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Interview with
Gelane Matthews Barron
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Place of Interview: El Paso, Texas
Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello
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Oral History Collection
Gelane (Matthews) Barron

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Gelane Barron for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on July 7, 1974, in El Paso, Texas. I am interviewing Mrs. Barron in order to get her reminiscences and experiences and impressions while she was an Army nurse at Fort Shafter during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. At that time Mrs. Barron was unmarried, and her maiden name was Matthews.

Now Mrs. Barron, to begin this interview, why don't 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.

Mrs. Barron: I was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, and I grew up in the service. My father was an Army officer, so I'm what is known as an "Army brat."

Marcello: When were you born?

Barron: I was born in 1916. You're not supposed to ask a lady her age (chuckle).

Marcello: I'm sorry, but for our records we need to do that (chuckle).

Barron: And then when I was growing up I lived all over the country, as my father was in the cavalry. The Middle West was really my home. From the time I was about eight years old I always wanted to be a nurse. So this was my goal in life, and I traveled around the country with my mother and father, and I finished high school in Texas, in El Paso.

I went into nurse's training in California. I was too young when I got out of training to take the state board examination, so I stayed and worked a year in California. I was too young to go in the Army to be an Army nurse, which was my desire, so I worked as a private duty nurse for a year, and I went into the service in 1938 as a second lieutenant, with relative rank. I was stationed at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, at the time. I was there three years, and my second tour of duty was to go to Hawaii.

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

- Barron: I wasn't very impressed at the time because I was engaged to get married (chuckle), but being a good soldier, I went.
- Marcello: In other words, you didn't apply for duty in the Hawaiian Islands.
- Barron: No, I surely didn't. And my first orders were for the Philippines, but because I was going to get married, I decided I would change orders with another nurse. She went to the Philippines and became a prisoner-of-war after December 7, and I, fortunately, was in Hawaii.
- Marcello: Now why did you opt out for the Hawaiian Islands rather than the Philippines? Did you have some sort of an idea that that might be a potential trouble spot?
- Barron: Not really. My father said that we weren't going to have this war till April of 1942, so I was engaged to a _____ officer, and I decided that if I had to pay my way back to the States to resign from the Army Nurse Corps, I would like to pay it from Hawaii rather than from the Philippines. So this is why I chose Hawaii. I resigned on the first day of December to come back to the States in February, and,

of course, the "Land of Liquid Sunshine", bang! On December 7, we were there and I stayed there then for forty-one months.

Marcello: Okay, now let's just go back a little bit. When did you arrive in the Hawaiian Islands?

Barron: I went to Hawaii . . . I arrived on the 16th of July, 1941.

Marcello: In other words, this was approximately five months before Pearl Harbor?

Barron: Yes, and truthfully, they didn't have enough space for all of the nurses, so we were sent out to Hickam Field to live. We lived in the enlisted men's quarters out there. There were sixteen nurses out there. We drove back and forth by ambulance to work.

Marcello: Now you were assigned to Tripler General Hospital in Honolulu.

Barron: At Fort Shafter.

Marcello: I see. It was in Fort Shafter, but due to a shortage of quarters you were actually living out at Hickam Field.

Barron: That's right.

Marcello: What were your quarters like at Hickam Field?

Barron: Well, we had little duplexes that had two bedrooms and a bath and a living room and a kitchen. We had two

nurses sharing each bedroom, so we had four nurses on each side. And, of course, our bane of existence was all of the cute flyers that always came by on Saturday night with a case of beer and sat in your living room (chuckle).

But we had moved into Tripler after . . . we had an alert starting on the first Thanksgiving. We had two Thanksgivings then, you know. We had the "Franklin Roosevelt Thanksgiving" that Franklin Roosevelt had. Well, we were on alert then until the Saturday before Pearl Harbor, but fortunately they had quarters for us, and we moved in about Thursday evening, and the war started on Sunday. But we were very fortunate because I looked at the house where I was living, and I would have been dead.

Marcello: That's very interesting. Going back just a little bit, what was social life like for a young, single nurse in the Hawaiian Islands in these pre-Pearl Harbor days?

