

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
NUMBER
251

Interview with
Monte C. Williamson
August 24, 1974

Place of Interview: San Antonio, Texas
Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcelo
Terms of Use: OPEN
Approved: Monte C. Williamson
Date: 24 Aug. 1974

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Oral History Collection

Monte Williamson

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: San Antonio, Texas

Date: August 24, 1974

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Monte Williamson for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on August 24, 1974, in San Antonio, Texas. I am interviewing Mr. Williamson 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.

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

Mr. Williamson: Well, my name is Monte Williamson. I was born in Belle Plain, Iowa, on September 28, 1908. I attended school in Iowa through high school and enlisted in the Army in 1927.

Dr. Marcello: Why did you decide to enlist in the Army?

Mr. Williamson: Well, I suppose, to a young person in those days, it was more or less an adventure-type thing. To me it did. It

had a great amount of appeal to it. I went to a summer camp, CMTC, one year while in high school, and I was pretty much fascinated by the Army. So I enlisted in the 14th Cavalry, later transferred to the Field Artillery which was horse-drawn, then was discharged, went back to the hometown in Iowa. I ran a service station for a couple of years till the depression got a little bit bad. In 1931 I decided to come back into the Army, only this time I wanted Coast Artillery, and I wanted to go to the Hawaiian Islands.

Marcello: Why did you want to go to the Hawaiian Islands?

Williamson: Same reason. Just a young person's ideas of the South Seas, I suppose, things like that. Just an adventure-type of thing. And after I arrived in the Hawaiian Islands, I was transferred to a couple of different organizations. I was put on special duty right away running a paint shop. I was also assigned to G-2 at Schofield Barracks.

Marcello: Now when were you assigned to G-2, which, of course, is Army Intelligence?

Williamson: 1932.

Marcello: Why was it that you were assigned to G-2? Was this a request on your part, or did you have certain skills that qualified you for being assigned to G-2?

Williamson: I don't know exactly why. I was recommended by an officer. I went down there. They sent me to a Japanese language school.

Marcello: Oh, is that right?

Williamson: Yes, I was taught by a Japanese who was from the Samurai class.

Marcello: Why was it that you were sent to a Japanese language school? Were they already looking ahead to the day when Japan would be a potential enemy?

Williamson: I couldn't . . . I don't know. I certainly didn't think of Japan as an enemy at that time. I didn't have any idea of it.

Marcello: Did you ever hear any of your officers or any of your buddies talking about the potential threat that Japan might present to the United States? Again, I'm referring to the period around 1932.

Williamson: Oh, not at that time, no.

Marcello: And this is when you went into G-2, and this is when you went to Japanese language school, however.

Williamson: Right, 1932 is when I went to this language school. However, I also took Hawaiian.

Marcello: Did you go to this school right there in the Hawaiian Islands?

Williamson: In the Hawaiian Islands, yes. It was conducted right on Schofield Barracks. The instructor, he was . . . I don't

know whether he was an instructor at the University of Hawaii or not.

Marcello: How many people were in your class? Do you recall?

Williamson: There was about eighteen, I believe, in this class.

Marcello: Were these all military personnel connected with Intelligence?

Williamson: They were.

Marcello: Was it a mixed class? In other words, were there members of the Navy and the other branches?

Williamson: No, this was all Army.

Marcello: This was all Army.

Williamson: Army and Army Air Corps.

Marcello: At this time you were still in the Army, yet?

Williamson: I was still in the Army. I was more or less moved around back and forth from different organizations because of a little promotion I had. The job was carried under one organization . . . I never done straight duty anymore as a soldier--blind duty. I didn't do that.

Marcello: What was your rank at this time?

Williamson: Corporal.

Marcello: You were a corporal. And this is also true at the time that you got out of the language school.

Williamson: I made corporal just after I got out of the language school.

Marcello: I think that's an indication of how slow rank was in the Army at that particular time, was it not?

Williamson: Yes. I was five years and three months as a corporal.

Marcello: Okay, so you were in G-2. You had gone to this Japanese language school. Now what sort of specific jobs did you do within the intelligence organization after you got out of the school?

Williamson: Most of my job was caretaking, I would think. I was in charge of details which took care of facilities, mostly. I didn't do any of the intelligence work such as counter-espionage. I didn't do any of that.

Marcello: Was this kind of demoralizing to you, after you had gone to the language school and now you weren't being able to put it to use?

Williamson: No, I was kept quite busy. I was trying to think when the . . . perhaps I would have gotten a little bit concerned over it, especially after 1936. Now I traveled to Japan on a trip--on a TDY trip--as an orderly for one of the officers.

Marcello: When was this done?

Williamson: This was done in the 1933.

Marcello: Was there any special purpose in your accompanying this officer?

Williamson: No, none other than to shine his boots, I suppose, and take care of his equipment.

Marcello: Was he an intelligence officer, also?

Williamson: No, he was an intelligence officer.

Marcello: Do you have any idea what he was going to Japan for?

Williamson: No, I don't.

Marcello: Do you have any theories on why he was going to Japan?

Williamson: Well, they were going to be speculating after things happened, perhaps. I'm quite sure the person he contacted over there was an old-time . . . I have reasons to believe it was the same set-up that was there in later years. I think they were there several years in Japan--this same intelligence group, which I later had occasion . . . it came up later, anyhow, after I came back to the States, even.

Marcello: How long were you over in Japan altogether in 1933?

Williamson: Oh, we stayed about eight weeks.

Marcello: And as you mentioned, you did nothing while you were in Japan except act as the orderly for this particular officer.

Williamson: I didn't do any . . . I wasn't . . . oh, I might have done some orderly work as courier of a few minor things and carried messages and things.

Marcello: When did you transfer from the Army into the Air Corps?

Williamson: Let's see, 1935.

Marcello: I gather, then, that between 1932 when you went to the Japanese language school and 1935, you never really did any actual work for or with G-2.

Williamson: No.

Marcello: Other than your caretaking-type of job.

Williamson: Yes, that's . . . yes, that's right.

Marcello: In other words, you were not putting your skills to any practical application.

Williamson: No.

Marcello: In the meantime, had you lost any of your skills with the Japanese language, or were you able to retain them?

Williamson: Yes, some. I think you have to practice those things. Some of the simple things, I remember still today. But you lose it if you don't use it. Then in 1936 when they brought us into a briefing . . . bring us into more of the . . . well, for instance, the preparedness, the long-range type of thing. In other words, how much food we had, how many years of reserve could we hold out and so on. These kinds of things. And I was so amazed I couldn't believe it.

Marcello: Okay, so it was in 1935 that you transferred over to the Air Corps. Why did you transfer?

