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Interview with  
Arthur Brindley  
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Place of Interview: El Paso, Texas  
Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello  
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Oral History Collection

Arthur Brindley

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: El Paso, Texas

Date: June 11, 1976

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Arthur Brindley for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on June 11, 1976, in El Paso, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Brindley in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was at Hickam Field during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

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

Mr. Brindley: I was born in Kingfield, Maine, in 1917, and was raised and lived there on a farm until I was nineteen, at which time I enlisted in the Army.

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

Mr. Brindley: Well, initially, I had designs on West Point and felt that this was the best way to go for various and sundry reasons--financial, to begin with. Then, of course, there isn't any requirement for a great expenditure of

money to go to West Point, but, nonetheless, I thought that this was perhaps the best place for me to move.

Marcello: Okay, so you enlisted in the Army. Where did you take your basic training?

Brindley: At Schofield Barracks, in Hawaii.

Marcello: You know, that's hard for me to visualize--the fact that in that particular period the basic training was usually taken at the permanent station to which one was assigned.

Brindley: At the unit. I was assigned to the 21st Infantry when I first went out there and served as a foot soldier for a couple of years and then transferred to the Air Corps.

Marcello: When did you enter the service? What year?

Brindley: 1937.

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

Brindley: I liked the idea.

Marcello: Why was that?

Brindley: Oh, I suppose it was the romance or some such thing as that. And to get as far away from home as possible.

Marcello: Okay, you mentioned that you went to Schofield Barracks. How long did you stay there?

Brindley: I stayed at Schofield two years, roughly two years, and then I transferred to the Air Corps at Wheeler Field.

Marcello: Why did you decide to transfer into the Air Corps?

Brindley: I wanted to fly. And, of course, I flew a "mowing machine."

Marcello: You flew a "mowing machine?" In other words, you were a groundkeeper of some sort when you were at Wheeler Field?

Brindley: Well, in those days, we didn't have concrete and macadam runways. We had dirt or sod runways, and there was a requirement to keep the grass mowed. And I was on one of those crews.

Marcello: How long did you stay at Wheeler Field altogether?

Brindley: Let's see. I stayed there until about the early part of '40 and applied for bombardier school which was conducted at Hickam, and as a result, I was transferred to Hickam.

Marcello: Now Hickam was the bomber base, isn't that correct?

Brindley: Yes, this is true.

Marcello: And Wheeler was more or less of a fighter base?

Brindley: Wheeler was a fighter base. And I went to bombardier school at Hickam. After completing it and getting assigned to a squadron, I came back to Maine on leave. Then I returned to the islands and married and continued my duties there.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk a little bit about Hickam Field and the training that you undertook while you were there. First of all, describe Hickam Field from a physical standpoint. What are your impressions of Hickam Field during that period prior to the war?

Brindley: During that particular time, it was a relatively large installation. There were two bomb groups and a depot called the

Hawaiian Air Depot. In all probability, it was . . . well, it was a major installation. With the two groups and the support people, there must have been, oh, golly, maybe 10,000 or so.

Marcello: And I gather that it was growing and expanding all of the time, especially as one gets closer and closer to December 7, 1941.

Brindley: Yes, this is true.

Marcello: For a while, was there not an area there called "Tent City?" People were living in tents until the permanent barracks were constructed.

Brindley: This is true. There was a "Tent City." I had forgotten that.

Marcello: Had you had any experience living in "Tent City?"

Brindley: Yes, I did. And then after completion of the big new barracks, why, we moved into it, and then I was promoted to a staff sergeant, and this authorized me to live in quarters, which I did. There were a number of us who occupied family quarters prior to the beginning of the war because there weren't enough families to utilize all of the quarters.

Marcello: Now this was, of course, before you got married?

Brindley: Yes.

Marcello: Now that's interesting because, as I recall, the Navy had an almost completely different situation. In the case of the Navy, there wasn't very much housing at all.

Brindley: No, there wasn't. I had a cousin stationed there at the time, and he envied me very much because I had quarters to live in.

Marcello: Okay, now you mentioned that when you went home on leave that you actually got married.

Brindley: No, I got married after I returned to the islands.

Marcello: I see. Was this a girl that you had met in the islands? Is that correct?

Brindley: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, where did you live after you got married?

Brindley: I lived on post in a multi-story building. It was a multi-family building, and I think there were perhaps about eight families that lived in that building.

Marcello: How would you describe these quarters?

Brindley: Oh, they were real fine.

Marcello: What were they likd from a physical standpoint?

Brindley: They were stucco-finished, two-story, and each apartment had two bedrooms, a living room, kitchen, bath, and a dining-room combination. Of course, they were brand new quarters and very nice at that particular time.

Marcello: Now in a situation like this, that is, being a married man in the Air Corps, was it necessary that your wife had to work in order to make ends meet?

Brindley: No, this wasn't the case in those days. Even though our pay wasn't as healthy as it is now, the cost of living wasn't

as high. Of course, we traded at the commissary, and, being on flying status, that really saved us probably because a ground troop who was married had a little more difficulty.

Marcello: In other words, you got flight pay? You get extra pay for your flight status.

Brindley: Yes, it was half of the base pay.

Marcello: What was the social life like for a young married couple at Hickam Field during this pre-Pearl Harbor period?

