

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

YSU Pearl Harbor Project

Personal Experience

O. H. 1003

ROBERT D. McCLEERY

Interviewed

by

Hugh G. Earnhart

on

March 28, 1980

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
YSU Pearl Harbor Project

INTERVIEWEE: ROBERT D. McCLEERY

INTERVIEWER: Hugh G. Earnhart

SUBJECT: Marine Corps, gunman, Fourth Defense,
battalion, Pearl Harbor, Hickam Field

DATE: March 28, 1980

E: This is an interview with Robert McCleery at 204 East Lucius Avenue, Youngstown, Ohio on March 28, 1980 for the Youngstown State University Pearl Harbor Project by Hugh Earnhart. The time is approximately 3:00.

Mr. McCleery, tell me something about your parents, your family, when you were growing up as a youngster, when you were born, things of that sort.

M: I was born in Struthers on Sexton Street, January 12, 1921 and I spent the first sixteen years of my life more or less in Struthers. my dad worked for U.S. Steel which at the time was called Carnegie. He was secretary to the vice president of the . . . Well anyway, he worked out at U.S. Steel in the office and my brothers, as they grew up, they went there and worked, so when I came home from the service, I went there, but now they shut it down.

E: Where did you go to school?

M: I went the first twelve years in Struthers then I went to Rayen for the last year, that's in Youngstown, Rayen High School.

E: Why did you make that switch?

M: Well, because my parents moved to Youngstown from Struthers.

E: Do you remember anything about those days either in elementary school or high school that still are vivid to you?

- M: I know I didn't care too much about school one way or the other. I mean it was really, as long as I can remember I didn't care anything about school at all. I mean it was a drag. I don't know.
- E: Was it the fact that it was the teachers or was it the feeling that there was an awful lot of pressure on everyone in the family to help earn a living, that type of thing?
- M: No, we had no problem with that because of the job my dad had, but it just seemed that if I didn't want to study, Mom didn't push it. I just did what I wanted and that's the way I got by. Of course I didn't get by really because years later I really enjoyed history, geography and that type of thing but then it was something else. I mean, I think the worst years of my life were spent there. In high school I didn't care for school, no way. Then when I left school, I couldn't get a job, things were really scarce. So then I went in the Marine Corp July 5, 1940, and went to Parris Island.
- E: You enlisted?
- M: Yes, enlisted July 5. From Cleveland, they didn't have any recruiting office here. So a friend of mine, we went in together. Of course I had to talk him into it and then that was sort of reverse psychology because I chickened out one time by myself. I went clear to Cleveland. I got up there, turned around and came back home. Mom, she was crying and everything. "Oh," she said, "I thought you were gone." I said, "When I got there, there was nobody there." She said, "Are you sure?" I said, "Yes, couldn't find it, I mean, maybe it was a day off." Then I sat down and looked at her. I said, "Mom, no, I can't lie to you, I chickened. I just couldn't go." So when my buddy finally decided to go, we both went up on July 1. He didn't want to go at first. They really talked him into it more or less. He was having a little trouble at home. So anyway, we went back on July 5. That was the day after July 4. He wanted to spend the 4th at home I guess. So we went back on July 5 and when we were being sworn in--I was already homesick before I left home-- and he hit me on the arm and he said, "You're not going to chicken out on me now are you?" So the officer who happened to be a captain in the Marine Corp who was going to swear us in, he kept looking at me. He said, "Lad, if you got anything you're hiding, we're going to find out. You might as well tell us now what's wrong. If you're hid-

ing anything, you're getting in under false pretenses. We're going to find out." I said, "No, nothing is wrong." My buddy kept hitting me, "Don't chicken out now." That was all it was, I was homesick. So anyway, we got sworn in. If it wasn't for him, I would probably have chickened out again.

E: What made you select the Marines?

M: Well one thing, the Navy was six years at the time. I figured six years, that was quite a long time whether you liked it or didn't like it and besides I liked the blue uniform they had.

E: It was dress for the war.

M: Yes.

E: Now that was what, for four years wasn't it?

M: Yes, it was four years. So when I went in there we enlisted for the four, and I tell you I was never so homesick in my life. I think, about fourteen months before I got over it, being homesick. Then it didn't bother me too much at all as far as wanting to come home because all I had was my mom and dad of course, and my couple of brothers but that wasn't like a girl and like that all the rest of the guys had so it didn't bother me. And I really loved the Marine Corp. It was a fantastic outfit, really, to me.

E: What kind of examination did they give you?

M: Oh, physical only. That is about all they did. They did very little as far as mental or anything like that. Most of it was physical, if you could read. In the Marine Corp at the time it was more than that I mean, you had to be in pretty good shape and things like that.

E: How many went to Parris Island with you at the time?

M: My buddy and I. I think there were seven that left from Cleveland.

E: And they took you by train?

M: Yes, we left, departed Cleveland on, it was midnight on July 5, or it would be Friday night, midnight in other words. Thursday was the Fourth of July and Friday was the fifth. We got sworn in in the afternoon and then we

had to loaf around till about midnight and it took us thirty-six hours to get from Cleveland to Parris Island. Actually, when we were at the hospital or whatever they called it where you got your shots and all that right away, it was about 1:00 I remember, pretty close to thirty-six hours to get down there.

E: What's the first thing that you remembered about Parris Island?

M: I wished I could go home. I tell you, I can't explain it but I was so homesick because I was never away from home before but Parris Island itself, it was so much different than I was ever used to. I always used to come home and go to bed. There, hey. And everything was strange. They only person I knew was my buddy, and they would stick you with needles on each side of your arm going through this thing. And being in the service, you were scared to do anything, breathe even, someone was going to clobber you or something. The train stoped, I think it was a place called Buford right near there and I could see the truck, the Marine Corp truck and they stuck us all in there. By time we got there though, I think there was about a full carload, pretty close to thirty-five guys or better, maybe even more than thirty-five by time we got there. They loaded us all in this truck with canvas tops, stuck you in there and pushed you back, oh man! The closer we got there the scarer I got. And on the way down though, I'd look out the back--they had one of those cars you could walk out to the rear of the train--you look back you could see the track itself in the distance and further back it would narrow. Gee I wanted to jump off of that darn thing. I didn't care for nothing. Oh, I was sick. I was. Oh, I tell you. I could have cried, but it was fun, after a period of time it was.

E: How long was basic training.

M: Oh we had about a twelve week then. We had a hurricane in August which held us back another week. We had to clean up the place. Everything was flattened. I mean it was really something. That was the first time I was scared about what was going on other than physical. I mean that's something with the elements. The wind was blowing and everytime I would see an officer I would go about three miles out of the way so I wouldn't have to salute if you could get out of it.

We had a platoon of about fifty-nine men and wherever

you went, fifty-nine men went plus the DI, drill instructor. No matter what you did. If you washed clothes, everybody washed clothes. When you went to the shower, everybody went to the shower. When you went to sleep, everybody went to sleep. When you got up, everybody got up. I mean you did it as one. You didn't walk off by yourself, no. If you got caught anyplace by yourself, which was impossible anyway.