Barron: It was wonderful! I had a date every night with a different fellow!

Marcello: I'm sure that the women there had their pick of the young men who were stationed on the island. By the time you got there, the build-up had already started, had it not?

Barron: Well, I would say that I met five charming young men in Fort Mason, and I was fortunate enough to have them as dinner partners all the way over on the Mariposa. Some of them were at Schofield, and some of them were at Fort Shafter. So they always looked after all of us. As soon as their cars got there, well, then we were all very popular.

Marcello: I understand, at least among a great many of the officers stationed in the Hawaiian Islands before World War II started, that the social life there in many cases was a very, very formal affair with long gowns and this sort of thing.

Barron: Well, Saturday night was always a formal occasion, and it was beautiful dancing under the stars at Pearl Harbor and down at Fort DeRussy and wherever your date would take you . . . on the beach. Of course, after we saw these places in the daylight, they weren't quite so romantic.

Marcello: What were some of your favorite places that you would go?

Barron: Well, usually Pearl Harbor. I think the club at Pearl Harbor was a very delightful place.

Marcello: You mean the Officer's Club at Pearl Harbor?

- Barron: Yes, but we dated a lot of Navy fellows, too, the submarine officers and so forth.
- Marcello: What sort of work were you doing at Tripler Hospital during this pre-Pearl Harbor period?
- Barron: Well, I was very fortunate. When I came in the service, I had a chief nurse who was the type person who said, "You should learn something that no one else knows how to do in the service, and you'll get a better job." So I was smart enough to learn how to run these BMR machine, the EKG machine, so when I went to Tripler I was assigned to the medical offices, and I worked with the medical doctors, and I also worked the emergency room and all the clinics. This is where I was assigned on December 7--the emergency room.
- Marcello: You mentioned just awhile ago that from time to time you would have alerts as relations between the United States and Japan deteriorated. What form would these alerts usually take for an Army nurse?
- Barron: Well, you had to be on your base. You couldn't be off your base for any length of time. They were evacuating women and children prior to December 7. We knew there was something cooking. In fact, the last transport got

out of there about the 15th of November, that took most of the women and children. But, of course, I still believed my father--that we weren't going to have a war. I made my resignation to come home in February.

Marcello: You had mentioned previously that you had resigned when?

Barron: The 5th of December, to come back to the States in February, but they sort of felt like I wasn't going to come back, and they refunded my money from the Matson Line, and I stayed there until 1944. Then I came back.

Marcello: What sort of workday did you put in at Tripler General Hospital? When I say workday, was it an eight-hour day, five days a week, or just exactly how did you work?

Barron: Well, when I was at Tripler, the workdays for the Army nurses was a twelve-hour night duty shift with one day off a month. Our day duty was from 7:00 to 9:00 in the morning and 2:00 to 7:00 at night, or a straight shift from 7:00 in the morning to 2:00 in the afternoon.

Marcello: Did this routine vary any as one got closer and closer to December 7 and as the alerts took place?

Barron: No, no. The only thing about alert was that we had to be on our base, and particularly the enlisted personnel couldn't leave, let's say, Hickam Field to go into Tripler. Now we were allowed to go into Tripler when we were on alert because that was our duty station. But the rest of them had to stay on the base to which they were assigned.

Marcello: I see. In other words, you were working at Tripler, but now instead of staying at Hickam, you were staying at Fort Shafter. Is that . . .

Barron: No, we had nurse's quarters at Tripler General Hospital.

Marcello: I see, and this is where you were staying, also. I see. Now did you ever think very much about the possibility of war between the United States and Japan during this pre-Pearl Harbor period?

Barron: Not really. We had a lot of things in the newspapers, and there was lots of ideas going around that something could happen, but, as I say, we didn't expect it in December.

Marcello: Did you feel relatively secure there in the Hawaiian Islands?

Barron: Yes.

Marcello: . . . since it was so far from Japan and perhaps the theater of action.