Brindley: It was quite active. We were fortunate in that we lived close to the NCO Club. It was half a block away, perhaps, so it didn't entail a great deal of travel. Then, of course, there were movies and your neighbors to visit with and friends in town.

Marcello: Would it be safe to say that you confined most of your social life to the base itself? Now that isn't to say that you never went off base, but was Hickam big enough that you could find a pretty good social life there at the base?

Brindley: Yes, I'd say actually it was large enough. However, my wife, being a native of Hawaii, well, we had many friends off base that we visited. However, there were movies to go to on the base, bowling, and dances at the club--things of this nature.

Marcello: Normally, what was your weekend routine like?

Brindley: We'd usually go off the base and visit.



Marcello: Okay, let's talk a little bit about the training and so on that you underwent here at Hickam Field during this particular period. You mentioned that you went to bombardier school.

Brindley: Yes.

Marcello: How would you rate that training that you received at that time? Do you think it was good training? Fair training? How would you describe it?

Brindley: I thought it was good training because . . . well, primarily, we had a man as an instructor who was known at that time as a master bombardier. And he and a couple of others had been trained at Langley. I believe it was Langley where they received their training.

Marcello: This is Langley Field in Virginia?

Brindley: Yes.

Marcello: How many weeks were you in bombardier school altogether?

Brindley: Six months. And then following that, I took a maintenance course at the Hawaiian Air Depot to familiarize myself more with the equipment than everything else. We trained in B-18's.

Marcello: Now this was the forerunner to the B-17. Is that correct?

Brindley: Yes. It was a two-engine aircraft as opposed to the B-17 with four. And we used those airplanes until just shortly before the war began. We hadn't had our B-17's but, I guess, just a couple of months before the war began. And

they were "D" model aircraft without any tail guns, and we flew those quite steadily until the war began, and even after the war began--those that were left.

There were a couple of bombing ranges that may be interesting. One was Kahoolawe. It was an island off of Maui. Allegedly, there was one individual who lived on the island and raised some cattle, and the bombing range was off away from his habitation. And then the other bombing range that we used was off of Kauai--water targets.

The Navy also provided us with targets. They would pull a slip so that we'd have moving targets to work on. This is getting a little bit ahead of the story, but after the war started, we embarked on a program with skip-bombing, it was called then, in which we would come in at about 2,000 feet and dive to the water level and release a bomb. This proved really exciting.

Marcello: What was the purpose of skip-bombing?

Brindley: The idea was to train us to go into harbors that were in enemy hands, such as the Shortlands in the Solomons area, to make real sure that we could get a dead kill on a vessel. It was a fine idea, but it was never utilized with the big aircraft.

Marcello: Okay, now when your training was finished as a bombardier, I would gather that you then proceeded to go out on these missions and exercises like you have just described.

Brindley: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, what other functions did these B-17's have? In other words, I do know that one of the functions of the Army was to engage in a certain amount of reconnaissance, offshore reconnaissance, with their bombers. Is this the sort of thing that you did here at Hickam?

Brindley: Yes, we did this after the war, and we hunted submarines, and I had the pleasure of bombing a few. We nearly had a mishap with one of our subs sitting on top of the water. We tracked down on him, and just before release point, he gave us a recognition signal, and then . . . we had a good track on him (chuckle).

Marcello: I'm sure there was a lot of that sort of thing that went on in those days and weeks immediately after Pearl Harbor. Everybody was rather jittery.

Brindley: Real tense, real jittery, and trigger-happy. And so these things did occur. However, to my knowledge, there weren't any actual incidents. This was as close as I came to them, anyway.

Marcello: Now did you ever engage in any of these reconnaissance missions prior to the war?

Brindley: Yes, we had.

Marcello: How would they work? Describe what a typical reconnaissance mission would be like.

Brindley: Well, we would be assigned a given sector of . . .

Marcello: Would it be a pie-shaped sector, more or less?

Brindley: Yes, and we'd fly a search mission, and it would last roughly four or five hours.

Marcello: About how far would you go out?

Brindley: Oh, we'd get out about six or eight hundred miles. Probably six hundred miles would be a good, round figure.

Marcello: How long does one of these reconnaissance missions usually take?

Brindley: Four or five hours. That's about the extent of the range with this airplane at that time without bomb bay tanks.

Marcello: Now is this the B-17 that we're talking about?

Brindley: Yes, without bomb bay tanks. We could fly a longer mission with bomb bay tanks, or we would carry one bomb bay tank and load of armament on the other side.

Marcello: Are these reconnaissance missions kind of boring?

Brindley: Quite.

Marcello: In other words, you're just out there flying around in the oceans, more or less?

Brindley: Boring holes in the air and looking for possible targets, or prior to the war we were looking for any activity or anything that would indicate that we were going to be faced with a problem.

Marcello: Now as one gets closer and closer to December 7, 1941, and as conditions between the United States and Japan continued

to worsen, were these reconnaissance missions stepped up at all? Or was it business as usual right down to the end?

Brindley: No, they were stepped up. We'd fly out of satellites.

Marcello: You would fly out of satellites?

Brindley: Yes.

Marcello: What does that mean?

Brindley: A field away from the main installation.

Marcello: I see. Our satellite was Bellows Field. It was on the . . . oh, golly, my directions are a little bit off right now, but anyhow, it was on the opposite side of the island, adjacent to Kaneohe Naval Air Station.