E: Was this, would you say part of the buddy system development?

M: It could have been but it was more discipline where everybody was together. He wanted to know where everybody was. When he, the DI, when he would say, "Fall out," he wanted to see--like he said--he wanted to see three rows of corn. Just when the dust cleared, he wanted to see you standing there. And that was the thing, you had to be there. If you weren't you were in trouble. He didn't even miss breakfast, nothing, when he said, "Fall out," you fall out whether or not you wanted breakfast or not you were out there. It was really something.

I remember I had practically a brand new pair of shoes when we got there on the Sunday and we stayed in our civilian clothes for three days. Do you know I had to throw those shoes away. They were all wore out, completely, so I just threw them away. I didn't even bother. The coat and things like that I saved.

E: Why did they have you bring clothes to the base?

M: Well, that is just until the time until they had you all work your way into the military.

E: Oh, I see, it was a process.

M: Right, a process and then they had us polishing brass. I've never seen so much brass in my life, doorknobs. . . That was something. I mean I couldn't get over that.

E: What types of things did they drill you or put you through as far as that basic thinking? In other words, you were there for, you said, roughly twelve weeks.

M: Yes.

E: Can you think week by week the types of things that you did?

- M: At first of course we did a lot of drilling even in civilian clothes. I mean that's the first thing but I mean you drilled. And it had me snowed. We had a roll call and he wanted you to say, "Here sir!" Of course, I dummy, he was giving guys heck for saying "Here," or "Yah," or whatever and I said, "Present," and that sort slid me in because I didn't understand all this. Anything you did, like my buddy spit in ranks. We didn't know that you couldn't spit in ranks it wasn't attention or anything. He had to stand out in front of all of us and spit for about, shoot, it seemed like ever. Nothing was coming out when he got through.
- E: Had to get a drink of water. . .
- M: I mean that was one of the first or second days. The longer you were in the more you knew. I could never figure . . . How are we going to remember all these cadences; left flank, right flank, rear march, platoon halt. How do remember them? How do you do it and all this? It came real easy once you got started there.
- E: What about the type of training for combat and that type of thing?
- M: What they did there, really, boot camp was just to get you oriented on military courtesy in other words the military part of it also getting you really to be able and in physical condition as far as running and handling the rifle and all that sort of thing. And the more meaner they could get, the better they like it. The DI's, if they could have an ambulance come out and pick you off of the parade grounds where we used to drill, they were bigshots that day. You got away with a little bit easier the rest of the day if they were the one. He used to tell me every morning we'd have inspection, he said, "I'll get you today McCleery." And I was one of the littlest ones and I weighed about one hundred and thirty pounds. I was only five foot six. So he used to tell me, "I'll get you today." And I said to myself, "No you won't, no, never!" So when the big guys would fall he'd say, "Tomorrow is your day McCleery." I guess he was just, well, wanting to make more of me than I wanted to be made. In other words, he wasn't showing me any partiality because I was little or whatever. But the further in we went, the better I liked it but I was still homesick. I was still, oh gee did that get me. Of course I put on--twelve weeks--I went up to about one hundred and sixty pounds, five foot six, in about twelve weeks time. It was all, not muscle, muscle, but there

was no fat. I mean I was only about thirty around the middle but I loved it. Then I started boxing.

E: While you were in boot camp?

M: Well no, they used to put the gloves on, Organized Athletics but we had another name we called it though. So, they played ball or volleyball or swam or boxed and you just put the gloves and messed around. Then we had smokers. That was the big thing back then, that if you could box really--you had to go for a physical and training, it didn't make that much difference as far as training with the boxing, but that was part of recreation. Everybody, not everybody I guess, but I really liked it that's why I started doing that and weight lifting, body building, running when I didn't have to and stuff like that.

E: When you got out of boot camp. . .?

M: Oh boy, that was a beautiful day. It was just like somebody getting out of prison because boot camp was where everybody--like I said, sixty men or fifty-seven men in a platoon, whatever we had--everybody did everything together and you sirred anybody that wasn't in a group. When people are walking just past your attention you seen a fellow standing there you didn't know, you sirred him.

E: You didn't take any chances.

M: Right, you didn't know, but after you got out of boot camp, anytime you sir a noncom or a noncommissioned officer, anybody besides an officer, you would catch it. I mean, "Hey, you don't have to sir me. You're out of boot camp. You don't have to sir me." And that was hard getting over it though, but it was nice. You could go to the movie alone, if you're on your free time, and all that. It was terrific, really.

E: Did they issue your dress blues?

M: They had no dress blues then. All they had was greens, the wintergreen as we called them, or the green uniform. They went away but I guess the only time then they issued the blue was if you went to sea school aboard a Navy cruiser or a Navy ship, then you could have the blue. But you couldn't buy them, not then, you didn't worry about it because it didn't seem like you needed them. Some of the guys would go on liberty as

civilians. But I never went. . . I went on liberty twice in nine months that I went there. Seven months, excuse me, seven. Twice I went on liberty and that was to a movie.

E: What'd you do when you got out of boot camp?

M: Well, I went into a machine gun unit. The outfit I was with was a thirty caliber machine gun, water cooled. My buddy, of course, he went the other way. He went someplace to Quantico, but I stayed in Parris Island for a couple more months. Then from there we went to Cuba. We went down to Guantanamo Bay and we were down there for about nine months, I think, somewhere in there. We went there in February until September of 1941 just training, going through all the normal things you do. It was beautiful there. When that moon was out, you could read a magazine. But when that moon was gone you couldn't see two steps in front of you. And it was a lot different. I've tried to talk to people that have been there, oh say in the last four or five years and they tell me I would never know it because then you had no indoor movies; nothing like that. You only swam in the bay and things of that sort. Of course then we could go on liberty over to a place called Caimanera but that was one place I never went on liberty on. I didn't drink, didn't smoke, didn't do much working out, played tennis and stuff. Went the movie every night. Of course that was just an outdoor movie. Sit down on the ground, laid back on your hat whatever you had. But it was really nice, terrific. And it took me forty-nine months to get home. When I left home July 5, I didn't get home until August 1, 1944, forty-nine months and forty-two of that was overseas, considered overseas, acting through Cuba and from then until we got back home.

E: What kind of duties did you have in Guantanamo Bay?

M: Oh we just did the regular duties. We used to have certain guard duty. That was one thing in the Marines, really, they put a pile of wood back and you had to guard it, nobody would take it or whatever but that was part of your training. We did a lot of marching, a lot of hikes with full packs and that sort of thing and we done things like you do in regular wartime maybe, make landings and that thing.

E: When you were at Guantanamo Bay then in 1941 and you, laying out there watching the movie or walking out to take a swim in the bay or something, did you think that

there's something about to happen here and I wonder what it's all about. We're not doing this to be doing it or are we?