Williamson: Well, again, the thing about it was that it was real high up in the picture in my estimation of the thing to do. I would give anything to fly an airplane, which I got to do plenty from then on. I'd worked up from

. . . after I got in the Air Corps, I just continued on making rank. For one thing, they needed a painter. I went into a bomber squadron primarily because they had fifteen bombers that were all overdue for a paint job, and they didn't have a painter. I got the job.

Marcello: I just don't understand the rhyme or reason behind this. Here you had been to language school, and you had learned Japanese. You came out of the language school, and you were more or less a type of a caretaker. Then you transferred to the Air Corps, and now you become a painter. Up until this time you've made no use at all of your Japanese.

Williamson: I had previous skills as a painter. That's why the man asked me. He says, "Have you got a pair of coveralls?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Come over to the hangar in the morning, and I'll give you a tryout as a painter." When I walked in the hangar, he said, "You see that wing?" There was a wing against a wall of the hangar. It was the wing of a P-12, a biplane fighter plane. He said, "You see that wing?" I said, "Yes." He said, "You sew a sleeve for that wing, lace it on, and dope it. If it passes inspection we'll put you in the squadron as a private."

Marcello: In other words, you had to lose quite a bit of rank in switching from the Army over to the Air Corps.

Williamson: That's right. I went back and started all over again. But that's what I wanted to do, and the working as a painter didn't bother me. I enjoyed it.

Marcello: When did you get back into Intelligence again?

Williamson: Let's see. I went into bombing as a bombardier and a navigator. I went through the schools as an enlisted man. I worked up to the job of first sergeant. Now our section in the squadron, we were the caretakers of all of the classified documents and the cryptographic equipment--all of this. This was part of our function. So we stored all of this--took care of it and everything--for the squadron after we got into this bombing, which was quite classified in those days.

Marcello: But you mentioned that at the same time that you were taking care of dealing with this classified material, you were also a bombardier and a navigator, I would assume, on the B-18's.

Williamson: B'18's. Well, I started out with B-10's and B-12's. Of course, we originally had the B-5, B-4, LB-7's, the Keystones, the Martin, the cloth and the wood airplanes. We had the B-10's which came from Martin--all metal with the single wing. Those were the first--the B-10, B-12. It depended on the engine you had, which the classification was. Then the B-18's . . . and, of course, we'd gotten B-17's in just prior to Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: And most of those, however, I think, were going to the Philippines, were they not?

Williamson: Well, we took a boat load of B-18's over to the Philippines and went over there and set them up. But the B-17's that we got, we kept at Hickam. We started our long-range navigation missions out of there.

Marcello: Well, again, I'm really intrigued by the G-2 aspects of your military experience. When was it during this pre-Pearl Harbor period that you really got back into G-2 again?

Williamson: Well, I wouldn't say that I got back into it again. After I went into the Air Corps, I was just into the squadron then because I believe Colonel Patton had left, and I went into the Air Corps, which was out of this unit that I was in in the Army. It was still Army--Army Air Corps. There I was just in a tactical bombing squadron. I would say that I had nothing else to do with the G-2; however, I'd been in the underground places over there in Hawaii which they had before the war--the big headquarters where the railroads went down in and all of the underground caverns down there.

Marcello: This is where the intelligence operations were located?

Williamson: That's where it would be if anything happened. If the island was invaded, this is where they'd set up.

Marcello: In other words, most of your direct experiences with G-2 ended before you actually transferred over into the Air Corps.

Williamson: Yes, at the same time, in other words.

Marcello: You mentioned that at one point in your G-2 experience that you did come into contact, perhaps indirectly, with the then Colonel George Patton. You might describe this particular experience.

Williamson: Well, this was sort of awesome to us because he had a reputation in those days. Usually, he didn't come out and stand up in the platform in front of the men and talk to you like this. He really gave us a lot of information. It made us . . . well, in the first place, like I say, I believe you'd just kind of call it awesome to us--things that we had never known before.

Marcello: What did he say to you, or what did he do while you were there?

Williamson: Well, other than the briefing, from then it was just strictly through channels. He never contacted us personally, I don't think. He was just the head of the G-2.

Marcello: For how long was he head of G-2?

Williamson: Well, I don't recall that. It seems like . . . I think he took over when he came over there. He sailed his sailing boat over there. I had a sailing boat at the same time, and I kind of was fascinated by that big ship he had.

Marcello: What sort of an appearance did Patton have? I'm speaking now in terms of uniform and that sort of thing.

Williamson: Well, at that time, I didn't . . . he didn't appear to me to be the character that they showed in World War II.

Marcello: In other words, he wasn't nearly so flamboyant at that time.

Williamson: Only in the speech, and he used the words then that he still used at the end.

Marcello: Did he have that high-pitched voice that he allegedly had?

Williamson: Very much so. I heard him turning his boat around in the harbor down there one day in between piers without using an engine. He was really talking to his crew in language that any deck hand would understand, I believe.

Marcello: Okay, let's talk about your Air Corps experience, then, in those months immediately prior to the actual Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. What sort of training and missions and maneuvers did you undergo during those months before Pearl Harbor and as conditions between the United States and Japan grew steadily worse?

Williamson: Well, there for two or three years we were concentrated, I would say, on the bombing aspect.

Marcello: And were you still functioning as a bombardier and navigator?

Williamson: Yes. The bombing . . . they had a theory on bombing there. For one thing, you had to be a first class bombardier three years in a row to even consider yourself a bombardier--before you even thought that you could hit anything with a bomb. In other words . . . and the weather being like it is in Hawaii, which is excellent, and the . . . we had . . . we were leading the Air Force in the number of bombs dropped by a good big margin. So we did have a lot of experience on it. At the same time, they were trying to establish bombing records, that is, tables to go by, which they really didn't have. They didn't have airplanes prior to this that could go up to those altitudes. The B-18 . . . whenever we'd bomb anything over 18,000 feet, we called it high altitude. We dropped almost all of our bombs from that high altitude.

Marcello: And you were using basically the B-18 bomber.

Williamson: The B-18 bomber with a 100-pound practice bomb. We done a lot of bombing over water. We didn't, until just months before the blitz, did we ever actually practice on a Navy vessel.

Marcello: Was this the Utah?

Williamson: Utah--the target ship Utah. And we went up bombing that many times.

Marcello: Did the nature of your missions or practice or maneuvers change or vary as one gets closer to Pearl Harbor, that is, the actual day of the attack?

Williamson: Yes. Up until then, most of our mission was bombing. Oh, you had to navigate to a target area, which were the outlying islands and so forth. But that's relatively simple, although not quite like it is here in the States where you can follow a railroad to the next town. But we done very little, really, navigation. As I speak of navigation, I think of it in terms of celestial navigation.

But as we got the B-17, things were changing. We started this patrol business. Now they called them . . . they didn't call them search missions at the time. They just were out, do a dog leg, and come back.

Marcello: In other words, you had a pie-shaped sector that you had to cover?