We had been on a maneuver--the Navy and the Army--just prior to Pearl Harbor. In fact, we had just come off what we termed an "alert" on the Friday preceding the attack on Sunday morning.

Marcello: Now when these reconnaissance missions were undertaken, were the islands covered in a 360-degree circumference? In other words, were there enough planes that that could be done?

Brindley: Yes, there were. They were divided out in sectors in such a manner that they could be covered.

Marcello: You said they "could be covered". Were they covered?

Brindley: In most cases. There are a lot of factors involved--aircraft maintenance, crews on leave, and things of this nature.

However, there were three squadrons in each group, and, as I recall, there were twelve aircraft to a squadron. So you could pretty well cover the field, and the Navy had its responsibility, also.

Marcello: Now were these around-the-clock reconnaissance? The B-17 really wasn't a night bomber, so I was wondering if these reconnaissance missions were carried on twenty-four hours a day?

Brindley: I really couldn't answer that question because, as you say, the aircraft weren't night-type machines. However, we did fly into the night for training purposes, but I don't know that we would have accomplished a whole lot if we had been out there specifically on a reconnaissance mission that night.

Marcello: Normally, when would one of these reconnaissance missions start?

Brindley: At daylight and end at dark. They were quite steady affairs, and, of course, we would sandwich training missions in between.

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

Brindley: Excellent.

Marcello: How do you account for the high morale?

Brindley: There was an esprit de corps then that isn't prevalent today. Now why this is, well, there are innumerable answers. But the people were all volunteers, and, of course, this is

a contributing factor. And the living conditions were good. And at that time, pay wasn't a real big factor.

Marcello: And from what you have said, I assume that you were kept pretty busy most of the time that you were on duty.

Brindley: Yes, we were.

Marcello: And I think boredom can usually lead to the deterioration of morale after awhile?

Brindley: Yes, this is true, and I suspect--I'm sure--that there was less boredom in the Air Corps, as compared to the Army, than there was in the Army.

Marcello: And I gather that the Air Corps was rather selective as to whom it accepted at that time.

Brindley: Yes, they were. In fact, there were very, very few people who could enlist for the Air Corps. They needed to enlist in another branch of the service and then transfer.

Marcello: And normally one would go into the Army and then into the Air Corps.

Brindley: Yes, that's true.

Marcello: Okay, let me ask this question. As conditions continued to deteriorate between the United States and Japan prior to the war, did you feel pretty safe and secure there on the Hawaiian Islands?

Brindley: Yes. We were trained to expect a possible attack because it was an outpost, much as was the Philippines. However,

it was not as close to Japan as was the Philippines, but nevertheless, we expected an attack. That's why we were on this particular maneuver.

Marcello: What opinion did you and your buddies have of the Japanese military? In your bull sessions, did you ever sit around and talk about it or anything?

Brindley: Not necessarily. However, we developed a great deal of respect for their aircraft.

Marcello: This was before the war or after the war?

Brindley: After the war.

Marcello: Yes, I'm sure you did after the war. I was wondering about that period prior to the war.

Brindley: Well, I think perhaps that we may have been under a false sense of security, in that we thought that we were highly trained and well-defended. But we got caught looking at ourselves.

Marcello: In your training, did you ever work very closely with the Navy? Now you've mentioned that from time to time they would be pulling the slips and so on and you would be bombing movable targets. But in your reconnaissance missions, did you ever have very much contact or liaison with the Navy?

Brindley: Yes, we had quite a bit. In fact, if I recall, the Navy controlled the sector patrol. I believe they did.

Marcello: Which meant what, so far as your bomber was concerned?



Brindley: The liaison between the Navy command and the Army was such that they laid out the pattern, or told the Army what they wanted done, and then the Army developed the pattern. But it was pretty much the responsibility of Hawaiian Sea Frontier to control that.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that during that period immediately prior to the actual attack itself, the Army and the Air Corps was under a state of alert or had just come off maneuvers. First of all, do you recall when that alert began?

Brindley: No, I really don't recall when it actually started. But it was a joint operation between the Navy and the Army because in theory we attacked Navy ships and they in turn shot us down. Now whether we were on this alert or this maneuver period for the purpose of being dispersed, I don't know, but the people who were doing the work thought they were.

Marcello: How seriously was this alert being taken by you and your buddies?

Brindley: This particular one was quite taken quite seriously.

Marcello: Why did they tell you that it was being held?

Brindley: I don't know that they did tell us other than that it was a joint maneuver.

Marcello: Had you had other alerts prior to this one?

Brindley: Yes.

Marcello: But did this seem to be much more serious in nature than the previous ones?

Brindley: Yes, it did. Of course, this was also designed to train the new radar people because this was a new thing that had been installed within the year prior to Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: Are you referring mainly to the radar that was installed aboard the ships?

Brindley: No, the land installations.

Marcello: I knew they had some portable radar stations, but they had radar beyond the portable radar stations then that they were constructing?

Brindley: Well, I can't really say that they were portable as such or whether they were permanent installations that were being built. It was something new, and we had radar on some of our aircraft. I had forgotten that.

Marcello: Did your particular aircraft have radar aboard?

Brindley: Yes.

Marcello: How reliable was it?

Brindley: It wasn't real topnotch, but there has to be a beginning, and some of us discussed ways of using it to drop bombs in our bull sessions.

