had to go
 at 1445 secured after
 about an hour. No sooner
 got down from ladder
 than T.D. was sounded
 What I spent - Navy Run!!!

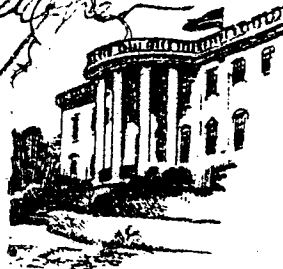
Things to know
when I go traveling again

Just heard news about Hitler
wanting to blow up Panama
Canal - Hope we go there. It
seems to get worse on here
every day. 251 Days

100 Dollars

Friday Nov. 7, Still underway
but we are going in tomorrow.
The California is supposed
to tow us in. The sea
is getting rougher
all the time.

I have been
so disgusted



cont

My Travel Memories

Date with people and things
on this pig iron ^{is} ~~is~~!!
all this day and last

Stopped at Here is some scutt
on us being back in
the states by Jan. I'll

Where I went

believe it or not I
do it. Hope there is
no inspection tomorrow
since I need a hair
cut!!!

What I spent

247 Days
\$100.00 dollars

Things to know ^{anchored AT P.H.}
when I go traveling again 11/9/41

Sunday Nov. 9, - Came into
harbor yesterday. Was on the
bridge with the Commander.
The old boy went ashore this
morning about 1100 Hooker!!
Took sun bath all afternoon
first time in long time. Wish
I could receive some mail.
It makes me so
disgusted bah!!
Am riding all my
pay this month
that is if the



My Travel Memories

records do not get here
Date I hope (not) I bet it
is nice back in the
Stopped at States about now. I
can see this guy Hayes
Doesn't want to get
along so — 20
Where I went

245 Days
\$100 Dollars

Tues. Nov. 11, - ARMISTICE!!
Rated 1000 liberty, so
little music and I
Caught rides out to
What I spent Anakuli beach area

Things to know
when I go traveling again

Spent the whole day
out there. Glad more
fun than we had in
long time. "We should
do this more often."

243 Days
\$100 Dollars

Friday Nov. 14 - Still anchored
at Pearl Harbor. About
the same old
weather this week.
Going on recreation
party tomorrow.



cont

My Travel Memories

morning for weekend
Date stay at Mana Kuli.
Will be good to get
Stopped at away from it all. Hope
to have lots of fun &
becha I will. Golly-wink
I was home tonight. Sitting
Where I went pretty close to home.
Am going to movies if
it doesn't rain.

240 Days

\$12000

What I spent

Things to know *ANCHORED* - P.H.
when I go traveling again

Sunday Nov. 16, - Went on
beach party to Nanea Suli
yesterday. Went swimming,
took pictures etc. Lally
I caught rides back this
afternoon. Hope our pictures
are good. The other guys
aren't back as yet. I still
have a slight headache.

228 days

~~1120~~



ANCHORED - P. H. (T.H.)
My Travel Memories

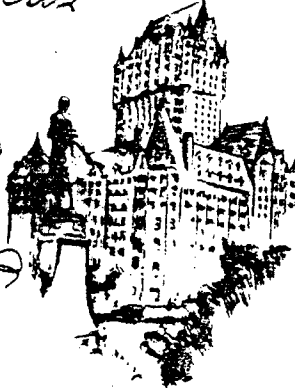
Date Wed. Nov. 19, Everything
going pretty smoothly.
Nothing happened at
Stopped at of ordnance since Sunday.
Galt went over today
(hope he gets our pictures)
Smith is getting me a pass
Where I went (I hope) tomorrow is
Thanksgiving. I only have
two more in the Corps.
Time seems to be dragging
along this second year
What I spent Rod all my pay
235 Days
\$120.00

Underway - T. H.
Things to know
when I go travelling again

Sat. Nov. 22. - He left the
harbor about 0600 - MANNED
BROADSIDE BTRY. UNTIL 0915 THEN
SECURED FOR CPT. INSPECTION
AT 0930 - ANOTHER NAVY RUN!!!
Had school this afternoon -
a lecture on advance guard
by Lt. Royce. Guess we will
be underway for about a
week and the turrets will
fire N.B.P. I think.