Williamson: Right, and we called them navigation missions. And we were flying them quite steadily because a couple of us there were . . . I made first sergeant at this time, Therefore, I had to fly at nights, and I done both bombing and navigation at nighttime because in daytime I had other duties. The other fellow who . . . a buddy of mine who had been there years and years, he flew three missions a day. He'd

fly one in the morning, one in the afternoon, and one at night. Now we got a lot of flying in . . .

Marcello: Now . . .

Williamson: . . . covering a lot of territory.

Marcello: . . . how many B-17's did you have here at Hickam Field at this time?

Williamson: At this time, I think each squadron had about ten.

Marcello: How many squadrons were there altogether?

Williamson: Well, we had two wings . . . two . . . in those days, they were groups--5th Group and 11th Group. We had about three bombing squadrons. I think they changed their reconnaissance squadrons and renamed them bombing squadrons.

Marcello: In other words, did you have as many as . . .

Williamson: Four squadrons.

Marcello: Then how many B-17's did you have altogether?

Williamson: Well, we had quite a number there.

Marcello: Was it more than twenty?

Williamson: Yes.

Marcello: Was it less than fifty?

Williamson: I'd say right close to that.

Marcello: You had around fifty B-17's there.

Williamson: Let's say with all, now, of the pre-war versions. There was no armor plate installed in them.

Marcello: Well, these bombers were specifically being used, however, for patrol purposes at that time, were they not?

Williamson: That's what I would call it. We went out on a navigation mission, but we were really looking for anything in sight.

Marcello: Were there enough of these B-17's to bring about an effective 360-degree patrol? In other words, could you patrol all approaches to the Hawaiian Islands?

Williamson: We could do it pretty good. We could do a pretty good job.

Marcello: How many of these B-17's would go out at one time on one of these patrols?

Williamson: Oh, they were small. Maybe three at a time. Each would patrol a different sector.

Marcello: In other words, if one of these patrols went out, all 360 degrees were not being patrolled at one time or anything of this nature?

Williamson: No. You took your certain sectors.

Marcello: I'm really surprised that there were that many B-17's there. I didn't realize there were that many B-17's there.

Williamson: Well, let's see, there was about eight squadrons altogether-- eight bombing squadrons.

Marcello: Were most of those B-17's there, then, on December 7?

Williamson: On December 7, one of the unique things that happened was that a flight of B-17's arrived.

Marcello: Yes, I know that, but I'm referring to the . . . I just haven't read too much about a bunch of B-17's being caught on the ground there at Hickam Field on December 7.

Williamson: I may be a little bit high in the number of eight or ten to a squadron. They were B-17D's. They were replacing our B-18's, but we still had the B-18's that we used, also. We flew those, also.

Marcello: Now Hickam Field was a relatively new establishment, was it not?

Williamson: Yes, it . . . I think in 1938 we started operating out of . . . actually, we had done away with Luke Field and moved it. We operated out of Hickam.

Marcello: Describe what Hickam Field looked like from a physical standpoint, in terms of the barracks and the planes and this sort of thing, after it was completed.

Williamson: Oh, in the time . . . after it was . . .

Marcello: After it was completed, yes.

Williamson: . . . in operation, yes. It was a . . . it had a wide runway, very wide, I always thought. It was quite a wide runway but not too long--about a mile long. The hangars were right down the line, just nice groups as . . . operations in the center. They had one group on one side, and they had one group on the other. This was after they increased the Air Corps . . . doubled the Air Corps in 1940. I think that's when Roosevelt declared, or proclaimed, a limited emergency or something, whatever you call it. And they doubled the Air Force.

We took the group we had--the 5th Group--and made a cadre for two groups filtered in with new men. Then the barracks was built. It was the first of its type. You see them all over the country now. They are still very similar. The new ones out here at Lackland are the same principle--the multi-wing. They had about ten wings on it, I think. The comments that we used to make was what a bombing target it would be because they covered the roof with copper, and for a few months there it glistened in the . . . you could see it for miles. You could see that copper roof when you couldn't see anything else.

Marcello: That was a rather expensive roof to put on these barracks, wasn't it?

Williamson: Well, I don't know. Of course, it soon discolored and got dark-colored, but it became a target well enough.

Marcello: How secure did you feel being based in the Hawaiian Islands? Even if war came between the United States and Japan, did you feel relatively secure there?

Williamson: Yes, I did. Inasmuch as I had . . . I could never understand the people getting so panicky about it. In the first place, we'd been informed that . . . I had quite a bit of confidence in what they told us: "For anyone to take the island, they would have to siege the place perhaps for at least sixty days before they could get it."

They'd have to supply this. It'd take enormous forces to do this, and to supply this force for sixty days would be some feat in logistics, I'll tell you that.

Marcello: Now these are some of the things that you learned from your prior experiences in G-2.

Williamson: Yes. Another thing, prior to December 7, they had brought the National Guard from, I think, California--I knew there were other states involved--over to the Hawaiian Islands. There were some 100,000-plus men. They were not even shot at, I don't believe, on December 7. They were all intact. They were scattered around the island. That, in addition to all of the forces over there, which is enormous . . .

Marcello: Did you even think about the possibility of the Hawaiian Islands being attacked by a carrier force by some potential enemy?

Williamson: I didn't think of it just in the terms of a carrier force because I always had that in the back of my mind. I believed in the sieging business, which doesn't sound like a carrier force. However, like I say, the certain word was getting out. A peculiar thing happened. Now I'd been in the service, then, several years. I'd been on maneuvers many times, but I'd never seen one as it was staged just prior to December 7.

Marcello: When was this maneuver held?

Williamson: Well, it started about November 26 or something like that. They called an alert. I always felt I knew a little bit more about it because I was a first sergeant. I had a detail of men. They immediately discontinued telephone service--couldn't use it. You had to use the field lines. They run in their own lines to headquarters. That was one thing.

They had another policy then. After you arrived in the Hawaiian Islands, you have to be there ninety days to get a pass. They called this a Class-A pass. They issued your card marked "Class-A," which would give you the privilege of going to town, in and out the gates, anytime you were off-duty. Also, after you're there nine months, you got a green card called a "Special Privilege." This pass entitled you to go in and out the gates, through the sentries, at any time of the day or night. You assumed that you had the permission of your superiors to go. These were pulled from the individual and put in a shoe-box. This was never done before because I remember I appointed a corporal to take care of these cards.

Also, we established that no more than one-third of any section would be allowed to be absent from the

base at one time, which got kind of involved when you've got two men in a certain row of detail there.

But that was one of the things, plus we put out the usual machine guns around and dug dugouts for them, sandbagged them and issued live ammunition. This had never been done. You never issued live ammunition to a maneuver. Of course, these were in sealed ammo boxes, but they were there with the guns. That's another thing.

Marcello: So all of these things made this alert different from some of the previous alerts.