Marcello: I've heard that the radar was so inaccurate during that period that you really couldn't tell a flock of sea gulls from a group of planes on occasions.

Brindley: This could very well be.

Marcello: I didn't know if that was an exaggeration or not, but I have read that.

Brindley: No, it's not necessarily an exaggeration. Of course, it was real crude from the standpoint of twenty years later.

Marcello: Who would have been operating the radar aboard the plane? Would it just have been the navigator?

Brindley: No, the radio operator was the radar operator. And then he would primarily search with it, meaning that he was looking for anything that would give him a reflection.

Marcello: Now would these reconnaissance missions also take place on the weekend?

Brindley: Only on an alert status.

Marcello: Okay. In other words, the reconnaissance missions were taking place Monday through Friday.

Brindley: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, now you go into that alert during that period immediately prior to the Japanese attack, and, as you mentioned earlier, you come off of the alert on Friday, which would be December 5, 1941. Now I assume, then, that the reconnaissance missions, as you pointed out, did not take place on Saturday or Sunday.

Brindley: No.

Marcello: Had they taken place, is it a good possibility that the Japanese fleet would have been detected?

Brindley: I think so.

Marcello: Why was that? Why was it that there were no . . . you know, nobody stops fighting on weekends. Why was it that no reconnaissance would have been carried out on the weekends?

Brindley: It was the peacetime Army (chuckle).

Marcello: It was not an economy measure or anything of that nature?

Brindley: No. As I recall, we weren't faced with a particular economy situation at the time. Since you bring it up, we . . . it brings to mind that many discussions were held in the barracks or the tents or under the wings of the airplanes, whatever the case may be, after the war started.

Marcello: But this sort of routine had a long-standing tradition there in the Hawaiian Islands, that is, that there were no reconnaissance missions or very few reconnaissance missions, let's say, that were ever carried on on the weekends.

Brindley: Unless some outfit was on alert at the time--either the fighters, or perhaps a Navy unit or as we were just prior to the start of the war, prior to Pearl Harbor. You asked earlier about how long we had been on this alert, and I said earlier about how long we had been on this alert, and I said I really couldn't remember--and I really can't--but it was several weeks.

Marcello: After awhile, I would assume that the urgency of an alert would wear off if you've been on it that long.

Brindley: Yes, it does.

Marcello: In other words, it becomes a routine?

Brindley: Yes. "What the hell are we doing here?"

Marcello: And nothing's happening?

Brindley: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, now this brings us right up, I think, to the days immediately prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, so why don't you pick up the story from the ending of the alert on that Friday until all hell breaks loose on Sunday. I want you to go into as much detail as you can remember because this is probably the most important part of the story. So let's start with the ending of the alert.

Brindley: Okay. As I recall, we moved back to Hickam Field from Bellows Field on Saturday.

Marcello: The alert was over on Friday, but you did not move back until Saturday?

Brindley: No, we moved back on Saturday and polished up our weapons and put them away and tied down the aircraft and got reestablished--oh, I forget the time--in the base activity.

Marcello: Okay, now you mentioned that you were on the alert several weeks, and I assume that you were out in the field all of this time.

Brindley: Yes, we were, as I said, at a satellite base.

Marcello: In other words, you had not seen your wife during this entire period. You had not gone back to your apartment.

Brindley: No, I had not.

Marcello: Okay, now how were the planes parked or lined up when the alert was over?

Brindley: Wing-tip to wing-tip.

Marcello: On lines?

Brindley: On lines, on the apron beside hangars.

Marcello: Why was it done this way? What was the purpose in lining them up that way?

Brindley: That's a good question.

Marcello: Was this usually done?

Brindley: It's usually done with . . . we had always done this.

Marcello: In other words, here again, this is nothing out of the ordinary?

Brindley: No, it's not.

Marcello: I've heard it said that the Army wanted them lined up that way because they were easier to guard against saboteurs. Have you ever heard this? In other words, one of the functions of the Army was to guard against saboteurs, since there were a lot of people of Japanese ancestry on the islands.

Brindley: Yes, I've heard this, and this may very well have been the case, or it may have been an excuse.

Marcello: And I've heard they're easier to fuel this way, too. Is that correct?

Brindley: Yes, they are, because the fuel system at Hickam was underground, and each row of aircraft would fuel right from the pit in front.

Marcello: Okay, so you parked the planes and polished your weapons. What do you do at that point? You've been on maneuvers now for a couple of weeks.

Brindley: We go home.

Marcello: Okay, what was your routine that Saturday after you went home?

Brindley: I think my wife and I went to town that evening.

Marcello: Do you recall what you did?

Brindley: We visited a man by the name of Roy Wilms and his family.

Marcello: Were these some friends of your wife's?

Brindley: No, they were friends of mine that I had met.

Marcello: What did you do that evening when you visited them?

Brindley: I think we just sat around "batting the breeze." I don't recall that we went out anyplace. I think that we had dinner and then discussed rebuilding some furniture that he had bought that evening. He was involved in refinishing furniture, and I helped him periodically.

Marcello: Was he a civilian?

Brindley: Yes. He had been in the Army; I had met him at Schofield. And that's what happened then.

Marcello: Do you recall what time you returned to your quarters that evening?

Brindley: Oh, probably around eleven o'clock.

Marcello: In other words, for the most part, it was a rather routine evening?