232 Days

120 Dollars



Underway - T. H.
My Travel Memories

Sunday morning - 23, The arc

Date still cruising around not
far from Honolulu. Went into
Stopped at condition watch last night
at 0000. I had the 4-8 watch
in fore top. S. Q. went at 05:30
and we had breakfast of rolls

Where ~~at~~ chop cheese & bread in fore top
Secured about 0630. The
sea is certainly choppy
today. This doesn't seem
like a Sun. morning

What I spent

23⁰⁰ Days

\$120.⁰⁰ Dollars

ANCHORED AT P.H., T.H.
Things to know
when I go traveling again

Friday 28, the fired N.B.P. last night
It was a very beautiful sight
to watch the three battle ships
fire their main + secondary bts.
A sub was reported by the
battle lookout so we had cond.
watches all the time until we
entered P.H. Held field day
today and did not have
to make coming to anchor etc.
I don't know just how
long we are to be in
port this time but
I believe I should
have drawn enough cont.



Cont.

My Travel Memories

Money to send mother + myself

Date ^{something} I used \$135.00 on
the books? Gee! I have

Stopped at been so darned sad +
melancholy today and for
the past week! Am trying
to get ready for captain's
inspection tomorrow. Am
Where I went going up on the lights to
witness the movie from
same.

226 Say to do

What I spent

\$135.00 on the books

P.S. Tomas is just around
the next corner.

ANCHORED AT P.H., T.H.
Things to know
when I go traveling again

Sunday, ^{Nov.} Dec. 30, The weather
tonite is most unusual for
Honolulu - rather cool indeed!!
It sure reminds me of the
weather in Texas. Was
supposed to have the watch
today, but the old boy
went ashore - Has he been
at last I hear(?) that
we are receiving our
pay raise and back
pay that should
make me damn
close to 200 at



Cont.

My Travel Memories

close of Dec. Maybe

Date

I will have more

Stopped at

than \$300⁰⁰ who

knows ??? Guess

I'll turn in and

try to sleep.

Where I went

324 days

\$135⁰⁰


What I spent

Day I would love
to see Mother to

visit Ova home!!

ANCHORED AT P.H., T.H.

Things to know
when I go traveling again

Wednesday Dec. 3. Yes, we are
still here in this despicable!
Pearl Harbor. I had the watch
today and the old man went
ashore about ~~20~~ 1530. Easy!!
I guess we will be here for
the weekend - won't go ashore
though. Boy, if we get that
pay raise this month I will
be away on top. I have
certainly ~~they~~  about
done a lot these
last few days
It won't be long

Cont

My Travel Memories

now - if I get off this
pig iron tub. Rec

Date

two letters today - one

Stopped at

from "Bell." Does me
a lot of good to get

letters from my friends
in Texas etc. There is

Where I went

a H.O. Movie tonight so
guess I shall go (for
a charge? huh)

What I spent

221 Days
\$1.25 Salary

Things to know Anchored - P.H.
when I go traveling again

Friday - Dec. 5th - Fk yes!
Still in good old Pearl of
I had the watch again today
The old commander is sort
mad about something of
late (I wonder why?) Tomorrow
is the big inspection (annual
my last one on the Mary
I hope) It is still raining
and sorta cool
as it has been
lately. I would
answer about
four letters to write



Cont =

My Travel Memories

Date if I only had some paper
to write on. Golly! I
hope we get that raise
Stopped at this month. It will
just make you good at
the close of Dec. I know
I can save the other
Where I went hundred easily.

219 Days
\$125.00

Sat. Dec. 6th. Inspection
was 4.0 this morning.
What I spent Dept all afternoon.

218 Days
\$135.00

Things to know
when I go travelling again

ANCHORED AT P.H.