Williamson: All these things were pointing at something. Of course, just eavesdropping and hearing things now and then, you began to piece some things together.

Marcello: You mentioned . . .

Williamson: And my commanding officer at that time, who was quite a famous Air Force man, General Ramey . . . he's a Texan, Roger Ramey. Well, at that time he was a major. He was the commanding officer of this squadron I was in--42nd Bomb Squadron. He was on mission "X" just prior to this, setting up the route to Australia in the event. Well, he went to an awful lot of trouble setting up things if it was just in the event of.

Marcello: How long did this alert last?

Williamson: This alert was still on the morning of December 7.

Marcello: I see, but you were not out in the field all this time.

Williamson: Oh, there was a few changes made--kind of big changes. About the third or fourth day of this maneuver, the commanding officer comes in, and he speaks pretty plainly. He said, "Where in the hell are my men?" He was referring to his crews, his airplane crews. Well, I had a long list here. I'd sent them over here to headquarters . . . and all these different code names were used for different places. I'd sent so many man armed with shotguns, so many armed with rifles, and so forth. He said, "I want them back. We've got to get these planes in the air." Well, I hadn't the least idea where to go to get them because the men came back to the barracks about the second day after this night . . . we spent the whole night sending details out. I believe it was condition . . . the "Black Plan," I believe it was. Our designated area was to guard the Oahu railway station in Honolulu or something like that, you know.

They came back and got their field gear--their mess kits, their things of this nature . . . backpacks. They didn't say a word to nobody. They were forbidden to, I guess, to say where they were going.

They also had going at this time a technical school on Hickam which . . . because we got this influx of new men. We had to train them. So they set up a tech school. They had about, oh, in the neighborhood of 2,000 or more students going to this school. It happened that the old master sergeant out of our squadron was the dean of the school. So he had called over and wanted all of these rifles and shotguns and so forth, machine guns, put on the hand memo receipt and give it to him and he'd sign it. They took over the ground guard--ground security around the base--and relieved these regular troops. They took over those things.

And our plane crews came, and we were flying again. But we still were on the alert, which we were on the morning of the blitz.

Marcello: Okay, awhile ago you were talking about the liberty routine. Just exactly how did your liberty run while you were here at Hickam Field in terms of the days that you could go on liberty and this sort of thing?

Williamson: Oh, you mean before this final alert thing came up or just . . . the routine way?

Marcello: Yes, what was the routine liberty?

Williamson: Routine liberty was that you could go to town anytime at night and usually weekends. Quite a few people went into town. Quite a few didn't.

Marcello: Now would this apply to just about everybody on the base . . .

Williamson: Just about.

Marcello: . . . except those who had duty?

Williamson: Except the duty, right. You know, guard details, charge of quarters, things of this nature.

Marcello: In other words, in any given month, how many weekends could you expect to have off?

Williamson: You could expect all of them off.

Marcello: Now are you speaking strictly for yourself because you did have quite a bit . . .

Williamson: No, I didn't have much time off, myself. But I had a kind of a funny job. I had to be there on the job a lot of times. The average soldier, the duty man, the man that does routine duty . . . we had a system over there. KP was one of the jobs that was kind of a twenty-four-hour job. You didn't get off. In fact, you didn't go to town that night when you were on KP duty. You got off late. But when a man came over to the Hawaiian Islands, we gave him thirty days KP to start with. He got extra pay--same as flying pay. He got half of his base pay. But his KP was taken care of for all the rest of his tour. For his three-year enlistment, he didn't have to do KP again. Things like this . . . but other

than . . . we have a flight in the air, and if a man's particular airplane's involved, he has to be there.

Marcello: Well, that's normal, but you were mentioning awhile ago that it was very easy to have off an entire weekend. In other words, you would not have to return to that base, let's say, until Monday morning for duty.

Williamson: That's right.

Marcello: You could leave, perhaps, on a Friday, or at least maybe Saturday at noon or something like that.

Williamson: This was until this particular alert, which was real restricting . . . it had never been done before.

Marcello: Now the Hawaiian Islands also have a relatively large population of people of Japanese ancestry.

Williamson: Yes, at the time I was taking the Japanese language, we were given a lot of figures there. I think at that time it was--I understood it to be--62 per cent Oriental.

Marcello: Okay, now at least in some circles these Japanese represented a potential threat in terms of saboteurs or fifth columnists. How much attention did you and your buddies give to this particular detail prior to the actual attack itself?

Williamson: This is exactly right. There was . . . this was our . . . always drummed into us--sabotage. We expected it to come from those particular-type people.

Marcello: What steps were taken at Hickam to prevent this sabotage from occurring?

Williamson: That's where all of this . . . these extra guards were put on around the perimeter of the base and everything. Because when you come through the gate, you're checked by the guard. But you have a perimeter out around the field out here. So this is where they put all of this string of sentries out there. They were on duty around the clock.

Marcello: Now I also know that it has been written that all of the planes at Hickam were lined up in nice neat rows in order to prevent sabotage. In other words, they were easier to guard, I assume, if they were in nice rows. What do you know about this?

Williamson: That was more or less the way it was put out--so you could keep a closer watch on them.

Marcello: What sort of security was maintained on those air planes?

Williamson: We had sentries walking in amongst them, oh, at intervals overlapping where they could see at any time. They could see anybody coming up on them. They had lights out there.

Marcello: At the same time, of course, those airplanes did make very inviting targets on December 7, because they were lined up in the neat rows.

Williamson: They were lined up, and the fact that they were compact, right close together.

Marcello: Virtually wingtip to wingtip, were they not?

Williamson: Almost, yes. That's right.

Marcello: How would you describe the morale of that pre-World War II Air Corps?

Williamson: I think the morale was good at that time.

Marcello: How do you account for this?

Williamson: Well, in our particular squadron I would say that it basically was because of my commanding officer. He was one that would really get it. I don't know whether he was trying to copy after General Chennault or not, but he certainly had the language that went along that way. Anybody in that squadron would do anything for that commanding officer.

Marcello: Okay, this more or less brings us up, I think, to the days immediately prior to the Japanese attack itself. So what I would like you to do at this point is to describe in as much detail as you can remember exactly what your routine was on Saturday, December 6, 1941, and then from there we'll move on over into Sunday, December 7, 1941.

Williamson: The memory on December 6 doesn't seem . . . I don't have too good a memory of it. I don't recall anything unusual.

Marcello: Normally, on a weekend what percentage of the men would probably be off the base?

Williamson: Normally, there would be well over 50 per cent. But at this time there was not because this man with the shoe box and the cards in it . . . as a person would come in from town--I saw this all night long--they'd turn their card in to him. There'd be somebody following him around to get theirs and go. I don't care if it was one or two o'clock in the morning.

Marcello: Normally speaking, on a Saturday night . . .

Williamson: There was only a certain percent that could go, and this many would not let out more than that many cards.