Brindley: Yes.

Marcello: Now I have a question that I want to ask you at this point. It's kind of important. I'm not sure if you'd be in a position to answer it or not, but I'll ask it, anyhow. Now the base and all of the installations had been on these maneuvers for several weeks. Would it be safe to say that most of the people, most of the personnel, whether married or single, might have been ready to "bust loose" that night and party?

Brindley: Yes.

Marcello: Do you recall if there was a great deal of partying that took place that particular night? Now you mentioned in your own case that that wasn't really what happened, but did you observe this being done by . . .

Brindley: Not necessarily because we didn't roam around that evening. However, it was said that there was considerable partying going on that night, and this would be a normal reaction, I think, after that being several weeks on alert.

Marcello: Did you notice anything of this nature taking place in the quarters around the immediate vicinity of your own quarters when you and your wife returned?

Brindley: No, not other than the usual Saturday night party at the club, which wasn't very far away, and it was going strong when we came home.

Marcello: But you did not go over to the club?

Brindley: No.



Marcello: Okay, it sounds like you had a rather routine Saturday night, so again I'll ask you to pick up the story as it occurred on that Sunday morning.

Brindley: Okay, I had gone downstairs to pick up the paper.

Marcello: About what time did you get up?

Brindley: Oh, around seven o'clock, 6:30 or seven o'clock.

Marcello: Was this your normal routine when you were home?

Brindley: Yes, on Sundays. I went back to bed, and my wife and I were reading the . . . well, I was reading the comics when several explosions occurred.

Marcello: Now how far were your quarters from the apron?

Brindley: Oh, let's see. About a quarter of a mile, perhaps half a mile, but not farther than that.

Marcello: What sort of a view did you have of the apron from your quarters?

Brindley: We couldn't see the apron or hangar line from my quarters, but I could see the Hawaiian Air Depot.

Marcello: What sort of a view did you have of the Pearl Harbor Naval Base from your quarters?

Brindley: It was perhaps a hundred yards away.

Marcello: Did you have a very good view of it, a clear view of it?

Brindley: No, there were quarters in between and buildings in between. Well, let's see. I was . . . I lived within the first block off of the perimeter of the road, and there was a fence there between us and Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: Okay, so you mentioned that you were in bed reading the Sunday paper when you heard these explosions. Pick up the story from that point.

Brindley: I got curious and looked out the window, and there was a small building out from the HAD,

Marcello: That's the Hawaiian Air Depot?

Brindley: Yes. I jumped into my clothes and went downstairs, and, of course, this had brought the other occupants of the building out.

Marcello: What were your initial reactions? In other words, what did you think these explosions were?

Brindley: Well, the initial reaction was that the Navy had come up with some sort of a device to simulate bombardment, and they pulled a "sneaky" on us.

Marcello: You had not seen any airplanes or anything of that nature?

Brindley: No, we hadn't noticed . . . we had noticed some airplanes, but hadn't identified them as Japanese aircraft until, oh, shortly thereafter. After we got outside, an airplane banked in front of our quarters, and we saw a rising sun on it, and then we decided that we had had it.

Marcello: About how much time has elapsed from the time that you heard the explosions until you got your clothes on, were outside, and saw the Japanese plane?

Brindley: Not a great deal of time elapsed. Of course, I don't recall, really, whether I just put on my trousers and went out or

what. This was probably more than likely what had occurred, and then we hurried back in and dressed. I tried to call the barracks, but there was no communications. So a couple of us got in my car . . . a couple of people, myself and another man, got in my car and drove to the barracks on the line.

Marcello: Now in an emergency like this--and I assume by this time you knew that it was an emergency--where would you normally go?

Brindley: To the squadron headquarters, which was in the orderly room.

Marcello: Describe the trip over to the squadron headquarters or orderly room.

Brindley: We drove rapidly and as evasively as possible because we were being strafed.

Marcello: Describe the strafing. Were you driving out in the open . . .

Brindley: Yes.

Marcello: . . . to get to where you needed to go?

Brindley: Yes, it was on the streets. They strafed the streets. They were shooting at anything that moved, and, of course, we were moving (chuckle). And we had to be careful that we didn't run over somebody because a lot of people didn't drive their vehicles. A lot of them ran.

We parked . . . there was a good-sized parking lot adjacent to the barracks, and we parked there and went to

the orderly room. And the first sergeant told us to get to the line, so we went to the line. We went to the armament shop, and we were issued our weapons and live ammunition.

Marcello: Now what sort of weapons were you issued?

Brindley: Colt .45-caliber automatic. Some people were . . . well, the air base squadron people were issued machine guns, and they set them up. Some of the people filled sandbags.

Marcello: In the meantime, was the first attack still going on, or was it over by this time?

Brindley: No, the first was still going on.

Marcello: How long did it take you to drive from your apartment over to the squadron headquarters?

Brindley: I'd imagine about, oh, five minutes, perhaps.

Marcello: You mentioned that they were strafing you. How close were the machine gun bullets coming?

Brindley: You could see the tracers. But the car wasn't hit then; the car was hit after it was parked in the parking lot.

Marcello: Okay, well, that sounds like an interesting story. Let's pick up the point now at which time you were issued your .45 and the ammunition. How would you describe the reaction of the men at this point? Was it one of panic? Confusion? Professionalism? How would you describe it?