I am writing this on
Monday, Dec. 5, 1941 because
I didn't have time yesterday
to even take a drink, much
less write. I'll never forget
Dec. 7, during my life time.
At 0800 when Colabo was
being sounded we were
attacked by Japanese planes
in a surprise attack.
They came in with
torpedoes and
horizontal bombers.



cont.

My Travel Memories

Date

The first I knew of it
was when I noticed
a large explosion on

Stopped at

Podul Island, then I

heard machine gun fire
which was incidentally
fired by a sailor on the

Where I went

Maryland that was
writing a letter on the
machine gun on the ship.
Crane. He got his plane.

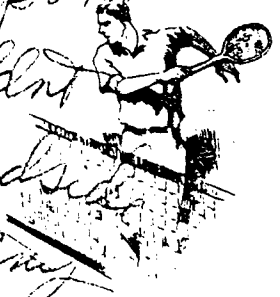
What I spent

hooray! That was
followed by G. O.
on the Maryland

00207

Things to know
when I go traveling again

my running up the mast
to man my station. While
up there I saw the Opla
take two torpedoes (which
were launched by low
flying planes flying across
the channel. It took only
two torpedoes to put the
Opla on its side. She is
laying on our port
quarter. She couldn't
man the broadside
battery and do any



Cont.

My Travel Memories

good so we secured and
went down on the A.A. Guns

Date to help the sailors. The main

Stopped at battle lasted from 0800

until about 1700 in the

afternoon. They have been

coming in ever since in

Where I went small groups. I am

standing on top of

the 1.1 A.A. gun No. 3 and

will probably see a

lot of action there

What I spent while we were in the

harbor they fit us

Things to know
when I go traveling again

a terrible blow. They
damaged or destroyed
6 of the 8 battleships
here in the Pearl of
the Maryland & the
Tennessee were the two
undamaged ships. It has
been reported that we
destroyed many of
their ships and
planes but
how true it
is I don't know.



cont.

Cont. Dec 7-8
My Travel Memories

It looks as if it
Date will be a long hard
war but I and all
Stopped at of the men are ready
and anxious. The
whole thing seems
Where I went like a dream. They
say only 145 men and
officers got off the
Arizona before she
blew up. They are
What I spent still pulling them
out of the bunkers

Things to know Dec 7-8
when I go traveling again

Opla. (I expect there
will be much more
to follow this data on
this week - we'll see?)

Thursday - Dec 11, - All is quiet
on the western front now.
There has been no more
attacks on Pearl Harbor
since Sunday. The Maryland
is along doing getting
repairs. The ship is
awfully crowded now
in the Mericid.



Cont.

My Travel Memories

From reports in the paper
Date the whole world has entered
the war. Looks like I don't
Stopped at get transferred now down
H!! I haven't shaved or
slept in a bunk since
Sat - 6. They are still standing
Where I went on - off on the P.P.'s

Sunday, Dec. 14. No more
hauls since 72h. They have
condition 3 watches now and
0900 liberty for 1/4 of crew. I
am standing 400 and 8
off on fwd. gangway. An
awful lot of scuttle

Things to know
when I go traveling again

butte going around these
days for instance they re-
ported an enemy sub in the
harbor and a captured
jap carrier in Honolulu.
Things are really getting
hot over in Wake I and
P. I. Hope I come out alive.
Looks like I wont go home
on leave for awhile.

Tuesday Dec 16, 42
didn't receive any
pay yesterday



Cont.

My Travel Memories

and boy, could I use some money for letters, cig, etc.

Date I haven't been to Honolulu

Stopped at since the war started -
can't go without money. These
watches are getting me
down. Have \$12 tonight.

Where I went Every thing has been
pretty quiet here in Oahu
since the 7th. No more roads
so far thank goodness. I
should have about 200
What I spent on the books this mo.

Anchored AT P.H.
Things to know
when I go travelling again

Sat. Dec 20, - Still no new
developments in the Pearl
Harbor war theatre. They
are working night and
day continuously on the
"Mary" and the other ships
trying to get them ready
for action. There has been
a lot of rumors about
when the "Mary" is
getting underway
and where she is
going when she
does. Only time



cont.