M: Well, the Marine Corp did that, the way I understood at the time. They put you out to make you the best Marine or the best survivor, whatever you would come under. That's why they drilled us. That's why they marched you and all that. Discipline was really something. I mean we lived in tents on a called Veer Point and we had sand. We brought sand up to put around the tents, inside the tent and when you walked out of that in the morning, you walked out backward and you smoothed over it and when the inspecting officers, one of our officers in our battalion would come through, he would only want one set of footprints, his, going in, but he didn't want to see nobody elses. When you walked out, you walked out and smoothed it over and your mosquito netting had to be tied a certain way, your bunk had to be made a certain way and if it was just a little bit different then you got restricted or any of that type of thing. I mean it was really strict. Thank goodness I was never on a restriction or penalized in any way the whole time I was in the Marine Corp, nothing. Never had to go up to see the captain for anything of that nature. I was strictly a Marine. I mean I loved it, spit and polish and all that stuff, once I got used to it. At first it was quite a shock but it was really nice then. I don't know of anybody that really didn't have a good time, that wanted to. A lot of guys used to laugh because I didn't want to go on liberty but me, I liked to run. I was always interested in sports and that was a good place. And we used to have what I said, smokers, boxing, oh maybe two or three times a week depending on if the Navy was in with their shakedown cruisers out in the bay we'd go out and box them and things like that. It didn't make no difference whether you won, lost or whatever but it was fun. Of course everybody wanted you to win. All they wanted to do was see blood and they didn't care whose. (Laughter)

E: And all those side bets that had been placed against the Marines and the Navy.

M: Right, that was fun, we enjoyed it, that was nice. But one thing, like breakfast, I can tell you what we had for breakfast every other day for the full nine months that we were there. One day you'd have pancakes or hotcakes, flapjacks. The next day it was sunny side up eggs. The next day was flapjacks. The next . . . Every

other day that's all they could have more or less. Once in a while they might slip something else in but I don't remember them doing it.

E: Only when there was inspection and the captain was showing up or a colonel, then you'd have something special.

M: Oh, that might, it just depends, right. Yes, but it was nice though. I mean we lived in tents and everything was done in tents even our sick bay, as we called it. They had a big pyramid tent with a regular awning, or opening where you had to see the doctor if you had anything you wanted to see the doctor for. It was nice though. It was beautiful of course though when we got those rains for three solid weeks and then when it stopped raining mosquitos came and after the mosquitos left we left. I mean it was beautiful. I don't know why, they have certain seasons for rain and you have certain seasons for mosquitos but it seemed like when that was over, it was beautiful really.

E: When did you get and under what conditions did you go to, I assume Pearl Harbor was your next duty station?

M: Pearl Harbor, well, it was a funny thing though. We had a real nice lieutenant from Pittsburgh. His name was Lieutenant Sisack and he used to tease me all the time about Massillon. Massillon had the run of the football everything was Massillon way back then. You were Massillon, Massillon, Massillon. So he and I got, well not buddy-buddy but I thought he liked me just being for that. So I had ordered a set of bar bells from York. I think it was called a two hundred and ten pound bar bell set and it was about twenty-five dollars. So anyway, they had them shipped down and they come down on the banana boat. So I was on guard the day that I got this invoice or whatever you call it and he happened to be the OD, officer of the day, so I asked him how we could pick it up. So he said, "Yes, we'll send a truck," and they went down and picked it up and put it in the back. I worked out three weeks with that set. Of course I only used the directions it had with the set. Our gunning officer, our gunning sergeant came up to me and said, "Do you want to take them with us McCleery?" I said, "What? Where are we going?" He said, "Well, we're heading for Pearl Harbor, Hawaii." I said, "Oh, get out of here." He said, "Yes." So we put them in a box like it was recreation equipment but with one of the ammunition boxes. We put pieces in here and

there and we shipped them up with us, recreation equipment. So we got to Pearl Harbor and I broke them out and three days after that, the darn lousy war broke out. So I said, "Hell with them." I just left them lay there. I don't know whatever happened to them. I didn't want no more a part of them.

E: What rank were you when you went to Pearl?

M: I was PFC (Private). But when we come through the canal, see we come up on--I forgot the name of the ship--I think it was called the Henderson, USS Henderson. I know we took that one from San Francisco to Pearl Harbor but on the way up we stopped at both sides of the Panama Canal, then we stopped at San Diego, and we stopped at San Diego, and we stopped at San Fransisco. It took us eight days to go from San Fransisco to Pearl Harbor. Four days out and they had darken ship and we wondered, "What's this supposed to be, darken ship?" Before that it was just like a pleasure cruise really.

E: What was the date that you left San Francisco?

M: Oh, we left the last day of November, which took us eight days. So four days out they had darken ship. I mean we had a little band on board, that belonged to the Navy band of course and smokers, like I say, every night, and movies and all that sort of thing. It was just like a pleasure cruise really except for no girls. But four days out we had darken ship and everybody wondered, "What the heck is this?" Four days out, in other words, it was half way between San Fransisco to Pearl Harbor and everybody is wondering what's going on here? You couldn't smoke above deck, no lights, no nothing. I mean it just about faced. So when we pulled into the Harbor being from down at Cuba, they used to place any big ship, like a battle ship or whatever would come in for a shake down, cruiser, whatever was there. They had one or two ships beside it like a small cruiser on even a tin can or they just set them out alone. I mean they were all over that thing and in there, you couldn't even get in. I mean, you look over the side and you're looking right down at somebody else. I mean that was really stacked. They even had three carriers in there and that was on December 1, on a Monday. So, we're figuring, "Gee, what the heck is going on here. Why all the ships are in here?" So, on about on a Thursday the three carriers went out and went south after they left the harbor. Being the Marine Corp coming up from Cuba was about, oh I'd say a month and

a half maybe, whatever and we had back pay and a few bucks coming more than usual. When I enlisted we only got \$21 a month and then I think we were getting something like \$36 or something like that. So anyway, on a Saturday morning which was on December 6, we got paid. I don't remember getting paid any time on a Saturday morning. Never do I remember getting paid. . .

E: What was usually the pay day?

M: Tuesday or Wednesday as I remember it but I never drew my pay. I used to leave it right on the book. In other words, when I got a certain amount of money, then I sent home to my mother and I would sign it and send it home. I was saving \$25 out of \$30 most of the time because I knew, like I said I didn't smoke, I didn't drink. How often do you need a shave, once a day, but as far as toothpaste and things like that went, there wasn't nothing really to spend it on where I was even when we went to the harbor, like that Saturday morning everybody got paid and I was the only one in our tent--we had a six man pyramid tent--and everybody right away got dressed and they went on liberty and I'm just hanging around doing the normal thing shining shoes or whatever and I don't know if I'd had had a movie that night or not but I might have went to the movie that Saturday night. The next morning I got up--our chow, our galley as here they called it, we had to have mess gear, your regular mess gear. You had the plate and the fork and the old tin cup and all that, that's the way we ate. You went in and took your mess gear and then you took care of your own gear. In other words, here was no mess hall as they usually have it. If you were at a barracks, a regular barracks then you sat down like you would at home.