Brindley: It wasn't panic. We each had an area to go to, and we picked up our weapons, and, of course, there was considerable rushing

around because we were being shot at and we didn't want to get hit. And we were being bombed. There was some panic, yes, because to wake up to a situation such as this, there was bound to be panic.

Marcello: Now where were you ordered to go?

Brindley: I went to the armament shack, drew my weapons, and went to the bombsight vault.

Marcello: Why would you have gone there?

Brindley: Well, that was my place of duty.

Marcello: Now, did you know this beforehand, or were you ordered to go there when you picked up your weapons?

Brindley: No, I knew this beforehand. We knew where we were supposed to be, and to go. We were going to try and get the aircraft off of the ground, and each crew had an assigned airplane to go to with all of our equipment.

Marcello: Now had the airplanes been hit at this point?

Brindley: Some of them had. Those that weren't hit, the pilots had started to disperse them.

Marcello: Describe what these airplanes looked like, that is, the ones that were hit.

Brindley: My squadron didn't lose any aircraft, but some of the 19th Group that were landing at the time taxied up by our hangar and lost a couple of airplanes.

Marcello: Now were these . . .

Brindley: . . . and one of these had a bomb hit right smack in the middle of the thing--the radio compartment.

Marcello: Now were these the planes that were coming in from the West Coast?

Brindley: Yes, the 19th Group.

Marcello: They were coming in, of course, while the attack was going on, and you actually observed them coming in. Did you see that bomber get hit?

Brindley: No, I didn't see that one get hit. I saw one get hit later on in the morning. Not so much later on, because the actual time that had elapsed between the first attack and the last was of rather short duration, but it seemed like hours. But I remember standing at the corner of the hangar and aiming my .45 at a Japanese Zero or one of the dive bombers. They were far away, far away. You couldn't hit the cotton-picker, but it made you feel better.

Marcello: In other words, you had a sense of frustration, I guess, and you had to fire, even though you knew that .45 wasn't going to do much good.

Brindley: Yes.

Marcello: Did you empty your clip?

Brindley: Yes, I did. I may have emptied another one. I don't remember.

Marcello: Okay, now were you doing this firing from the bombsight vault?

Brindley: Yes, from . . . well, the hangars were laid out in pairs, and between the hangars there was an "H"-shaped building, really, a large "H"-shaped building, because there were two hangars and the area in between them, which was a bombsight vault and an armament shack, we called it--one for each squadron.

Marcello: Okay, so what did you do when you got to the bombsight vault?

Brindley: Pete Vasalie was the chief bombardier. He was issuing the sights to us as we came in, and we were to take them to the aircraft--we did take them to the aircraft--and put them in.

Marcello: In the meantime, is the bombing and strafing still going on?

Brindley: Yes.

Marcello: And we're still in the first attack?

Brindley: We're still in the first attack. And then the aircraft were dispersed.

Marcello: When you say the aircraft were dispersed, you mean you actually took off, or you just dispersed them around the field?

Brindley: No, they actually taxied them around the field and spread out.

Marcello: Now would you have actually been in the airplane yourself when this took place?

Brindley: No, the engineer and the pilots taxied or moved the airplanes.  
No, we were busy shooting at the Japs with our .45's (chuckle).

Marcello: About how many shots would you estimate you fired that morning?

Brindley: Oh, golly, I don't know. I know we were issued two clips, and I'm sure that I used them both. There were nine rounds in each clip, as I remember it, and I may have probably reloaded and fired them again. But now that I'm . . . and I've thought about it several times since then. We were typical, curious people because we would hide and look to see what's going on. But if we saw an airplane, we would shoot at it.

Marcello: Now did you stay here at the bombsight vault for the rest of the attack?

Brindley: For the first attack, yes. And then during the second attack, we went to the dispersal area to the aircraft.

Marcello: How much of a lull do you think there was between the first attack and the second attack?

Brindley: I didn't think that it was very long.

Marcello: How low were those planes flying during the first attack?

Brindley: Some came in real low. And the real high-level attack, as I recall, was the second wave.

Marcello: Yes. During that first attack, I've heard it said that the planes were so low that you could distinguish the pilots. Did you observe this?



Brindley: Yes.

Marcello: What did they look like? How were they dressed? What did they do? Could you distinguish any of these things?

Brindley: One damn fool waved his hand! "Well, that might be alright for you, buddy, but it isn't for me!"

Marcello: So what did you do when you saw him wave (chuckle)?

Brindley: Shot at him (chuckle)! They came in very low, and they strafed the quarters area and dumped several bombs on the barracks and on the parade ground.

Marcello: Do you have time to get scared in a situation like this?

Brindley: No, you don't. You think about it afterwards and then get frightened.

Marcello: So you would say that for the most part people were acting in a rather professional manner?

Brindley: I think so.

Marcello: Even though they were frustrated?

Brindley: Yes, I think so.

Marcello: Okay, so what do we do then between . . . you mentioned that you were at the bombsight vault during the first attack, and then you moved to your airplanes whenever the lull, such as it was, occurred. What happened at that point, then?

Brindley: And then we just stayed out there. The intent was to get the airplanes off of the ground, but for some reason or other we didn't.

Marcello: Well, I would assume that the airfield would have been full of bomb holes and so on.

Brindley: Yes, it was pock-marked to a certain extent. This was probably the prime reason for not getting off. However, one airplane did get off.