Barron: Yes, I think we did. In fact, I can remember quite distinctly that we were taken off alert on Saturday morning, and, of course, everybody had a date for Saturday night. I very fortunately, or unfortunately-- I don't know which--was engaged to a young man back here, so I was not interested in dating too much towards the time I was getting ready to come home. I was probably one of the few that had a very clear head on December 7 because a lot of people had been on alert for two weeks, you know, and they all went out and celebrated.

Marcello: So this alert lasted for two weeks altogether.

Barron: Yes.

Marcello: And you didn't come off the alert until that Saturday of December 6?

Barron: That's right. We were on a sabotage alert, too.

Marcello: You might describe what this sabotage alert was like.

Barron: Well, this was when they were presuming that someone was going to come in and either blow up the planes or slash the tires so that we couldn't use the facilities, and, of course, this is what did happen. They couldn't get the planes off the ground on December 7 at Hickam because of slashed tires and the burning of the cane fields and so forth.

Marcello: These are things that I hadn't heard about before, and let me just go back here a minute and ask you a couple of preliminary questions. Now the Hawaiian Islands, of course, had a relatively large population of citizens of Japanese ancestry. Did you think very much about the possibility of these people committing sabotage or being fifth columnists or anything of this nature?

Barron: No, we even had a Japanese cook in the nurse's quarters, and he was more frightened than we were, I think, on December 7, for fear that somebody was going to annihilate him.

Marcello: When you thought of a typical Japanese, what sort of person did you conjure up in your own mind? Now I'm referring to the period prior to Pearl Harbor.

Barron: Well, they were mostly the people who ran the truck farms and had the . . . came to your door with the fruit and vegetables and so forth, and they were very quiet and very timid people--very, very quiet. But as far as thinking they were going to knife us in the back, I think that was the farthest thing from my mind at that time. The people who had been delivering milk to families for years and years turned out to be some of the saboteurs.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that on this particular Saturday night immediately after the alert had been called off that a great many people went out and celebrated--maybe to excess. Was this a common procedure on a Saturday night in Honolulu, or was the night of December 6 an exception rather than a rule among the people that you knew?

Barron: No, I think Saturday night was always the time to go out because everybody was off on Sunday, and then I think after you've been on alert for awhile, it's kind of nice to have a date and go somewhere if you have been cooped up all the time. The same thing was true with men and women and husbands and wives. Of course, they went to the Officer's Club even on alert as long as everybody knew where you were, but I don't think it was any different from any other Saturday night.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit about the days immediately prior to Pearl Harbor. Let's start with the Saturday of December 6, 1941, and what I want you to do at this point is describe in as much detail as you can remember exactly what you did on December 6, 1941. Then from there we'll go into December 7, 1941.

Barron: I think I was probably working in the emergency room, and I took call for the X-ray people on Saturday. It was my weekend to work. I was off at five o'clock because in the clinics we usually worked 7:30 to 5:00--whatever the doctors worked. It was a routine day. There was nothing different about it from any other workday. And after you got off, if you had a date you went out. That was about it for that kind of day.

Marcello: What was your routine after you got off duty?

Barron: Well, I went back to the quarters and . . . in fact, I was in bed at 9:00 on December 6. I was reading a paper, and the headlines were saying, you know, we were having all this problem in Washington. If something wasn't done, that the Japanese were going to call off of this, that, and the other. And I said, "If they're going to have a war--if they're going to start one--they're going to have to hurry. Tomorrow's December 7." And sure enough, the next day was it.

Marcello: Okay, well, it sounds like you had quite an uneventful day then, or at least a routine day, on December 6, and let's just follow this through to December 7 and relate again in as much detail as you can remember what you did on December 7, from the time you got up until all hell broke loose.

Barron: Well, as I say, I was to report to the emergency room and work the out-patient clinics for that particular day. So I was up and ready to go on duty at 7:00. We had long ramps between the quarters and where we worked, and as I was going up the ramp about 7:15 that morning, I ran into the chief nurse, and she looked like she was in a trance. I said "Good morning" in my cheery little way, and I got no response. I wandered on up the ramp toward the emergency room, and I ran into one of the corpsmen, and he was covered from head to foot with blood.