E: But your outfit. . . ?

M: We just got there see.

E: Which was what, the. . .

M: Fourth Defense Battalion.

E: The Fourth Defense Battalion of the Marines.

M: Right, at the time, right.

E: Where were your people's headquarters?

M: We were headed for Wake.

E: Yes, but where were your headquarters there at Pearl?

M: Oh, we were right about three miles out of the harbor. It was right down the main highway. Leaving the harbor toward Honolulu was one highway and we were right out about two miles down the road in a big area there that they were setting up. I don't know why, we weren't going to stay there long anyway.

E: Was that area, did that belong to the Government?

M: Yes, I guess it did because. . . Oh, it would have to I suppose. It was a big area I suppose. I don't know how big it was, but we housed about 650 to 700 men in our battalion. It was just new. You could tell they just threw up the tents and what have you because we weren't going to stay there long.

E: How many went over on that troop ship? Do you have any idea?

M: Well, our battalion at least. . . Oh, I'd say close to 700, between 650 and 700 on the Henderson, the battalion. That was what a peace time battalion was. And of course now, they had all kinds of other batteries as they called them. They had six inch anti-aircraft runs on artillery and they had five inch and three inch search light outfits and things like that, that was all in this one battalion. But we go there on, like I say, December 1 and that's where we went, went out to there.

E: Did they truck you out there or did you march?

M: No, we trucked. It was only about, I'd say no more than a couple of miles if I remember.

E: They didn't let you go into the town or march through the town or anything?

M: Not yet, not yet, no, no, we were quite a ways from town actually. We were just out of Pearl Harbor. You see, if you come out the main gate, there was one highway with double lanes at the time and as you come out the main gate, on the right would be where Hickam Field was.

E: Right.

M: And then we come right past there and went down on the left as you're going toward Honolulu because when we did finally get on liberty from there you come out and you

got the highway and you went straight in. The highway went right into Honolulu.

E: In other words you could actually see the planes in Hickam Field and so on?

M: Oh yes, well not quite Hickam Field as easy as the planes coming and going over your head yes.

E: Yes, but I mean those that were coming and going to Hickam Field.

M: Right, right. Now there was all talk about something is going to happen. Japan is going to do something. They had an idea something was going on.

E: What was the first thing you remember coming in on the Henderson?

M: Well, all the ships in that one group. I mean at the time we didn't know the names of the ships or anything like that but there was one that they called Ford Island. It's right in the center where they. . .

E: Yes, Ford.

M: Yes, and they have a battleship row as they called them. Of course, I found out this later but what we couldn't get over was how they were all tied in there together, I mean right boom, boom. Why were they all in one lump sum? I mean you couldn't even throw nothing over the side you'd hit another ship. I mean they were really stacked in there and then we couldn't get over that. Like I said, down in Cuba we had all kind of area and if there was a battle wagon come in for a shake down they would stick it out there, it was nothing all jammed in. So that's the first thing we were wondering, "Why were so many ships in there?" And they had three carriers in there too and we couldn't get over that, why it was so packed. I mean to tell you it was really loaded. Of course, I think it was on like a Thursday or a Friday the three aircraft carriers went out to sea.

E: Yes.

M: And they went south. Of course, if they would have gone north they would have run right into the group, the task force coming in. But that was the first thing I thought. They did have a band like they see in the movies and stuff. There was a little band. I don't

know if it was civilian or service band and they also had girls with the hulas and leis or whatever they call them. It was just like at show. But that was at the harbor and then we left right away and we come out to that camp or whatever they called it. Maybe they had a name for it but I don't remember it. I don't even think it's there now. I think that was just something they stuck up to tide us over till we left.

And like I've said though, on December 6, which was a Saturday, we got paid and all the guys right away, by noon I think there was only a half a dozen of us anywhere near there. Everybody was gone on liberty. Of course, that was the first real liberty we had with money. A private with \$30 in his pocket, that was a lot of money.

E: That was big money then.

M: Right. But not me, I was up there polishing and cleaning up. I was always scared of getting into trouble, I was scared to death of getting brig time or as we called it, yo time. In peace time you had to make that up if you were in the brig for any length of time. Anything, even a sunburn, if you couldn't perform our duties you had to make that up at the end of your cruise as we called it, your lessons. Then that happened there, everybody was gone so I guess it was about 7:30, we had mess call, went to breakfast and there was nobody there. So, I'm on the way back. Three cans they had, first you would empty your garbage out if nobody was eating it--of course, I eat everything. Nothing was ever in my mess kit. Then you went through, you washed it up, then you went into soapy water, then clear water, then clear water. I'm walking back, I'm singing, "Hey, nice beautiful day, Sunday," and all of a sudden I see flames from behind me the way I was facing as I remember it. "What the heck is the matter with these people, don't they know today is Sunday." Then all of a sudden the darn island just seemed like it was rocking. "Gee, these people are nuts!" Sunday morning about 8:00. Boy right away I run back to my tent, just put down my mess gear and they blew for formation. I said, "What's the matter with these people?" When I come back out of my tent I looked. Of course, it was about a couple mile, like I say, from us to the Pearl Harbor and I looked down and I could see what was going on more or less. The planes would disappear. Right away I seen a couple of them with the red circle on it and I said, "Oh, oh, that must mean Japan." So, when we fell out, there was

only four or five of us right there. The whole battalion there were only about thirty-five guys.

E: The rest of them were still in town?

M: Right or wherever at. They weren't there, not right at that part of the base anyway. They could have been anyplace really. They might have been in town or wherever. But as I remember we had one truckload of men, thirty-five approximately there, but we all didn't get into one truck. They had us all seperated. In other words, there was I and another fellow and a driver on the truck that I was on and they gave us these old tin kelleys, the one's they used in the First World War. I never seen one before until that day. They were round and they sit on top of your head. That's what they called them in the First World War, I think, was a tin kelley. You couldn't hold them on nohow. You'd bend over they'd fall off. So I was sitting at the back of the truck and as I remember there was a bar going across and I had my toes under it like this and kid was sitting on this side. It was an all metal bed, short, maybe fifteen or eighteen high the bed. He had his legs underneath mine and he's fixing his helmet and I'm leaning against the back of the cab fixing my helmet. This guy went around the curb, the first thing I know this kid is hanging on to my. . . His legs are hitting my legs. His head is hanging over the things. His helmet went underneath the wheel and his head was bumping on the front tire there. So, right away, good thing my toes were underneath that rail or he'd have slipped right underneath. He would have killed him. He would have run right over him because when he went around that curve he went around it like oh man, fast. It just swung you over.