Marcello: Now, when was it that the 19th Bomb Group was coming in from the West Coast? Was it during the first attack or the second attack or when?

Brindley: It was pretty much spread out through the entire activity.

Marcello: So what did you do, then, during the second attack?

Brindley: I hunted the ditch.

Marcello: In other words, you hunted a ditch near the plane?

Brindley: Yes, near the airplane.

Marcello: Okay, so describe what happened during the second attack.

Brindley: We set out there and watched the high-level people come in and hoped that they wouldn't hit us. And they flew some beautiful formations. But then about the second attack time, Fort Kamehameha got busy and got their ack-ack guns operating, but they weren't too successful. In fact, they may have hit one airplane.

Marcello: I assume from what you've said that there wasn't too much in the way of antiaircraft weaponry here at Hickam Field.

Brindley: No, there wasn't.

Marcello: You, I suppose, would have been depending upon the fighters at Wheeler Field for protection.

Brindley: Fighters at Wheeler and Fort Kamehameha.

Marcello: And, of course, the fighters at Wheeler had already been knocked out, too.

Brindley: Yes, they had had their problems. And I don't recall how soon the antiaircraft guns got operational again, but they were operational during the second attack, I know.

Marcello: Did you stay in that ditch during the entire second attack?

Brindley: Yes.

Marcello: And, I assume you didn't fire then?

Brindley: No, there weren't any low flying aircraft then.

Marcello: And you weren't that frustrated to try to fire at those high-level bombers?

Brindley: No.

Marcello: How long would you estimate that the second attack lasted?

Brindley: I would say a half-hour. That may be too much time, or it may be too little.

Marcello: How many people were in this ditch with you?

Brindley: The whole crew.

Marcello: And was it a hole that had been made by a bomb?

Brindley: No, the one that I was in wasn't, but there were some that were occupied by people . . . I mean, some bomb craters occupied by people.

Marcello: Did any of your particular airplanes get hit during this second attack?

Brindley: No, we were real fortunate, and we didn't have any problems in that regard.

Marcello: In the meantime, were you thinking about your wife at all, and what was happening over at your quarters?

Brindley: I wondered about it, but then there wasn't a heck of a lot I could do. And it later turned out that the dependents had been evacuated to the surrounding hills.

Marcello: Okay, so what happens now in the aftermath of the attack?

Brindley: After the attack . . . I could have sworn it was eleven o'clock in the morning when the second one occurred, but it wasn't. It was much earlier than that. We'd then moved our aircraft into our assigned dispersal areas on Hickam. There were bunkers across the base, across the runways. We moved out there and stayed out there that night--Sunday night.

Marcello: What did you talk about during the evening, or what did you do?

Brindley: First of all, we were forever getting some chow. And, of course, there were no lights and no smoking because we were anticipating further attacks that night.

Marcello: I would assume that there were a lot of trigger-happy GI's around there.

Brindley: Yes, there were, and there were some shots squeezed off.

Marcello: I guess it wouldn't have been safe to have moved around too much.

Brindley: No, it wouldn't have. You could have collected some "lead poisoning."

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

Brindley: Oh, brother! Well, I can't recall any really specific ones.

Marcello: You must have heard the one that the Japanese were going to land or had already landed.

Brindley: Yes, I recall hearing that one, and the fact that they had landed at Kaneohe. They did, in fact, land a submarine at Bellows, our satellite field--a two-man sub.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were forever getting chow out there where you had finally dispersed your airplanes. Did you have very much of an appetite?

Brindley: As I recall, I was hungry.

Marcello: Okay, so the next morning, describe what the field looked like so far as the damages that was done. What stands out in your mind?

Brindley: Well, the Hawaiian Air Depot was a shambles, and there were . . . let's see. The hangar west of ours had been hit. And our hangar had been riddled with bullets--the impact marks or pock marks. And several wrecked aircraft were around.

Marcello: Were there still fires and this sort of thing going on?

Brindley: Yes, there were still some fires. And then a Japanese dive bomber had been shot down close to the HAD, and we went to look at it. One of the observations was that the engine was a copy of a Pratt and Whitney, and it had a Hamilton electric prop.

Marcello: What sort of emotions or feelings did you have when you saw this damage and when you examined this downed Japanese airplane and so on?

Brindley: I think we were then beginning to develop a hate for the Japanese because our peaceful existence had been destroyed and we had lost some people. Oh, yes. I was missing for a while (chuckle).

Marcello: This sounds like an interesting story.

Brindley: I mean, I was carried on the missing role for a couple of hours, so I'm told.

Marcello: Well, how did this come about?

Brindley: Somebody thought they had seen me get hit.

Marcello: In the meantime, had it been too early for your wife to have been notified?

Brindley: Yes.

Marcello: She didn't know anything about this?

Brindley: She didn't know anything about it. That's probably what most of us felt, was that we really were developing a hate for the Japanese.

Marcello: What did you do in the aftermath of the attack, that is, the next morning?

Brindley: The next morning, we started getting ready to move out to Bellows again--back out to Bellows. And in those days, there was considerable security consciousness as regards to the Norden bombsight.

Marcello: You were using the Norden bombsight at this time? And I assume that's why they sent you out to that bombsight vault.