My Travel Memories

itself will tell. I hope it
Date is Bremen or Paris
although it isn't very
Stopped at Libby's. Still no news
from home and I don't
have any equipment to
send mail with. Since
we didn't get paid the
Where I went 15th. Am drawing all my
money this time in order
to send it home. At least
mom can use it. I hope
she isn't worrying about
me. A bunch of mail
What I spent just came aboard
perhaps there is

Things to know
when I go travelling again

some for me (that I didn't
send out) I hope!!! I stood
on 8-12 to a 4-8 watch last
night and it almost killed
me. I've slept all day
and have 4-8 again this
afternoon. More later —

Sunday Dec 21 — He got
underway yesterday about
1600!!! The "Mary"
Penn. & Finch
left Pearl Harbor
and have been
heading North by



My Travel Memories

North East ever since 9/11.
Date Still don't know when
we are headed exactly
Stopped at but think that it will
be Bremerston (I hope!!!)

No enemy has been
Where I went contacted so far and
we are standing on
+ out on the secondary
P.B. Kobi missed the
ship is P.B.

Monday 22 - All hands
What I spent are drifting into blues
today and skinning
all their gear. I

Things to know
when I go traveling again

am just about as happy
as I can be because
we are going to Puerto
or Seattle. The weather
is getting cooler but it
isn't cold enough to wear
a shirt in the day time.
Our course has been
about due East since
last night.

Tuesday 23, still
underway and
still headed N. by N.E.
I can hardly wait.



UNDERWAY

My Travel Memories

until we reach Guernsey
(that's where I think we
are headed) These directions
Date Stopped at watches aren't so bad
after all. The weather is
getting cooler all the
time - Sounds good!!!

Where I went
Amaz Day Dec 25th. -
This isn't such a bad
Gloria after all - It could
be worse, we are headed
What I spent for the good old States
anyway. Reports came
over the radio that

Things to know
when I go travelling again

The Mexicans were finally
defeated on Tabo. After
sinking an enemy cruiser
and two destroyers, much
less many, many Japs
that were landing. The
are still headed by N.E.
And it is getting very
cold. The are heading
a very sharp
lookout for
enemy subs
that have been



Dec 26 - Tomas - Underway toward
My Travel Memories Seattle

resorted operating off
the West coast. A

friendly tanker was
stopped at reported bunk off
frisco. I hope Wash.
knows what it is

Where I went being. It seems that
we are more off on the
defensive than we
should be. The are having
Tomas dinner at 1500.


What I spent Am drawing \$277.00
last of this month.

STILL UNDERWAY - DEC 26TH

Things to know
when I go traveling again

~~Dec 26th~~
~~Friday~~ Headed for Seattle from
Puget Harbor - The weather
is colder than hell and it is
raining equally as hard. They
have a little water coming in
the casemates on the other side.
Right now I am listening to
Churchill's speech at 10900
Dec 26th. He seems pretty determined
as all of us do.

Dec 27th - Still underway
for Seattle. - Last night
we hit a terrific
storm about
1830 which lasted



My Travel Memories

all night and which
Date tossed and shook this
35000 ton battle wagon
Stopped at violently. Water came
in the basements about
kitchen deep and got the
main deck wet. The secondary
Where I went battery is secured and
they are standing watch
on the P.F. battery. The
sea is still rough this
afternoon and it is very
What I spent cold. The gun shutters
are up so maybe the

Things to know
when I go traveling again

water want concern about at
least I hope not because
I certainly do need some
sleep. I'm gonna get me
a hotel room in Seattle
and sleep forever. More
later —

Dec 28th Sunday - Still underway
the sea is calmer this morning
but it is still cold. I had my
last nit in the sack for the
first time since Sat 6th. We have
sighted several sea
gulls and that
means we are nearing
land (I hope) The family