E: Where were you going?

M: We were going into the harbor.

E: In other words, you were Marine defense your unit got ordered to go down.

M: Right.

E: With what mission?

M: Well, I didn't know it at the time but for a while you would only have two or three men on it. We loaded ammunition from the ammunition dump right at the. . .

Well, I don't know if we can call it the Marine base or the Marine barracks but it wasn't very far from all the action anyway. It was in the center of Pearl Harbor more or less and that's where we ended up right away was loading ammunition and we took it around. That's why I could see everything going on. Like we took it around the base and all you had to do was, you dropped it at certain places like they were going to put guns there or something. My rifle was put in cosmoline, everybody's in our outfit in peace time for transportation, in other words they put them in cosmoline and put them in a rifle box. In other words, you didn't even see them for that whole time. That would be less for you to carry I guess but that's the way they did it. So when they handed you your rifle it was so loaded with cosmoline you couldn't have done a thing with that thing. You could hardly hold it let alone fire it. It would probably blow up in your face because it was loaded. And they also passed out gas masks and our captain, his name was Stewart, he said, "I don't want any of you guys opening these things--it was in a metal can like--He said, "I don't want any of these open till I give the word." So I seen him three days later, I still had mine in the can and he jumped all over me. He said, "Well you got that, how come you didn't . . . ?" "You didn't give me the word." Of course, I didn't see them. But anyway, when we went in there that morning, we come through the main gate. We went right down to the ammunition dump and we loaded all kind of ammunition. It didn't have to be any special size or whatever just whatever it come out. A lot of it was thirty caliber, a lot of fifty caliber and even anti-aircraft as they called it. But very little artillery because you didn't need it. I don't know how they had it stored but then we'd go out and we were going all around there putting ammunition out.

E: Just dropping it piece-meal?

M: Well, at certain places there like if you see three or four guys there with a machine gun or anything like that you would just put it there and then you would see anti-aircraft guns, battery outfits and you'd find out if it was three inch or whatever it would be then you would just drop the ammunition there. And even lot places you just lay it there. There might be half a dozen people a few feet away or whatever but some of the things were set up. I remember going around on ships too and laying them on the dock, where they could take them on the ship.

E: And all this time this Japanese attack was underway?

M: Boom, boom, right. And at the time of course I don't know what time of the day it was I mean, how long after it started but I remember looking from where I was unloading, I think I was on a ferry boat landing at the time, right near there, and I happened to look out and I seen this bomb or torpedo. Of course at the time I didn't even know it was the Arizona but it went down the funnel, the round stack. It just disappeared. Of course, where I was standing it looked like it could have went beyond it but then all of a sudden it just poof, and down it went. Later on I found out it did go down in a stack and it was the ninth time it was hit. The way I understand it, it was the only battleship that was sunk that's why they made the Arizona as they did. But stuff was flying around, oh man, oh man, I'd never seen such. . . I wasn't scared though, really. I thought I would be terrifically scared though. Anytime we had formation that I didn't know what it was all about, something different than usual, right away, "We're in war, we're in war," and I was scared but then, I don't know, it just didn't seem real maybe I don't know.

E: You didn't have time to prepare for it.

M: It was now, so when we were all dropping this ammunition off and everything else underneath strafing and what have you, this one time in particular, I remember I was on this canvas truck, the top of it was canvas and so was the--where it went over the driver and we had that loaded with ammunition and I was sitting right back on the tailgate. I looked like this to my left and right along side of that was where Hickam Field was. All that separated Hickam Field from Pearl Harbor is a fence like there would around a football field, six or eight feet high. That's all that separated the two was that fence at the time and as we were going down there, I looked back and this Japanese zero--I guess it was a zero--started strafing it, I mean it looked like he was coming up.

E: Coming up the road.

M: Right. So, I'm looking up like this at him. I don't know what to do, fall off or hang on because if he'd have hit that thing it would have blown us all to hell. And you've seen pictures where you seen the Japanese, the little guy.

E: Yes. (Laughter)

M: Well, I could swear I seen it.

E: He was that low.

M: Right, I could have reached up and hit the bottom of that plane, I swear it. But when he pulled up, he quit firing. I don't know whether he ran out of ammunition or he liked me but anyway, that's the only thing that saved me right then because if he would have kept on firing he would have blown us clear out of there. He would have had to because that thing was full of all kind of ammunition. Oh, we were going about sixty miles an hour, pretty close and zip, he just went above the top of that truck. Now why he stopped, I don't know. I think that's the only thing he could have done was run out of ammunition.

And then they had pieces flying all over, oh man, it was something else. I didn't know that two hours or one hour and forty-five minutes could be so long. Because when they said--just lately I've been reading and people have been talking about the thing--said it was only from 7:55 until I think, 9:45. That's about an hour and fifty minutes isn't it? Boy that was the longest hour and fifty minutes I ever lived.

E: Did you have any awareness that different waves of Japanese planes were coming in, or did it just seem like one continuous attack?

M: Well, it seemed like it was all one group I mean there were planes there all time. When they came from the aircraft carriers maybe they came off in groups but once they once got there it didn't look like they left right away. In other words, you could look and see them high, low or whatever. And they had everything on fire, oh man, smoke all over. Well it was pretty much of a hassle. Everybody, they didn't know what to do, where to go, run or whatever.

E: Did you, as far as your organization is concerned, pretty much know what to do once the order came you were to go get ammunition? Did it work pretty smoothly?

M: It did, with us.

E: How did you know where to go?

M: Well, the first thing they did is they put us on the truck and they told the truck driver to take us and they told the truck driver. All we were to do is unload it.

E: In other words, the truck driver was a . . .

M: He was the main cog, where to go. He had to know where to go.

E: Yes, but he had been stationed there for awhile?

M: He must have because he sure knew how to get around because we were all around then.

E: That's what I was going to say.

M: But not only that, there was all kind of strafing, bombing, torpedos. The torpedo, I'm not sure but it looked like everything was a mess really. I mean you don't know which way to go. I don't know, even remember eating that day but I had to eat. It was really something.

E: With the attack lasting a little less than two hours, is there anything that you recall as far as the ships in what they called Battleship Row or any mainland targets that the Japanese were interested in or was it primarily--they came after the carriers but some of the carriers weren't there.