Marcello: What time was this?

Barron: This was about 7:15.

Marcello: This was actually prior to the attack then, is that correct?

Barron: I think that they actually came in a little before 7:30 because we had heard the shelling about that time, and we thought it was maneuvers. I ran into the corpsman, and he was completely covered with blood, and I said, "What happened to you?" He said, "They shot a sailor." And I said, "That's not unusual. You shoot them every Saturday night." He said, "I know, but the Japs shot him!" And with that I thought, "My God,

we've been attacked!" So I went on up to the emergency room, and there, literally, we had acres and acres of people on stretchers, and this was something that you just weren't expecting.

We had a very wonderful medical supply officer who, before Pearl Harbor, we thought he was the meanest man in the world. If you ordered two pencils, you got one. But on December 7, we had all the supplies we needed.

Marcello: What was your initial reaction when this medical orderly stated that the Japanese were attacking Pearl Harbor and the other military facilities?

Barron: I guess your first reaction as a nurse is, "What can I do?" So on getting to the emergency room, we decided that the best thing to do was to have 50cc. syringes and fill them with morphine and 50cc. syringes and fill them with tetanus. We went down all the litters, and someone followed us with Mercurochrome and iodine to put "T" for tetanus and "M" for morphine. And then was when we found out that there isn't such a thing as sterile technique. We used the same syringe, the same needle, and an alcohol sponge, and we had no gangrene, which goes to prove that sterility isn't everything in a case like that.

Marcello: How many casualties were there, approximately, in this initial group that came in?

Barron: I would say probably fifty, and the hall was completely filled with them.

Marcello: Where were most of these people coming from?

Barron: From Pearl Harbor. We got almost all the casualties from Pearl Harbor and Fort Kamehameha and everything in that area because Hickam got some, but we thought they had been bombed out. Our first reaction was, "What's happening at Hickam" because we knew the girls that were out there. But they literally brought patients in on Coca-Cola trucks. You know how the Coca-Cola trucks slant? I don't see a Coca-Cola truck today that I don't think of . . . we had a brand new Red Cross building that we used as a morgue because we had so many DOA's, and we had no dogtags.

Marcello: DOA in nurse's jargon is "dead on arrival?"

Barron: Dead on arrival. And the people that you did see, you know, you worked over them as fast as you could to get them into the hospital area, and, of course, they were still bombing. And all I could think of was that all the dental chairs that were up on the second floor were going to come through the floor just any minute

and kill all of us, but they never did fortunately.
That old building held up.

Marcello: Generally speaking, what was the nature of the casualties that were coming into Tripler at this time? Were they burns and shrapnel wounds or . . .

Barron: Mostly shrapnel, but I think everybody was so . . . this happened so fast that people ran out of buildings instead of seeking cover. Tripler was hit. She had a short shell that hit Tripler, but it was not from the bombing at all. We sent all the women and children from the base across the street from Shafter up into what we called the storage tunnel, cold storage tunnel, and kept them up there so that they would be out of the line of fire in case we were invaded because no one knew whether they were going to walk ashore or what at that time.

Marcello: For my own knowledge, where was Tripler in relation to Fort Shafter?

Barron: Right across the street.

Marcello: I see.

Barron: The main street comes down from the main part of Honolulu and out through there--toward the Moana Gardens. Shafter itself is where most of the Army

headquarters group was, and Tripler was across the street. It was a very old hospital. It was a two-story cantonment-type building that had been built back in about 19-something, 1901 or 1902. We had no windows. We only had screens so it was very hard for us to do blackouts there, too.

Marcello: Generally speaking, how would you describe the conduct of the personnel at Tripler when this sudden influx of casualties came in. Was it one of panic? Confusion? Professionalism? How would you describe the conduct?

Barron: I would say professionalism. But I think nurses and corpsmen and doctors . . . this is something . . . you don't think about yourself. You think only of the patients, and I think in many of your own experiences in other places you do the same thing.

Marcello: What was some of the improvising that you saw being done here to care for this sudden influx of casualties, which must have been overwhelming?