Marcello: Normally speaking, on a Saturday night what would be the condition of the men who returned to that base from Honolulu?

Williamson: Now that would depend upon when that Saturday night was. If it was the end of the month, of course, it's going to be different. And this was just a little ways past the end of the month.

Marcello: When was payday?

Williamson: As I recall, it was at the end of the month.

Marcello: Okay, in other words . . .

Williamson: This was one week later and the people did not have a chance to spend their money because of this alert really restricted them. Now Honolulu did have pretty tight curfew laws, just like bars go and things of this

nature. When ten . . . as I remember right, at 10:30 the doors were closed downtown.

Marcello: Do you recall whether you were on the base or whether you had gone downtown on that Saturday?

Williamson: I was off the base. I was off the base on Saturday evening for awhile.

Marcello: Do you remember what time you returned to the base and what time you went to bed?

Williamson: Yes. I came in about eleven o'clock because everytime when I came in I made the routine up through all of the floors. I was listening to a gang in the back there by the . . . the day room was already closed. But at the doorway . . . they were sitting on the floor along the wall just batting the breeze. They had a young kid there that could really entertain them, a Canadian boy. Anyhow, this was the night before.

Then, of course, that's one thing this commander told me when I became first sergeant. I didn't want the job, of course. But he said that in making out the morning report you just don't make a mistake on that, and this is made out as of midnight the day before, see. In other words, the day ends midnight. Well, I made it out the following morning after midnight because something . . . if you made it out at eleven o'clock at night, there could be something that could happen, somebody go to the

hospital between eleven o'clock and twelve o'clock.
But I made it out the following morning because,
usually, if anybody's AWOL or anybody's missing, I'd
have a chance to locate them.

Marcello: Is this the first thing you did in the morning, then--
to make out that report?

Williamson: The first thing I did every morning was make the report.

Marcello: Okay, what time did you get up on Sunday morning?

Williamson: Oh, I was up about six o'clock.

Marcello: Was this your normal procedure?

Williamson: Yes. I went and had breakfast, and I was sitting in the
orderly room making out the morning report when the first
bomb went off.

Marcello: Well, describe what happened.

Williamson: Well, I've got a pretty good memory of that. I was
sitting in a wing . . . the south . . . headed out
south. Our wing of the barracks faced Pearl Harbor.
My back was toward it--toward the window. I had a
desk there. The first bomb--the first explosions--I
noticed shook the building pretty good. Well, they
were building new docks over there in Pearl Harbor.
They done quite a bit of blasting, so I really didn't
give it an awful lot of thought till the second one
followed quite close after the first one, but far
enough apart that it wasn't the same blast. I thought

that was sort of unusual because I'd just swiveled around and looked out the window--I think they had the venetian blinds up--and I kind of looked out and saw this big pillar of dark gray . . . I knew what TNT looked like. They don't use TNT for blasting as a rule.

But I walked around to the sally port and up the hallway to the front door there. There was about four fellows standing there. By this time there was about the third or fourth torpedo that went off, I guess. I think they were torpedoes.

Marcello: In other words, all of this activity was coming from Pearl Harbor . . .

Williamson: From Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: . . . which is only separated from Hickam Field by a chain-link fence.

Williamson: Yes, but also the distance of about 1,000 yards perhaps.

Marcello: From where you are?

Williamson: From where I was standing. As this big smoke was building up there, why, here comes an airplane right across. I would say it was at not more than a 300-foot altitude above the barracks at least. It went right over the Marine Barracks, and a gun cut loose from the roof of this barracks. Now this was most unusual.

Marcello: Was your first thought that these were Army planes or Navy planes on maneuvers?

Williamson: Yes. That very first thought was, "I never saw a maneuver pulled like that." Oh, maybe it would occur out in the boondocks somewhere out there, but not over the inhabited area. Well, this airplane that came across that barracks was hit, and it went into a smoke and went right into a dive. It went right into Fort Wheeler. As I understand it, it hit out a wall there where there were about twelve men standing out there.

Well, this was too real. By this time there were . . . the first ones that had gone across and had dropped their bombs had then gone out to sea and swung around and come around across our barracks. They were above the barracks at a good height, but you could see the insignia on it. And they were the dive bomber-type with the fixed landing gear, not the type that comes up. And they were using machine guns. It was a very windy morning--exceptionally high wind.

Marcello: But clear.

Williamson: But clear. There was a lot of cumulus clouds around. But that was a clear morning. I don't believe more than two or three minutes had gone by when Ramey arrived on the scene. I was dressed in a pair of . . . I remember those light blue silk--raw silk--trousers.

Marcello: Now up until this time, Hickam had not yet been hit?

Williamson: No, not to my knowledge it hadn't been hit. Not even with a machine gun bullets because these machine gun bullets were going over our heads and heading toward Pearl Harbor.

So he rides up there. He had a pair of slacks on and sneakers, and he said, "Get the men out of the barracks, and get them down around the officers' quarters! They're going to hit these barracks next!"

Marcello: You realized by this time that these were Japanese planes.

Williamson: Oh, yes.

Marcello: What were your emotions, or what were your thoughts when you realized that this was not a practice, this was not an alert, but, rather, it was the real thing?

Williamson: Well, this was a . . . it was kind of a strange feeling, I'll tell you. It was hard to really think of it as being real. It had to be real. The thing that gave it away was those terrific explosions over there, and that high . . . and then the fire beginning to show.

So when he gave this call to get the men out, I remember I took . . . I went and grabbed a whistle. I slept in a room right off the bottom floor here. I went up through all the barracks, blew the whistle, and told

them to get outside. Some of them were sitting around reading yet. I repeated the message every time. I said, "Get out and get down around the officers' quarters!"

But nobody did because . . . one block over from our barracks was the ball diamond. From there you got a grandstand view of the entire picture. There they stood.

Now I immediately, before they had even gathered over there . . . what popped to my mind was this hand receipt that old Major Blakey, who lives up here at Burnet . . . he was at that time a master sergeant, about the oldest master sergeant in the Air Force. He got in the Air Corps out here in 1917. He was commissioned in World War I over in Europe. He stayed there for Army occupation duty, I believe, but when he come back he was made a master . . . they didn't have master sergeants in those days. They made him a master technician in 1920, I think it was, or '21. He held that commission right on through till World War II. He was an old master sergeant. I thought about him getting all of these guns we had-- machine guns, rifles. So I hot-footed across to his supply room. I knew where it was. But it had a padlock on the door. Me being green in combat, you know, I didn't know enough to knock the lock off the door. I respected . . . I went back.