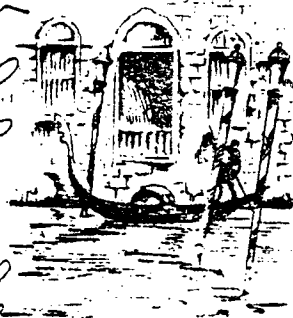
My Travel Memories

left us yesterday, for this
Date The fine cool new destination
with us and 3 P.B.'s. The
Stopped at are supposed to reach the
sound or Straights by
tomorrow anyway. The
next time I write in here
Where I went we will be at the end
of our destination. —
Monday, 29, Feb, we finally
arrived here in Puget Sound.
Nearly froze to death up
in Secondary at 21. We are
What I spent laying out here in the
sound not far from

Things to know
when I go traveling again

Bremerton waiting to take all
the ammunition before going
to Navy Yard. I will probably
go on Liberty Thursday afternoon
if I can get there this time.

Sunday Jan. 11. - He have been here
in Bremerton for some time
now and boy oh boy!! Is
it cold. Am going on Liberty
every chance I get and
sleeping when ever
I get the chance. His
Captain's head head
is getting worse
every day and he



My Travel Memories

is disliked by everybody
Date on the ship including me
If I ever get home again
Stopped at So help me, I shall never
leave again huh!

Jan. 9, Still here in
Where I went Bremerton. Nothing new
in the war as far as
the ind. is concerned
She is in dry dock rec
new guns and overhauling
What I spent in general. Am standing
B.F.R. watches now. I

Things to know
when I go travelling again

called mother the other
nite and talked 18 min.
with her. It cost me \$4.00
It was worth it I bet that!
It snowed for a whole day
and every thing was pretty
well covered but it has
melted now and is sloppy
as hell. When I go
on liberty I get
a nice soft bed
and lots of sleep
I wonder why?



My Travel Memoranda 3

Date
Stopped at
Ald "Gilch" is losing
more points with me
every day. Don't know
when we are leaving.

Jan. 19, They are still in
Bremerton and at the
Where I went present time are living
in the Galley on the
beach. Things are pretty
well torn up in the
casemates due to the
What I spent work on them. Mother
is probably coming

Things to know
when I go traveling again

out from Peas and will
be in Seattle today or
tomorrow if she is
coming. I only have
600 in my bank account
for buying a watch
and ring. Some new
rates have been given
way. I will
actually be glad
to see some action
but so far it
doesn't look



My Travel Memories

very imminent. The
Date weather is a slight
Stopped at least warmer than when
we arrived. The Ursapit
isn't here any longer
and they have taken
the main mast off
Where I went the Tenn. Guess they
will take ours off it
too.

Jan. 30, 1942 - Haven't written
you for some time now.
What I spent I have been awfully busy
doing nothing!! Mother

my 2 Things to know
when I go traveling again.

came out by train. Myrtle
also. They stayed only
two and a half days but
it was great having them
here for just that length
of time. I sure wanted to
go back with them. It was
so impossible at times like
these. I still don't know
when we are leaving here
or where we are going
when we do. I hope
we go to Australia.
This damn life is
about to get me down.
I'll be so glad when



My Travel Memories

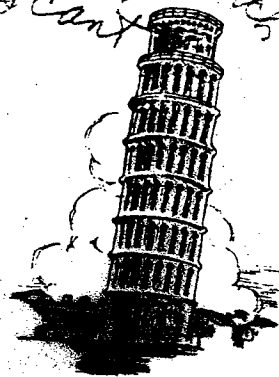
I can go home, marry
Date *Qua*, if she's waiting by
then, and settle down.
Stopped at. It would be so nice

to have a home of my own.
The war situation in all
theaters seems to be for
Where I went the allies. M^r Huthorn is
still holding out. The Japs
are advancing on Singapore
but it appears like allied
help of planes and men
are arriving. "Death blow

What I spent dealt to the Japs in
Maccassar Straights

Things to know
when I go traveling again

where about 30 ships were
sunk or damaged." I think
soon that US troops will
launch a great offensive on
all fronts especially the Malayan
theater. " Maybe by June of
1943, I can go home I hope.
More later — P.S. I am now broke
along with having broken my watch
and ring oh well I can't
take it with me.