M: Right but they were gone. That was really surprising to them. I mean it seemed like they were hitting anything especially the ships, because the Marine barracks, later on I was stationed there for a few weeks after that at the Marine Barracks, wooden barracks and there was nothing there, nothing hurt but it wasn't very far from the dry docks and that was pretty well hit. Mostly everything was ships, planes. Of course Hickam Field, when we were coming out there when I was just about strafed, you could look over and see everything going on over there and the planes oh, I swear there must have been nine hundred planes. It seemed like every time you turned around there was another one but they claimed there was only about three hundred and fifty-three is the way I heard it. But it seemed like they just continuously--I mean not just then they stop, then they come in, it seemed like they just kept coming really. But I remember before, not long after I went on that doggone ammunition truck, we went on top of an administration building with a thirty caliber and we set

it up and they were still bombing and stuff and strafing but they didn't keep us there long because they weren't interested. It didn't seem it because when they flew over they didn't pay no attention. In other words, that building was just a building. And us sitting up on top of the thing. We could hardly stand up let alone fire the thing. With a thirty caliber machine gun, to do anything good with it you have to weigh them down because they would jump all over and you couldn't have done it there. They took us right back down. It took us longer to get up through that hole than we stayed up there. Right away they come up and said, "Hey, get out there ain't no use of staying there, you can't do no good here." Then they took us on in further down alongside of the ferry boat landing. I remember that one. That night, in the morning, it was dark, as far as the moon, it was no bright night. I'm looking out and my buddy, he was from Tennessee, Nashville. I forgot his first name but we called him Red. His last name was Travis--just the two of us on this machine gun and I'm looking out at the harbor like and I seen two tin cans, better known as destroyers sitting there and you could just make out the silhouette like. So all of a sudden he says, "Hey, three of our airplanes are coming over," and I turned around like this, "oh yes." You could see the running lights and then I looked right at the two tin cans and all of a sudden they started to fire. They started to fire first, the two tin cans started to fire. They jumped right out of the water. Everything lit up and everybody on the base fired and we even, with our machine guns fired at the three planes. Later on I found out we got two out of the three, American PBV's. They were American planes, about just before daybreak.

E: Yes, so called ruptured ducks.

M: Yes, I have never yet been able to run into anybody that remembered that that I know of. I haven't talked to--well of course now I probably could have asked but up until this time I knew nobody else besides me that was there.

E: That was what in the evening of. . .

M: That was in the morning. That was the eighth.

E: December 8.

M: That was the day after actually. It was just before daybreak.

M: Right, it was about 4:00 or 4:30. I can remember him turning. I was looking like I am here, just standing there and he looked up and he said, "Hey, three of our planes." You could see the running lights and the noise. So, I just turned around and I said, "Yes," and then when the two tin cans fired, everybody started. I don't know how they got only two out of the three. It was something.

E: What about the cleanup operation?

M: That was kind of bad because I remember, the morning of the eighth, it had to be, they had small boats, I don't even remember what the heck they called them now but they had a couple of us going out and you'd see something floating you'd grab it. It might be a shirt or it might be a body or things like that. A couple times you reached out and picked up just a head and ugh, it was terrible, that part. You didn't know who it was though. A lot of the stuff that was thrown around took years I guess to really straighten it out. Things were really well beat up.

E: They pressed in the service, any military personnel that was there is part of this cleanup operation?

M: Well more or less, yes. I mean we fell in the next morning. I don't remember if we were still back at that same camp or whether I was down in the Marine barracks but I don't know how they found you or we found them. It seemed like everything come out all right as far as men knowing where they were at. We had a couple or three or four guys were always together. Just like that night though we were on that machine gun, they had Navy men that were walking four abreast. I don't remember what the heck rifles or whether they had BAR, Browning automatic rifle, or not because it was pretty hard to fire that off hand position. You had to have put it in a prone position.

E: That's right, you'd jump around too much.

M: But then we heard fire, you would hear it all night long, prrrr, prrrr, prrrr, anything that would move. When you got in place, you stayed there, let me tell you because if you were out walking around, don't. Then they passed the word, the fellows were hollering that Japs were landing on the other side of the island, they're coming in. I don't know where they got the idea but everybody was hollering that Japs were landing on

the other side of the island, they're coming in. I don't know where they got the idea but everybody was hollering and passing it on.

E: Probably the little midget submarines.

M: Yes, they picked up one.

E: Yes, that would give them a bunch of jitters.

M: One of them did float up there I think I read. But everybody was really shook up. But I don't remember eating or where I ate. It's like I told before. We must have eaten with our mess gear. Maybe they brought a truck around. They'd done that a lot too. Even after they had a truck come around with mess. They did that in Cuba when we were out on maneuvers or whatever. They'd bring a truck out and you could just eat out of your mess gear. There wasn't such a thing as a mess hall there except when you're back at the point. But that was something else. I'll never forget it. People were oh yoy. Nobody that I knew personally that actually was killed or injured that day. I seen, like going down the highway and you'd see something getting blown up and guys from on the Navy that were on the ships that were all beat up but actually, personally, I knew no one that got hurt.

E: Well being first, out away from the harbor area and then being away from Hickam Field and Ford's Island and that place which were targets for the Japanese they really didn't care about your little tents?

M: No, I wasn't only there until about, oh, I'd say ten minutes after eight, fifteen minutes at the most after they started to bomb. We went right in there because that kid at the gate, I knew him. I've forgotten his name though, was right away after, within a few minutes. And that's where I was on that. I seen a lot of it. You couldn't figure out what was going on either. You didn't know what you could do because you had nothing you could fire.

E: What kind of warning did they give you, any at all?

M: Nothing, not that I knew of.

E: In other words, the first thing you remember is looking up and seeing a plane with the zeros on them?

- M: Seeing planes right, right.
- E: And seeing the attack against the. . .
- M: Like I said, we were out about three or four miles, maybe two miles wasn't very far out.
- E: They dropped down in the bay area.
- M: Right, they disappeared but you could see. You knew something was going on.
- E: You could hear it.
- M: Right, boom, boom and I swear the island started rocking. That's the only thing we had, no warning as far as I know of. I mean it was strange to me because when I come back from morning chow with my mess gear as I said, swinging it, happy being Sunday, there was nobody there but me.
- E: It was a beautiful day too wasn't it?
- M: Oh, it was a beautiful, sun shiny day. It was really nice.
- E: Good place to be in 1941 wasn't it, up until that time, up until that time.
- M: Right, it was really--we had six men to a tent and I was the only one in the tent or anywheres near the tent. Well, like I was saying before, I don't think there was thirty-five of the whole battalion that was actually there at the immediate time then. They might have been there twenty or thirty minutes later or whatever but right at that time of the bombing that I realized what was going on there was only about thirty-five or so. There was nobody in the mess hall for chow. I was surprised. I don't know what they did with all the groceries they had cooked up. They should have checked to see who was there first I think but we had guys coming in around 1:00 and they weren't feeling too--what's the word--swift or pretty well rocking.
- E: Still under the weather.
- M: Yes.
- E: Do you know of anyone that was in your company or in your battalion who actually as we say, tied one on?

M: Yes, I think all of them did.

E: That simply didn't even know that the attack was underway and were kind of sobering up and, "What the heck happened out there in the bay?"