About half-way back, there was one of these cement . . . it looked like a smokehouse, you know, one of these terminal buildings where the wiring is all connected. It was fairly modern buildings, so they had this reinforced concrete construction. I noticed all of these sparks going through there. Well, I mentioned before that it was very windy. They'd already dropped a bomb on the HAD hangar--the depot down about as far as Hickam. That smoke was rolling right across over us, and fire was leaping up with these sparks. Then I realized that those weren't sparks. Those were tracer bullets. These planes were coming around the end of the . . . now they're strafing us out there and dropping fragmentation bombs.

Marcello: They were trying to get those airplanes, right?

Williamson: Well, no. This time they were in the barracks area. They were strafing the airplanes as they came around. They'd strafe right down the airplanes and come right on across us. So anyhow, I remember getting on one side of this building, and then when they'd come the other way, I'd get on the other side. I was dodging them.

Marcello: Were you coming directly under this strafing? I'm sure it seemed like every plane in the sky was shooting at you even though they all weren't.

Williamson: It seems like it. I know that and I realize they weren't, also. But I waited until what I thought was an opportunity

before I ran out and went back to the barracks. I changed clothes.

Marcello: Why did you do that? It seems rather peculiar, doesn't it?

Williamson: Well, it seems to me that the word got around to get in uniform. Or at least I would be better to be in some sort of uniform. I put a pair of coveralls on--Air Force coveralls. I was in civilian clothes.

I don't know if anybody was in the barracks. A few were straggling. By this time it was getting pretty hot out there. I went out on the ball diamond, and somebody drove up with a truckload of rifles. I don't know where they got them at. But I do remember that I put as many rifles on my arms as I could carry--I think five of them.

Marcello: Now all of this is still taking place during the first attack?

Williamson: This is the first of the first. Of two basic waves, this was not one of those. This was a real preliminary because I got these rifles, and . . . you know, the Air Force done away with rifles about 1932 or '33 or '34 or somewhere in there. They didn't carry rifles that much, just pistols. I remember I carried all of the bandoleers of ammo that I could put on my arm. I was in pretty good condition in those days. Every rifle I handed to somebody, I had to

load it for him. This I remember very well. They didn't know how to load one of those Springfield rifles. Then I kept one for myself.

The first plane that come over we emptied . . . I emptied my rifle. Five shots, that's bolt action-type. The plane was hit. It didn't burst into flames, but he was smoking and went on over toward Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: And you think that your group was responsible for hitting this plane?

Williamson: Well, everybody gave a cheer. I feel that somebody might *have hit him.*

There was an old fellow--a sergeant. I don't remember his name, but he was in our squadron. He was in charge of the ball diamond. He was a World War I veteran--quite old. He took over out there. That guy, I think, deserved all of the credit that anybody could ever be given. The way he took over and all through this whole thing out there, he set up these machine guns. For instance, they're water-cooled. They didn't have water in them. He was sending them over to the latrine with their tin hats. By the way, the helmets we had in those days were the British-type--the flat one. They didn't have the new modern ones. So they were scooping out water and carrying it over and pouring it in that machine gun to get them to operate.

Then, of course, about this time . . . for some reason I hadn't thought any more about going over around the officers' quarters, which is just another block over. We had a machine gun set up at home plate, one about third base, one about half-way between, one about first base. And as these planes come over, of course, they were trying to shoot at them.

Marcello: Now you're still with your rifle, however.

Williamson: I still had a rifle. There were quite a few rifles by this time going around there.

Marcello: You never did go back and break off the lock on the armory where you were.

Williamson: No, I didn't. I never bothered with that again. But the thing was that we had a lieutenant who had been recalled to active duty for this 1940 thing. He was a lawyer from the State of Iowa--Lieutenant Crampton. I always said this, also--that it was a good thing we had that. He had the foresight to commandeer these cars and things and use them if necessary, which is the way to do it in a emergency. He would just get in a car and use it and go. Of course, he was getting them off the street--cars that were parked along the curb. The first thing you do is clear the streets. But we wasn't thinking of this.

Finally, we saw this first wave coming in high.

Marcello: Now up until this point, in other words, the planes that had been coming over Hickam Field, had basically gone toward the fleet first and then . . .

Williamson: Yes, and swung around and . . .

Marcello: . . . swinging around and came back. As . . .

Williamson: . . . just strafing.

Marcello: And as an afterthought, Hickam was hit with whatever they had left.

Williamson: Yes, or perhaps some "frag" bombs that . . . small "frag" bombs which are those shrapnel-type things, grass cutters, that are spread out.

We saw the high ones coming. I had . . . like I say, had been watching bombs from the ground and from the air for several years then. I remember commenting to somebody. I said, "It's just a matter of range because they've sure got the course coming in good."

I often thought that they had . . . their intelligence slipped up one little bit because I think they were after the fuel supply. We had what you call an aqua system. The gasoline storage was underground pressurized with water. But it was under the ball diamond. Well, the ball diamond that the tanks were under was the practice diamond right over by the flight line. This field was . . . a block up and a block over was the regular diamond which

you could see from the air. It was all grassed up and trimmed up real good. I think they thought this was the ball diamond that had the gas supply.

Marcello: And they just bombed the hell out of that baseball diamond.

Williamson: They bombed this ball diamond. The only thing out there were these people.

Marcello: Where the machine guns were.

Williamson: Where the machine guns were because everybody was gathering around here. Now I was kind of looking out for myself. I thought, "When the time comes, I'm going to head for that left field dugout there and kind of get down below ground level." But I do remember that when the time came . . . we saw the bombs drop out of the planes. I went for this left field dugout there, and it was heaped up. The guys were full from the bottom up and higher than the ground level, so I just lay down where I was at. Now this I remember.

Two or three things flashed through my mind there, just like taking a picture with a camera. One of them was . . . first the extreme heat of this exploding bomb. That's the first thing that I can remember. I think when I reached down, the coveralls kind of popped up here because I was stuck with hot dirt here (gesture).

Marcello: You mean down your neck.

Williamson: Down my neck, as if somebody took a stick and poked it down there. I had a heck of a time getting it out. I had to unbutton my clothes.

I can remember one fellow running. We also had gas masks in those days which were real gas masks, but not the combat-type. They were training-type. He had it on and that flat helmet. He was a man from the armament section. I don't know if I recognized him at that time. But he was running, and when that bomb went off right behind him, he went through the air about thirty feet. His hat blew off and his gas mask blew off because I remember seeing it. I can just see it right now. And he was reaching for it, and he was in mid-air. Later on, I talked to him--Sergeant Warren. He was telling me about it. When it blew off, that's the only thing he was thinking of--getting that hat back and getting it on his head.

One fellow told me he got under a truck which felt to him like the running gears was five feet in the air. He was after something to kind of get down over him.

But I believe the worst casualties that happened there were people who got under automobiles. They'd crawl under a car and the concussion of those bombs blew the tires out, and the cars just laid on them and burned.

We pushed over about two of them there. We got them turned over. But, boy, I heard a lot of guys hollering under those cars, and we couldn't get to them. They were just all afire.