My Travel Memories

Feb. 13, 1942 - Still in P. S.

Date

N. Y. Works on ship is

Stopped at

meaning completion so we

may pull out any week

and again we may never

leave - who knows ??? I

just get back from the

hill range (camp Wesley & home)

Where I spent

After spending 9 1/2 days of

heaven compared to this

damn tub. How I wish

I was home tonight!!!

A ten day leave would

do me more good than

What I spent

any thing else. A pretty

good tonic that!!!

Things to know
when I go traveling again
NEWS OF LATE

1. McArthur still holding out in P.I.
2. A.E.F. sent to Ireland
3. Singapore has fallen - Feb. 16,
4. Churchill criticized by English people.
5. N.E. I threatened next.
6. British defenses falling back at Bangkok - "Burma Road"
- Feb. 17. McArthur still holding out and expecting giant sized attack.
- 60000 British troops captured in Singapore
- Russians still driving Germans slowly back.



My Travel Memories

Feb. 16, Big "Marys" still
Date in P.S. N. Y. The crew all
Stopped at anxious to get under way
and get a crack at em.
The Saratoga came in this
morning with torpedo boats
at her water line almost
Where I went exactly amid ships. I

wish I could see Tokyo
once more - just once!!

Tuesday Feb. 18, Things are beginning
to get dull again!! Am I
taking out 30 allotment

What I spent 00 I can get married
if I ever get back!!!

Things to know
when I go traveling again

I made a bet with Sammy that
we wouldn't be in a foreign country
within 3 mos. Has says we will. I
hope ^{we} will. I doubt if the Mary
will see any more action for a
long time unless the Gaps come
over here, which is a probability
indeed. I don't think that G & J
shall go on much liberty from
now on.

Feb. 21 - Still haven't been
on liberty. The Mary got
under way this morning
and we are anchored off
Port Townsend at the
present time. I have
a pretty bad cold and



Cont-

My Travel Memories

had caruche today Neagon
this blame was I would
Date be getting so short on her
now that it isn't funny. There
Stopped at no telling when I will
get off this tub now that
is in one piece. Will start
standing 30 min. watches tomorrow.
Where I went apparently the tanks haven't
gotten started yet. Things still
look bad for the Allies every
where except in Russia. May
power to the Cossacks!!!

What I spent

UNDERWAY - PACIFIC COAST
Things to know
when I go traveling again

Feb. 27, We left Puget Sound ^{May 20, 1942} yesterday
about 14:30. The Tenn. and Colorado
and 4 cans are along with us. The
are heading South probably for
San Francisco. So far trip has been
uneventful but we can never tell
about those damn japs subs. I am
standing Hon. Hall on director. I am
hope I get to see Mama in Frisco.
More later

March 1st - Still underway towards
Frisco. Fired main battery this morning
while doing that a sub was sighted
and one salvo was fired from
No. 6 B.S. The sub wasn't
seen again. We are supposed to
reach Frisco about
Tuesday? - I hope will go
on liberty, I guess.



UNDER WAY NEAR "FRISCO"
My Travel Memories

MARCH 23, 1942. Liberty in San Francisco
Date has been swell and we were there
about three weeks. She are to be out
Stopped at at sea less than a week and then
back in for some more good liberties
I am dating a very pretty Italian
girl. No new developments in the war
situation as far as the Navy is
What I observed. Many ships have been
leaving Frisco with equipment and
soldiers aboard. They are probably
headed for Australia. The Westville
just arrived in Frisco from the
East coast. Mr. Arthur has been
What I spotted transferred to Australia to
take supreme command of the
Rhies. Dorn for the 5425th.