M: There was one kid that he come in I guess it was pretty near 11:00 or after, he was still staggering, looking around, he couldn't figure out what was going on. He looked up at the air--I don't know where he got his rifle from--and all you could see in the air was a speck. He picked his rifle up and he started shooting at that speck. I mean he was one of the ones that was really loaded, I'm telling you. I don't know how many of them but that one in particular was funny to see him shooting at that speck in the sky. Normally you couldn't hit that thing with a . . . It was just a speck way out there. I don't know what kind of a plane it was. I don't think it was one of ours. I don't think he could have gotten anywhere near it.

E: He wouldn't have hit it anyway.

M: No, nowheres near it. I don't know if he even got off the ground. Not surprisingly, because we had the newspaper from Honolulu, and they had all about, "Japan is going to do something, start a war;" they didn't know exactly when. But what the surprising thing was, was getting paid on a Saturday.

E: On the 6th, you don't recall anything in your battalion, hearing any of the officers or any--we always called them scuttlebutts that goes around.

M: Yes, right.

E: That something was about to happen?

M: We knew nothing. There wasn't nobody there really to tell you that. Because all the guys, as soon as we got paid, we got paid in the morning, first we had inspection of course, that was one of the daily routines except on Sunday or a holiday but that was a Saturday, everybody got paid on Saturday. As soon as they got paid, everybody went and got a pass to go on liberty. I was one of the few that was there.

E: This clean up that you had to do, was the whole battalion. . . ?

- M: Well yes, maybe not all, everybody but they might have a group, like a clean up group that you had to clean up this certain area and you had to clean up that part and there was another group someplace else. It didn't take long really, as far as where we were because I guess we were on our way to Wake Island, if they hadn't bombed then, maybe a couple weeks later we would have been on Wake.
- E: How long did your battalion work on this clean up?
- M: Oh, a couple days, I mean the Marine Corp is always noted for police work, that's what we called it. Everything had to be ship-shape all the time. It's like I told you before, in Cuba, you had to back out of your tent. Everything had to be--cigarette butts, that used to make me mad, picking up cigarette butts because I didn't smoke. Now why am I picking up somebody else's cigarette butts for, but that's part of your duty.
- E: Did you just clean up your own area?
- M: Well, certain areas, yes. You might have been assigned that day to do a certain other area besides where you were. Half of the battalion was out on different points of different places. They had guys in anti-aircraft, maybe sixty or seventy guys, how many it was I don't quite remember. I think that was about what it was, a battery as they called it. But I was right down in the harbor after that working in guard duty or whatever. You had to pull guard duty no matter what.
- E: You didn't help with any of the cleanup and salvage operations on any of the ships?
- M: No, we didn't go on aboard any ship. It was just the area where we were, and things like that, but very little really.
- E: What about the threat of a Japanese invasion, did your outfit take that pretty seriously or you just waited till. . .?
- M: Well, I don't know what our commanding officers or anybody thought but we thought they could have taken it if they wanted because it don't seem like, the way things were they weren't very well organized for a thing of that nature. It just seemed like it was all set up. Seemed like that because everything was--look, like us, we didn't have no ammunition, we didn't have any rifles,

nothing and I don't know how many personnel or service personnel was on the island at the time as far as Army Navy and Marine Corp. But the Navy was all there and they had what they call port and starboard liberty, half of the detachment aboard ship would go on liberty, the other half was supposed to be there in case something happened. But at the time, I'm not sure what went on then even really because I wasn't aboard the Navy ship at the time. But everybody was really trying to do the best they could. They didn't know what to do maybe because there was very little you could do. When they started strafing, there was nothing you could do if you were on a truck or unless you had some kind of anti-aircraft or machine gun or something to fire at them.

E: You don't recall any kind of an attempt on the part of the Navy, you didn't see the Navy. . .?

M: Trying to get out?

E: Trying to get out or any of that kind of stuff?

M: No, because I think they were bottled in. A couple of them did get out though. I'm pretty sure they did.

E: Yes, yes they did.

M: Smaller. To my knowledge, I don't think it happened too quick. In other words, they had enough in there to really destroy a lot of the ships to keep them quite where they were. To get out of there would have been more trouble than just sitting there I think.

E: Yes, they might have sunk them in the channel.

M: Right.

E: There's another thing too, the very fact that they did it on a Sunday morning which was characteristic of even in today of kind of a lull or the least activity.

M: But wasn't that the eighth over in Japan, of course it still wouldn't make any difference, it was the seventh still.

E: Yes, that's what they wanted to plan by, our date.

M: Yes, because that was a Sunday, right. But we really enjoyed, I did anyway, the service even during all the Guadalcanal and all that sort of thing.

E: What did you do when you moved into the barracks there at Pearl?

M: Well, I got stuck with mess duty at the time. See, then if you were just a private or PFC, you had to do thirty days a year. But the other fellows were out on gunning placements and anti-aircraft, whatever but I was still attached to a thirty caliber. You were on the perimeter of everything and that's where I spent, well, I don't know if I was there thirty days. I think I was but that's what I did then. Then you always got to pull guard duty, not at the same time you're on mess duty at the time. I don't know what they do today as far as mess duty goes. That was a ritual, once a year, thirty days, you had to do mess duty, private or PFC, non-coms, no. That was pretty nice, you could do anything you want. We had liberty every other day. Of course, when I went on liberty I just went into the YMCA and worked out and then went out for a swim on Waikiki Beach but other than that I didn't fool around drinking like all the rest. All they want to do is drink, drink, drink. That was a regular ritual with them. I like to to out and look at the country side and see what was all around Diamond Head or something like that.

E: How long did you stay there in the barracks then?

M: I don't remember how long I stayed at the barracks as such, but I remember we were in the barracks from December until around March then we went to an island below Guadalcanal called--the New Hebrides did--it was called Luganville. We were just training there and then a few weeks after they went out on Guadalcanal we were out with them there too. I went in with what they called the third defense. I wasn't there when they made the landing or anything like that. But I really don't like to talk about too much there because it's too involved really. I forget half of what went on even the scary part. The fun part, there was fun, even there too. But at Pearl Harbor everybody was saying that they caught a small two man sub in the nets, I think, and they were sealed in there because I remember they were burning the tower part of the sub off and when we were loading to go to Wake Island, they had to burn it off, and when they burn it off I don't know how long those Japanese were in that two man sub but you could smell it. Oh boy it was terrible and you didn't have to be right there either. I mean, I remember seeing it from a distance burning the top of it off as we were loading. As far as that December 7, I think that a lot of fellows

would do little things a little different if they knew what was going on. I think that things would have been set up different really because, like the group I was with, like I said, we had no ammunition, no hard hats, no nothing. Everything was put away, no pistols, everything was put away from coming up from Cuba.