Barron: As I say, most of them that came through the emergency room were sent directly to the wards or to surgery, and fortunately or unfortunately, they were having a doctor's convention in Honolulu, and

so we had a big influx of doctors, and this is a great help to everybody. We were very thankful that they didn't bomb the building where they were having the meeting because we would have been really hurting for facilities, you know, to have people help us.

Marcello: In other words, those doctors from that convention actually came down to Tripler and the other hospitals and pitched in.

Barron: Yes. We had a lot of nurses who had not been in nursing per se, that were wives and so forth, that came in also. Of course, we also had an influx of the prostitutes. They did a great job, too (chuckle).

Marcello: In what way? This sounds like an interesting story.

Barron: Well, they came in because they felt that the hospitals were the safest place to be, which they were, because we had crosses on the top. But they came and helped, and they were very good. In those days we didn't have all the package-thing like we had today. We had to fold the 2 x 2's and 4 x 4's and make the cotton balls. So they were great in helping with supply. But after about three days of this, they were out selling their wares, so we had to get rid of them (chuckle). But a lot of things that did happen were, as you think back on them, they were very funny, but they weren't funny at that time.

Marcello: Can you think of some of the funny things that happened at that time?

Barron: Well, after the initial bombing and all, we worked until about four o'clock in the morning before anybody really realized that something had happened, and here we were out in the middle of the large ocean wondering where we were going and whether we were ever going to get off of that island. And we had one darling little doctor that . . . he finally went to bed, and he got up the next morning about 6:30, and it was still quite dark--it was in December--and he came running up the street yelling, "parachute troops" and scaring everybody to death, and all he'd seen . . . they were putting flares out, you know, to guide in some of the planes. But we had no lights on our planes, you know, and we didn't know who was the enemy and who was the good guys (chuckle).

Marcello: I would assume that there were all sorts of rumors floating around that night.

Barron: Yes.

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

Barron: Well, of course, they were shooting at anything that moved. The guards shot more horses and cows than, I

think, even Hawaii had (chuckle). You had to go to work in daylight and get off in daylight, or you'd be shot.

Marcello: I'm sure you heard the standard rumors about the Japanese troops invading the island or paratroopers landing and the water supply being poisoned and things of this nature.

Barron: No, really we didn't at Tripler. I guess everybody sort of figured the Medical Corps could take care of itself, you know, and we were all issued helmets and gas masks and the whole thing--the whole bit. And fortunately, we didn't have to use our gas masks over there, and so many other places had gas attacks, I presume, but we didn't.

Marcello: You mentioned that you worked until 4:00 in the morning, at least during this initial period, and did you have enough supplies and things of that nature to handle this tremendous influx of casualties?

Barron: Yes. As I said, we had a very, very wonderful supply man. As I said, before the war we thought he was cutting everything to the bone, but when December 7 came, our hospital was well-equipped for anything we had to handle.

Marcello: Well, you mentioned that you worked until 4:00 in the morning. How much sleep did you get before you went back on duty again?

Barron: Well, I went home about 7:30 in the morning after it got light, and I slept till noon, and then I was back again. None of us got very much sleep for about the first week. We didn't have enough help. And then, of course, then they started sending more help in as soon as they could get a convoy ready to come out.

Marcello: In other words, during the period prior to Pearl Harbor, there were probably enough nurses and other personnel there to take care of the routine duties of a hospital, but certainly after . . . on December 7 and after December 7 the hospital personnel were overwhelmed.

Barron: That's right. We had forty-two nurses at Tripler, and they all worked very well together, and, I think, as I said, the medical profession is a profession that you think about others before you think about yourself. But then, as I remember, at 4:00 that morning I sat down and I cried my heart out thinking, "What's going to happen next?" I think that's when we first realized that there really was something. Then we didn't know whether they were coming back.

Marcello: After the attack took place, how did your attitude toward the Japanese change?

Barron: Well, I really didn't have too much contact as far as seeing any of them or anything until about February. At that time I was on night duty in the MP section, and they brought all of the Japanese prisoners to lock them up behind bars up on the section where I was working. And they had them in the front section where we had an armed guard.