Anchored - San Fran, Cal.
Things to know
when I go traveling again

April 2. We are anchored at pier 29 as we
were before. This is a small liberty town
but from now on I will have to save.
According to Markie's letter they might
all come out to see me and bring
Oua!! that would be swell!!! It
would be my luck to have them
on the way out and then we would
shave off to the West Pacific. We'll
see - only time will tell. We don't
need stamps on our letters now
so I shall take advantage
of the situation tonight
and write three or
four. I had six dollars
left from my last mit so will
have to delay a day with Ray.



UNDERWAY FROM SAN FRANCISCO

My Travel Memories

April 14, Under way today from
"Frisco" about 0930. We are a
Date convey of seven battleships, 2 subs,
destroyers and merchant ships.
Stopped at Our destination is unknown to
the crew. Have heard many tales
as to where we are headed. Am
standing watches on 30m. R.F. 5th.
Where I went Will be part of a firing
squad tomorrow at Admiral Kidd's
sea burial. I wish we were headed
for the South Pacific!!! 37th Div
fighting for India and Burma now.
Rush still holds offensive.

What I went.
April 17, Still underway somewhere
in the South Pacific. No word

Cont.

Things to know
when I go traveling again

crew is still guessing our destination
and what we will do after we get
here. My guess is Hawaii; although we
are still too far south. The weather
is getting much warmer and the
water much bluer. My face is
slightly sunburned. Maybe we
are finally going after the Japs.
The Russians seemed to be taking
the hell out of Hitler. He can still
run a few battleships and a squadron
of subs!!

April - Still underway somewhere in the
South Pacific. I think we are headed
for the Tonga islands but for
what I don't know. I
have heard rumors that



Cont.

My Travel Memories

we are to shell the island. He should
be there within 36 hrs. There has
Date been no enemy sighted so
far but this is dangerous
Stopped at territory for Jap subs. I hope
I see the States again.

April 22, Still underway somewhere
in the South Pacific. He's fueled
two cans today after much
Where I went trouble. It is getting hot as
hell and my face is slightly
burned. There is still no hope
as to where we are headed
but it looks like a long
journey. I'm liable to
What I speak pump off on one of these islands
if we get near enough!!!

UNDERWAY IN S. PACIFIC

Things to know
when I go traveling again

My 4 Well we didn't bomb or shell an island as we expected and are headed back for the W. Coast (some say home beach, I hope so!!) the weather is getting somewhat cooler and I am able to get a cool drink of water every so often. They have put some severe restrictions on the fresh water and it is getting hard to take a shower even. They sell ice cream about every 100 but there is always about 1000 men down there to get it and how I hate to wait in a sweaty line so I just wish I had some they fired the gun. F. A. gun today and did pretty good. More when we anchor!!



Underway from Long Beach

My Travel Memories

MAY 13, Well we anchored at Long Beach
for three whole days and I happened
to be in the third section which
started on the fourth day. Today we
got underway!!! This Navy is
slightly fouled up! I was going
to see Connie today if I could
have gone ashore. She isn't very
far out as yet and maybe we
will go back in L.B. He fired
the 5" A.P. and 2 rounds of 5" dual.
I was in Casemat #9 when they
fired. I certainly wish that they
could come out to see me.
Maybe later on.

What I spent

Things to know
when I go traveling again

Anchored Pier H25
57th St. San Francisco

MAY 17. Liberty in France is far but
could be better. I am riding my
money on the books in hopes that
Tosts can come out and we can be
married this summer. Things are
so uncertain as far as my ship's
position and destination at present
and in the future. The war seems
to be turning to good for the
United Nations on all fronts but
that is no reason to be
pessimistic about its outcome.
A person doesn't know
whether to think into
the future or no. I would like to
see Tosts once more.



ANCHORED - SAN FRANCISCO CAL.

My Travel Memories

STILL AT WAR WITH AXIS

GOVERNMENTS - JAPAN, GERMANY, ITALY

Date May 28, 1942 - Liberty was
cancelled today and regular Ben

Stopped at
waters set on the P.H. The government
expects an attack by the Japs on the
West coast. I think it would be
hard for them to do but it is
possible. Mother, Muth, and Fran

Where I went
are supposed to come to see me
in June or July. And Ova and I
will be married. How happy I
will be, oh! hey! There is no telling
when we will get under way
but probably not before Sat.