Marcello: Up until this stage, how would you describe the reaction of the men? Was it one of panic? Confusion? Professionalism?

Williamson: No, I don't know how you'd describe it. It was just . . . I don't think it was . . . it wasn't panic. The only one man that I ever recall that sort of panicked . . . and he had the shakes so bad that he had it all day and all the following night. But just kind of describing my own feelings, I think that I talked about this quite a bit. I think the enormity of this darn thing that . . . it just didn't bother me. Now if I saw an accident and four or five people torn up, I'm pretty sure I'd almost get sick. I just couldn't stand to look at that. But that day it didn't bother me. I don't recall anything bothering me that day. There was just too much of it. In fact, I can recall some humorous things about it.

Marcello: What were some of the humorous things about it?

Williamson: Well, I was standing there beside a bombed-out hole right there by the fire station, and here comes a truck by with two guys in the back end. One of them hollered, "Any dead

bodies over there?" We said, "No," and then here come some guys with the old picnic basket baskets picking up fingers and fingerprinting them, throwing them in the . . . and things like that. Later on, I kind of thought it was kind of funny them doing that, you know, and going about their business. I believe that under the circumstances I don't believe people would panic as much as you think they would.

Marcello: What did you do now between the first wave and the second wave?

Williamson: Well, really, we started, I think . . . the first thing . . . I don't know who started it, but we started picking up the wounded.

Marcello: By this time most of the planes, I gather, had been destroyed.

Williamson: The ones that were . . . no, they were burning. These planes that came in at the same time, you see, they got some of them, too.

Marcello: Did any of those B-17's that were coming in from the West Coast actually land here at Hickam during the attack?

Williamson: Oh, yes! They landed . . . some of them had a plane around their rail right before they hit the ground. You know, those planes are not level. They don't have triple landing gears like we've got now.

This one pilot, he's a very rough talking, very blunt talking, man. Swede Olsen was his name. His bombardier was killed after they landed. After they came down and the plane settled, the bullets then got the man in the nose.

Marcello: When the planes were landing, the noses were pointing upward.

Williamson: After they hit the ground when the tail goes down. And these planes, of course, came in closer then. The armor plate took an awful lot of those bullets. The armor plate's about that thick behind the seats (gesture). They just set them behind that armor plate and flew them right in to the ground and landed.

Marcello: So anyhow, what did you do, then, between the first attack and the second attack?

Williamson: Well, I think mostly we just picked up the . . . hunted for wounded people and started picking them up and started putting them on stretchers. The hospital was not too far away.

Marcello: Had most of these people been wounded as a result of the fragmentation bombs and this sort of thing?

Williamson: Yes, more or less. Not many that I know of were shot--not many--but just from debris flying around.

Marcello: Were any of the hangars and so on burning by this time?

Williamson: Oh, yes. Yes, that got some of them down there because these hangars are quite large. I think the doors are about forty feet high, and they're full of glass. Well, this glass just went everywhere. In fact, I don't know how you could drive up and down the ramps of the flight line. Except, I did do it at night on a motor scooter without lights. I was just going along there almost blind. The lieutenant had a motor scooter, and he sent me over to the hangar for something. I don't remember what it was for. Of course, they moved us out away from the hangars, and we stayed at our own airplanes.

Marcello: Now when did this occur?

Williamson: That first night.

Marcello: Okay, let's get back to the interim between the second attack. So you were busy picking up the wounded and so on. How long was it before the next attack came?

Williamson: Oh, I think it was less . . . seems to me right around thirty-some minutes.

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

Williamson: Well, it was . . . as far as we're concerned, it seems like we were a little more organized. We scattered and they dropped the bombs. The first bombs, oh, got the hangar line more.

Marcello: Now were these high level bombers again, or were these dive bombers?

Williamson: These were high, and the depot was down below. They kind of came quartering across the field. The hangars that got hit on the flight line side, they're double hangars, each one. It just kind of moved out. Up on this end they didn't get hit. Just kind of quartered across. I'd forgotten. I think they counted eighty-some bomb hits on the barracks. Of course, a lot of them are smaller bombs.

Marcello: What did you do personally during this second attack?

Williamson: Well, I don't think that I did anything. I started back for the hangar line once.

Marcello: Why did you do that?

Williamson: Well, somehow, somebody got the idea that that's where we're supposed to report to, the flight line.

Marcello: Was there any more resistance being put up during the second attack, that is, resistance here at the base itself?

Williamson: I believe Pearl Harbor put up a lot more.

Marcello: How about Hickam Field where you were?

Williamson: I didn't notice that they were doing much more. We didn't really have anything to resist with. We didn't have any large caliber guns. Fifty-caliber machine guns was about all we had.

Marcello: In other words, actually, so far as most of the personnel was concerned here at Hickam, you were concerned first of all with saving your own skin because you didn't have anything to resist with.

Williamson: That's right.

Marcello: And then secondly, probably, to gather up the wounded and the dead and this sort of thing.

Williamson: That's right--take care of those. Ourselves first and then them.

Marcello: So what did you personally do then, during this second attack? Did you try to find cover someplace or what? You were heading for the flight line, you said.

Williamson: I was heading for the flight line. Again, we just laid in the ditch down there between the hangars and the barracks side. Hangar line row was there.

Marcello: What did it feel like to be under these bombs other than being scared?

Williamson: Well . . .

Marcello: What did one of those concussions feel like?

Williamson: I don't recall a concussion as much as the terrific noise. The noise is, I think, the most disconcerting. More than anything else, I think the noise would get a person. I think bombs that made a heck of a lot of noise would almost be as effective as the ones that does a lot of damage. But

then again, I'm kind of going by some later information we got, you know, like in Korea things, when they interrogated those people who come down and who are captured.

Marcello: Okay, basically then, you were hiding in a ditch near the flight line when the second attack occurred.

Williamson: Yes, during the attack. Now that's while the bombs are falling. Again, we're up again, and we went through the hangar trying to uncover anybody we could find.

Marcello: Now this was after the attack is over.

Williamson: This was after the . . . we didn't know it was over yet, but we were still around looking. I immediately started trying to make a morning report (chuckle).

Marcello: You still had that morning report on your mind.

Williamson: Well, I was trying to get a census of the . . . take a roll call, so to speak, of the squadron, try to find out what happened to them. I spent the day and that night and the next morning doing that. I went up to the hospital, and I walked through that thing at night. It was after dark. You just had to step over the people in there . . .

Marcello: Was this something that you had . . .

Williamson: . . . trying to find people that were in my squadron.

Marcello: Was this something that you had been told to do, or was this something that you had to do?

Williamson: No, I was just supposed to do this because I was first sergeant that night. I was supposed to find what happened to them. I don't think I was told to do it.

Marcello: What sort of rumors were floating around in the aftermath of the attack?