Marcello: Now were these military prisoners or civilians that had been taken into custody?

Barron: Civilians who had been taken in. And so on the first night I was on night duty, I thought, "Now this is ridiculous. We have an armed guard sitting in this cell with these Japanese prisoners, and there are two corpsmen and myself in this cell. And these people could overwhelm the man with the gun and kill us." So I asked permission to move the MP patients up and put them in the next cell back so that we had a locked door. And we were notified at that time that in case of an air raid or anything, we were to move the Japanese prisoners across to the prison over at Fort Shafter. But some of these

people knew more about the United States than I did myself--some that we talked to who had been like milkmen over there, and, for years, had been planning what they were going to do when this happened.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that there were cases where tires had been slashed at Hickam Field and the cane fields had been burned and this sort of thing. Would you elaborate on these particular incidents?

Barron: I was not at Hickam when this happened, but we had heard that during the day. We had some planes that had left the States to come over. They had no armament on them and no way of knowing until they got close enough to Hawaii that we were being attacked, and they had to come in. And, of course, they were shot down trying to land. And they figured that the Japanese had come in there to slash the tires so that we couldn't get the planes off the ground, because they bombed Ford Island and the Navy base there at Pearl Harbor to keep those planes off. And, of course, when the fellows went out to get in planes at Hickam, the tires had been slashed. They could not get them off the ground.

The cane fields, we understood, were cut and burned to show them the way in.

We had one other incident during February, then where we had a circle of fire on the mountain which we knew we were going to be bombed again, which we were that night, and I was on night duty at that time.

Marcello: Do you recall this particular bombing incident?

Barron: Well, they dropped their bombs up in one of the craters. We didn't have any damage from it, but it certainly frightened us because we still didn't know what was sitting out there in the ocean because they had captured quite a number of one-man submarines and so forth that had gotten through our nets and had come in under our ships. So we knew that they were out there somewhere. And then we had "Photo Pete" that kept flying in every night, and they kept tracking him until they found out where he was refueling and so forth. It was an exciting time, and yet it was a frightening time, too.

Marcello: I assume that you were on edge constantly during this period?

Barron: Well, I didn't feel real safe (chuckle), but I figured somebody was going to get us out of there.

Marcello: What was it like working under blackout and conditions of martial law? Of course, after the attack both

blackouts and martial law were declared. How did you improvise to take care of the blackouts? You mentioned awhile ago that the windows had screens on them.

Barron: Well, of course, up in about March or April they condemned Tripler and we moved out. We took over all of the schools. We took over the St. Louis College as part of our hospital. We took over Farrington High School with our surgical section. We took over the Kamehameha School up on the mountainside. And then I went up on the mountainside to the Kamehameha School and worked up there in the medical section. We then had no patients whatsoever down at the old Tripler.

Marcello: Did you have very much contact with civilians during this period immediately following the attack? You mentioned the prostitutes, of course, here at Tripler Hospital.

Barron: We had a lot of civilian nurses that came on active duty with us at that time from some of the other hospitals--girls that had been working at Queen't Hospital and Children's Hospital and the Japanese Hospital, which was an isolation hospital. Some of them came from the other side of the mountain that had been in the Public Health and so forth. Then we started

getting units in from the States. They would bring whole units over.

Marcello: Did you have service wives and people of this nature coming in and helping to roll bandages and all of those other menial tasks of that nature?

Barron: We really didn't have that many families over there because so many women and children had come home because they'd sent a lot out in the Philippines, and I think that the Hawaiian Department had sent a lot home, also. But we had what they called the Women's Air Raid Defense. They called the WARD's, I believe, that came in there and did some work for hospital units. Now some of the people . . . if you were a dietician or you had some reason to stay over there, if you were married to an officer or an enlisted man, you could stay, and they did work in the hospitals with us, but you had to have some kind of a profession to stay. If you were a telephone operator, you could stay and man a board, but just because you were somebody's wife didn't give you the privilege of staying in Hawaii. So we had like three men to every nurse or every woman on the island. Other than the Hawaiians--they stayed, of course.