Brindley: Yes. And we used some of the vehicles. There weren't too many military vehicles that survived the attack because it seems to me, as I recall, that the motor pool was hit quite heavily. So we utilized our own vehicles and a few trucks that were still available to move to Bellows. And we loaded all of the bombsights in one truck, and I drove my car. With me was another man, and we were both "armed to the teeth."

Marcello: By this time, had you picked up some additional weapons?

Brindley: Yes.

Marcello: What did you have now?

Brindley: We had a machine gun and an automatic rifle, I believe it was.

Marcello: You had a machine gun and an automatic rifle?

Brindley: Yes. And we had our side arms.

Marcello: Now you mentioned earlier that your car had been hit.

Brindley: Yes, it had been hit. It was real strange. A 20-millimeter explosive shell had penetrated the left front fender between the wheel and the engine, but fortunately it didn't do any damage to the radiator or the engine. The concussion from a bomb blast had blown the top off of it.

Marcello: Now was it a convertible?

Brindley: No, it was a coupe. Now in those days, there was a '35 Plymouth coupe. There was a soft top. By that I mean . . . well, now it's a vinyl top.

Marcello: Was it a type of canvas or something?

Brindley: Yes.

Marcello: So you now had a convertible, in other words (chuckle).

Brindley: No, the framework hadn't been disrupted or destroyed in any way, but the fabric top had been peeled off and exposed. Well, you could call it the underside of the headliner. It was chicken wire beneath the top (chuckle). But, anyhow, it survived. Other than that, I was pretty proud of that car. It got hit (chuckle).

Marcello: A real collector's item now (chuckle).

Brindley: Yes, it would be one now.

Marcello: So, anyways, you were accompanying this truck with the Norden bombsights.

Brindley: Yes. I led the convoy to Bellows. We were all in the same convoy, but there was two other fellows in my car, the coupe, and we were crowded, but it didn't seem to disturb us any. We were young and thought we were doing what we ought to do. And then the truck behind us had the bombsights, and the balance of the bombardiers were on that truck and . . . no, they weren't. The bulk of them flew out, but there were



some people on the truck, and another car was following it--"armed to the teeth." We could have had a miniature war.

Marcello: What were you going to be doing with these bombsights when you got to Bellows Field?

Brindley: We had a vault out there, too, a dispersal vault. Then we put them in it.

Marcello: Why would you have been taking them from Hickam Field out to Bellows Field?

Brindley: Because we were going to move the airplanes. The airplanes were moving out; the squadron was moving out again.

Marcello: I see.

Brindley: And for some reason or other--security reasons, I suppose--it was decided that they would best be moved on the ground rather than flown out. And so this is the way it happened. Then we stayed out at Bellows and flew our search missions out of Bellows.

Marcello: How long did you remain at Bellows?

Brindley: Until September. Then we moved out the Hebrides in the Solomons area.

Marcello: During the attack, did you notice any individual acts of extraordinary bravery that stand out in your mind?

Brindley: No, I don't recall anything in particular. No, I don't recall anything.

Marcello: I have one final question. What lasting impressions has this Pearl Harbor experience had upon you in terms of your outlook towards things in general?

Brindley: Oh, that the country as a whole should be more aware of the possibilities of such an attack. I sometimes wonder if we really are aware or if we really profited. At the time, it congealed the relationships of people in the country, and this may be what it takes to jar this nation.

Marcello: When did you see your wife again?

Brindley: Let's see. . . not too long after we moved out to Bellows, we came back in . . . we were allowed to come in in small groups.

Marcello: Had she moved back into the quarters by this time?

Brindley: No. The day that I saw her . . . the next time that I saw her, I picked her up from the evacuation point when she and several others were picked up and went to their quarters, and they stayed that night. It was within a very few days after the attack, and we stayed in the quarters that night to pick up some belongings for both of us. And it was approximately . . . the time element was such that the people, our neighbors, were real upset and real frightened. They were a young couple that were younger than we--and we were young enough--and we all slept in their living room on the lower floor. We brought a mattress down from upstairs,

and the four of us slept in the same bed (chuckle) because they were convinced that this was the safest place to be because their front window had been shattered with a shell. The girl's name was "Midge."

Marcello: What was their last name?

Brindley: I've been trying to think of that all day.

Marcello: Now how long after the attack was this?

Brindley: I would say within two or three days.

Marcello: Had your wife been unduly worried about your safety and so on during this period? As you were about hers, also?

Brindley: I think perhaps we were concerned, but we were real happy to see one another again.

Marcello: Was she evacuated out of there shortly thereafter with the rest of the civilian dependents?

Brindley: No, she stayed there.

Marcello: Even all throughout the period, she never left?

Brindley: No.

Marcello: Even when you took off for the Hebrides and so on, she was still in the Hawaiian Islands?

Brindley: She was still in Honolulu. She knew she was to come to the Mainland.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Brindley, is there anything else that you think we need to talk about and get as a part of the record? I have plenty of tape, so if I've missed anything, feel free to discuss whatever you wish.

Brindley: No, I don't think you missed anything. I'm apologetic that I can't recall more.

Marcello: Well, like I told you before, this something that happened thirty-five years ago, so there's no reason why you should remember everything. I think you've done an excellent job in recalling the events that did take place, and I'm sure that historians are going to find them valuable when they consult your memoirs.

Brindley: Well, this little bit with all of the other little bits may provide something.

Marcello: I'm sure that it will.