What I spent
since we are supposed to have
admiral's inspection. then. Can't
say!!

UNDERWAY FROM FRISCO.

Things to know
when I go traveling again

June 1st. No yet underway Sunday
the 2nd about 0830. The fired the
main battery that afternoon and
port side secondary battery that
night. She has been a Japanese
raider party headed this way
so this task force is out to
intercept it, if anything. The
force is comprised of the Maryland,
Colorado, and about five ten cans.
Perhaps we will pick up more
later on. There is no telling how
long we will be out, but
I am hoping to see
Old Mother & Auntie this mo
or next.



UNDERWAY OFF WEST COAST

My Travel Memories

June 6, 1942 - I picked up Bat Div 3
this morning and an auxiliary
Date aircraft carrier - the "Long Island."
Stopped at It still don't know how long
we will be underway or where we
will come to anchor. I still hope
to see the folks and Toots this month
or next.

Where I went

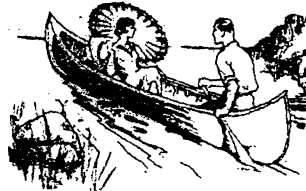
June 7, I'll headed West!! The
Jap Navy was engaged with
of Midway Is. Result - 3 Japs
Jap carriers sunk - 1 damaged - 4
2 battleships seriously damaged - 4
cruisers sunk or damaged - American

What I spent

Aircraft carriers spent tons pretty
badly damaged. Loss in planes
on both sides was pretty heavy

Things to know
when I go traveling again

the gaps, losing all their carriers
based for land. The Communiques
mentioned American B-26's, such
guns being used and I don't
have any idea which ship it
could be unless it was the
and North Carolina which were
on the East Coast. The one headed
that way and maybe I will
see some action on this tub after
all. I don't see why we don't
go all the way to Tokyo with
the tank force - 7 battle ships,
aircraft carrier and 9 B-29's
You will tell!!!



UNDER WAY - HEADED WEST
My Travel Memories

JUNE 9, 1942, OUR COURSE IS STILL WEST AND
A LITTLE NORTH. NOTHING UNUSUAL!!!

Date JUNE 9, 1942 - OUR COURSE IS STILL WEST,
WE ARE APPROXIMATELY 1000 MILES WEST
OF SAN FRANCISCO AND NORTH OF PEARL HARBOR

Stopped at

JUNE 11, 1942 - WE ARE APPARENTLY GOING BACK.
NOW SINCE OUR COURSE IS SOUTH AND EAST

JUNE 14, IT SEEMS THAT WE ARE OUT TO
SEA THIS TO PATROL UP AND DOWN THE
COAST. WE ARE SUPPOSED TO GO IN
THE 2375 or 2475.

Where I went JUNE 22 - WENT TO LONG BEACH AND
STAYED FOR 3 DAYS. I WENT TO SEE
CONNIE WHILE THERE. WE LEFT TB
TODAY AND I AM PRAYING THAT
WE ARE HEADED FOR FRISCO SO
I CAN SEE THE FOLKS. THE
NORTH CAROLINA IS WITH US
NOW WHICH MAKES 8 BATTLE

What I spent \$4.75

July 19 - Left Frisco this morning
about 1000. I think this is another

Things to know
when I go traveling again

Have been! He will probably fire
the machine gun battery. Different
control and then go back in!
That's ok by me though since
Mother + Gus + Pats are in Fresno
and will be glad to see them
again. Am little bit worried
about the money situation though.
I'll be glad when Pats + I are
married and can be alone when
I go over. I am pretty damn
sure that she is the one
for me and that we
can make a go of it.
I will write in this



My Travel Memories

book when we go back on
Date which incidently will be
for the last time. Perhaps
Stopped at I shall procure a diary in
which to write my sad tale.
I wish to hell! We were headed
for Australia or the Philippines.
Where I went No such luck!! This is a damn
good Coast Guard patrol boat.

What I spent