Marcello: So the odds changed for you.

Barron: Yes. Well, for almost everybody, I think, as we all . . . we had a little slogan, "If you didn't get married in Hawaii--you didn't," you know, because there were so many men over there after the attack.

Marcello: Now during the attack, you mentioned awhile ago that Tripler was hit by a short round of antiaircraft fire, probably from a friendly battery. Did Tripler sustain any other damage?

Barron: No, and that was really, I think, some of the gun emplacements that were up in the mountains, you know, the short shell, and we had several casualties from that. But you expect those kind of things.

Marcello: From what I gather, most of the damage that was actually done in Honolulu itself occurred because of falling shrapnel and short rounds and this sort of thing from American guns rather than from Japanese bombs.

Barron: I think so. I think they concentrated mostly on Pearl Harbor because even Fort Kamehameha and some of those places didn't seem to have the damage like Pearl Harbor--that one particular place. I think that was the heart of what they had to hit in order to keep us from going anywhere else.

Marcello: Did you stay in Tripler Hospital during that entire period, or did you have occasion to move out through either Pearl Harbor or Hickam Field at any time during the attack or at least during December 7?

Barron: Well, I would say sometime late in the afternoon they had called in and asked for some instruments to be sent out to Hickam, and so I was sent out with the ambulance to take the instruments out there, and then, probably, later on after dark, I was sent up to the storage tunnel where we had the women and children. We had several women in labor, and we had no doctors to go, so another nurse and myself were up there, and we delivered two young children that morning.

Marcello: Had you ever done this before on your own?

Barron: No, I had not (chuckle). So that was an experience, too. And now nurses, of course, are doing it all over the country.

Marcello: What did Hickam Field look like when you went out to deliver those instruments? Describe it as best you can remember.

Barron: Well, the three main barracks where enlisted personnel lived looked like the bombs . . . they had dropped three bombs--one in each wing. And it looked like

someone had taken a can opener and a can of sardines and just rolled the top of the building back. That's where we lost a lot of our people. We also lost quite a few at the chapel. The chapel was hit . . . had a direct hit when people were at mass at that time. The hospital was not damaged. They had some close calls, but they had not damaged the hospital at all. A lot of the quarters, in fact, the quarters I had lived in, was machine-gunned. If I had been off that day, I'm sure I would have been a casualty.

Marcello: Did you see your former quarters where you had stayed when you were at Hickam Field?

Barron: Yes.

Marcello: What did they look like?

Barron: Like somebody had taken a machine gun and just riddled them to pieces.

Marcello: Did this shake you up quite a bit?

Barron: Yes, it did.

Marcello: Did you have occasion to get out to Pearl Harbor at all, that is, to the Naval Base?

Barron: Well, actually, you know, Hickam sits right next to Pearl Harbor, and we could see the burning ships and so forth as we drove down to the hospital area. But

I was not on the base per se until probably ten or fifteen minutes later.

Marcello: What sort of thoughts or emotions did you have when you saw all of this physical damage around you, especially when you got up to Hickam Field? Now you mentioned that obviously you were quite shook up when you saw where you had formerly lived, and this place had been pretty well shot up.

Barron: Well, I don't know. I think your biggest thing then, once you're away from patient care and you're looking at the whole spectrum of it, you thought, "My God! Are we ever going to leave this island?" It just looked like everything had gone, and how . . . no ships were there. I mean, the ships that had gotten out of the harbor, of course, we didn't know they had gotten out. It just looked like somebody had just churned up Pearl Harbor with an egg beater.

Marcello: Did it kind of give you a feeling of being alone-- something of this nature?

Barron: Yes, because you really . . . we were trying to get information out to our families because I knew that my father was at Fort Leavenworth going to school, and my mother was alone, and I know that if she had

heard it on the radio she would have thought I was under the first bomb. It took us almost two weeks to get any information out. I'm sure it worried all of the families. Of course, the Red Cross did the best they could to help us, but my father always said, "No news is good news," and I guess that's what sustained them.