Williamson: Oh, there were rumors. The rumor that I remember mostly was the fact that they were landing at this place, that place, and different places. They were making landings. Those were rumors. At one time they had pretty much of a shake-up right there for a few minutes. They searched everything.

Marcello: I'm sure there were a lot of trigger-happy servicemen around that night.

Williamson: Yes, I'm sure there were, too. What I would call the trigger-happy ones that I saw . . . not that they were shooting at somebody, but when we finally moved out-- this is getting toward evening of December 7--out across the runways . . . and they just came out with truckloads of food, canned goods, and just spewed it out along the area. You'd hunt for it yourself, see. They had to do something because they had hundreds of men out in this area out here. When something would happen over at Pearl Harbor . . . in fact, I believe officially there was three

planes that were up some sort of . . . whether it was weather or what it was, they were returning. It was after dark.

Marcello: There were some planes coming in off the carrier Enterprise. Everything in the harbor opened up on them.

Williamson: Everything opened up including . . . not only Pearl Harbor, but we were on the other side of the runway, which is a good long way from the harbor, and Fort Kamehameha is over behind us, and they cut loose with their machine guns. They added to the show there, I guess. Some of the fellows lying out here on the ground were opening up with the rifles and just shooting.

Marcello: Describe what the field looked like in the aftermath of the attack as you remember.

Williamson: As I remember it, it was just a . . . the ground was covered with debris. Small-type . . . bricks and blocks and broken glass. Now some of the airplanes had burned. One or two burned right off up to the wing, and the nose stuck down. Some had just burned an engine off or a wing off or something. But they were . . . now during this attack . . .

Marcello: The second attack?

Williamson: No.

Marcello: During the entire attack?

Williamson: During the entire attack, after the first attack and before the last, an old friend of mine . . . we were together in the same squadron, but after we split up he was in another squadron. He was part of this detail that went out, and they loaded an airplane with bombs during the attack. They got it pre-flighted and ready to take off. They were wanting to go out and hunt for this carrier. Well, it didn't take an intelligence report to tell you that whatever attacked us was well-protected, at least against a lone bomber. But they described it to me after . . . they said that while they were under there cranking these bombs up in there when the bullets are ricocheting under the airplane from the enemy planes.

Marcello: What were your feelings or emotions when you surveyed that damage that had been done there at Hickam as you saw it in the aftermath of the attack?

Williamson: Well, I think immediately you had pretty much of a dim view of things mainly because of the smoke. It gave a bad look to things. But once that fire got down and they got the smoke out, I don't think things looked near as bad.

Marcello: In the aftermath of the attack, how did your attitude toward the Japanese change, or what was your attitude toward the Japanese?

Williamson: Well, I don't think it was very good at that time. I didn't have very friendly feelings toward them, of course, although it seems like that I remember that I thought they had a reason. And, of course, the reason given . . . I'm afraid that I got some of this opinion from later associations. I met the commander of this air attack, this Captain Fuchida. I met him a couple of times.

Marcello: This was years later?

Williamson: Oh, yes. I was stationed in Japan just as soon as I retired. He was a missionary then, and he was quite an intelligent man alright. Well, he'd have to be quite a good soldier to lead that attack. I mean, they didn't pick him for no reason at all. There was nothing much they could do about it.

Because of a . . . after the attack, things had happened. I think that tempers a lot of my feelings, too. During the months preceding the attack when we were bombing, when it came time to drop the record bombs . . . each year you practice all year long, and you drop for a record at each altitude with so many

bombs. At that time you had to have an umpire aboard your ship who is from another squadron, an officer who is disinterested.

Marcello: A disinterested observer.

Williamson: A disinterested observer. It seems that the one that I got was always the same officer each year. When I came back to the States, I got commissioned because of the job I was doing. I was sent to Spokane, Washington. I was walking down the street at Geiger Field there where I was at a few days after I got there, and I met . . . and this group that I had been with almost . . . we were relieved. We were the first time that a group was relieved in the South Pacific when we came back. This was after Guadalcanal, the initial invasion and so forth. In March, '43, we were relieved and sent back to the States for reassignment. Most of these previous officers and men were sent to Geiger Field, and I got there eventually. I was walking down the street, and I remember meeting an officer. I think I saluted him. I don't remember.

But, anyhow, somebody tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Don't you salute an officer when you see him?" I said, "Yes, sir." Then I recognized him. It was this

lieutenant, only then he was major, that used to be my umpire. Somehow, he had the connection. I don't know whether he was in G-2 or what it was, but he said, "Say, by the way, I'm going to Fort Leavenworth to a critique on this thing--this Pearl Harbor thing or pre-Pearl Harbor--and if you want to go, I think I can get you a seat." I said, "No, I can't go. I've got an assignment here at Geiger." I had to take a class out in the hills out there--gunnery school. He said, "Well, I'll tell you. When I come back, I'll tell you what happens." He said, "Colonel Cleer, who was the intelligence officer all those years in Tokyo before the Harbor, is going to report at Fort Leavenworth."

So I don't think it's classified now anymore, but when he came back, he said, "I'll let you know what I hear." What he told me was, if I got it straight and I think I have, that Colonel Cleer gets upon the stage and he's speaking about . . . as I gather the dates, I would say it was somewhere in the fall of '41, maybe August or maybe early fall. I believe in the summer. Colonel Cleer met in either Singapore or Shanghai, one or the other, a high-ranking Japanese officer. They had a drink, I believe, at the club there. He said, "How come the Americans who are so proficient have such incompetent

people in their intelligence department?" Well, Colonel Cleer . . . I knew he had something on his mind, of course. And he finally told him--this Japanese told him--he said, "Because of our long friendship of many years, I'm going to tell you something." He said, "Within a few months we'll be at war with your country." And then he said that . . . Colonel Cleer, of course, right away wanted to . . . tried to explain. He said that neither country could afford a war and all of this stuff. And he said, "Well, there's nothing I can do about it. It's out of my hands."

Marcello: Who said this?

Williamson: The Japanese. He said, "There's nothing I can do about it." He was not for it. He sort of knew that what the outcome would be for his country if they did get involved in a shooting war. Anyhow, since war was already arranged, Cleer wanted to know who was responsible for it. Well, he got nothing out of the Japanese. So he sent a report to Washington saying, "For God sakes, get ready." And they sent a wire back to him to change his report.

Colonel Cleer testified on this. He sent back a message and told them that he would resign from the service, but he wouldn't change his report. He had that much confidence in that officer. So I'm sure they knew it, and I'm

sure they broke the code. But how long they broke the code before Pearl Harbor, I really don't know. I think it was just days. But you could not let on that you'd broke the code. You couldn't let on that you knew about it because this'd give away the . . . the Japs would know. They'd find out some way. So I feel that the attack, while it was more or less known that it was going to happen, it had to happen to keep certain secrets.