- E: You kind of get the impression they just did not expect it to be.
- M: Well, not right, right then I don't think because it was just too pat and if they did get any warnings, which I read that they did, it was so unbelievable that, "No, they can't do that." But that was something.
- E: There was an awful lot of Japanese or certainly Japanese descent who lived in the Hawaiian chain. Do you recall any activity, the activity of rounding them up, doing anything of that sort?
- M: No, we never bothered anybody, as far as I know because I know a lot of them worked at the harbor. A lot of them had to be there to work. Right away, like the guys in the Marine Corp, you had to have a haircut at least once a week and they had civilian barbers that used to go on liberty and cut their hair and right away they were complaining because the service men weren't getting their hair cut as usual or as much as they did from the civilians. They had girls, women, men, but they were, like you said, Japanese descent or some type which I wouldn't know one from the other really, not now anyway, or then either. So they stayed away from them and they were complaining that or any type of restaurant where oriental or that type of people would be serving you or had owned the restaurant, they all shyed away from that sort of thing. But as far as rounding anybody up like they did in the States, I was really shocked when I heard that, because I didn't believe it, I never knew anything about it really but there no, I don't think they ever did anything like that, not to my knowledge.
- E: What about the curfew that was instituted right away?
- M: Right away, I think it was just around 6:00 in the evening I think. We had had liberty from before noon, somewhere before noon until 6:00, but you had to be back at your base or your station before dark, at least around 6:00. I think, as I remember it, it was 6:00. It was real early in the evening anyway. But when we were going into the harbor, on the truck I was on,

civilian people, women and everybody was altogether different before you could drive in a truck and they didn't even see you. Everybody was giving you the peace sign, waving to you, what a quick change that was, really. It seemed funny though. Just because of the harbor getting bombed and the Japs, they were really looking forward to you helping or whatever the case may be. They were really different. It seemed like it turned them right over, before they didn't pay any attention to you.

E: What about the attitude in your battalion or even in the Marine Corp itself, from that attack on December 7, did you notice any change in the attitude of the people in your company?

M: Yes, very much, because they seemed like they wanted to go get them. They figured it wasn't going to last but three or four days the way they thought. They forgot about island jumping or what do you want to call it when you get there. But right away, "Let's go get them, let's get them. Let's get even with these people." They told all this and done this and done that what they did on that day. Everybody was all gung-ho, "Let's go." They would have left then right then and right up and made an invasion of Japan I think. That was the attitude most of them had.

E: What would you guess would be the average age of your battalion?

M: Most of them were, I would say, not much over twenty or twenty-one, most of them. Because I had been twenty-one in January, and they bombed on December 7, so I was about the average age. I would say between nineteen and twenty-one, twenty-two at the most, most of them, somewhere in that area. It wasn't real old.

E: What about the age of the officers?

M: Well, they were all young too. We picked them up when we went, like I went and joined the group on Parris Island. We went to Cuba, then we went to the Harbor, then everything seemed like everybody got busted up there. They didn't stay together very much. I got shipped out a different way, whatever. But the officers, a few of ours were just young. I mean they were just plain new. I would say maybe the same time I was in, say eighteen months to two years and they were maybe a year or two older because most of them, at the

time would probably have to have college to get to be an officer, they didn't come up through the ranks, those would have been a lot older. But you also had older ones, like the colonels. You used to have so many years in before you could make from a second lieutenant to a first lieutenant to a captain. I think a captain had to be something like eleven years when you made captain. A major was something like fourteen or sixteen and those type of people would be a little older. But soon as the war broke out, if you were in the right place, even with people like myself, enlisted, if you were in the right place at the right time, you could go right through them. You could go right to the top, but if you weren't you just struggled along. I enjoyed being what I was, I mean, I wasn't interested in being a top sergeant or anything like that. I was more interested in just being me.

E: After Pearl Harbor you went to Guam?

M: Yes, we went to all the islands, Guadalcanal, and Munda, and at Tulagi. We went Luganville then Bougainville then I come back to the states after. Like I said, I got home in forty-nine months. Then I was over being homesick until I seen Mom and she starts, "My boy." I didn't even hardly shave, I had a moustache, hair on my chest. She wasn't used to that before when I left. Things looked a little different and she cried when I got home. I was already over being homesick, I really enjoyed it then.

E: Did you then spend the rest of the war state-side?

M: No, I come back and right away we went down to camp--I mean I was there--Camp La Jeune for four or five months or something, somewhere near there. Then a few of us got a chance to go to what they call sea school to go aboard a cruiser or whatever, Navy ship, I should say, not a cruiser but that's what I went on. We went to sea school on the west coast. They had a sea school there and they had one up at Norfolk, Virginia I think they were. And that just taught you what to do aboard ship. The routine was just like boot camp really although I had already had over four years, it was just like going through boot camp again. And then they needed three Marines to go aboard with the light cruisers they called it. It was in Nashville and they took the three top best Marines they told us. Then my buddy and I and another fellow went aboard. Of course we could have been the best, maybe we weren't but . . . But then we

went aboard ship and I seen everything I'd seen before, I mean a lot of the islands. And I was also up at Sumatra, we went ashore there a couple of times, Borneo, couldn't find a wild man there though. We went through the Philippines and as the war ended we were just on the outside of Okinawa and our Marine captain come up this one day and told us the war had actually ended. He said, "Well, McCleery, you can pack your sea bags." I said, "What for." He said, "Well, you can go home." See I was what they called at the convenience of the Government. After my enlistment was up they just kept me. I didn't want to re-enlist because my mother kept telling me, "Don't stay in. Don't stay in." Then my kid brother was killed in Europe. He was in a B-17 on Christmas Day of 1944. But she kept yapping, "Don't stay in." So Mom had a thing with me, all she had to do was shed a tear and I said, "Ah well." But when we were there I said, "I'm going with the ship." He said, "Where's the ship going?" I said, "Well, it's going to China," as you know. He said, "Oh, you go to China you'll never get out of the Marine Corp." I wished I could stay in, I told him the same thing. So we went to China for thirty days, Shanghai, and it was real nice. And you're never a Marine till you've been to China. That was the old saying when I first went there. You're not a Marine till you've been to China so I made sure I went to China. It was beautiful.

E: Then you came home then as quickly as they could. . .

M: Well, like I said, then I stayed a thirty days longer. By the time I got home it was sometime in November. November 8, I think it was of 1945 that I really got discharged from Bainbridge Naval Station down right outside of Baltimore. They tried to bring you back to the closest place that you enlisted so it didn't cost you nothing. If they could drop you off here then it wouldn't cost you anything but that's what, twenty cents a mile or whatever. But as a whole though I really enjoyed the service before. Once I got over being homesick, oh boy, I really enjoyed every single minute.

E: Of all the experiences that you've had in the Second World War, are there any that stand out more than any of the rest?

M: Well, only Pearl Harbor. That other stuff, you expected it, with Pearl Harbor you didn't. That was one of those things that was a surprise. I mean although you knew something was going to happen, you didn't expect any of

that, really you didn't. And there was talk of things of that nature but other than that very few. Even when we were on Guadalcanal, things that had happened, today you just wonder if it did happen because it just seems unreal. Was I ever in the service? I got pictures to show I was but I mean in you mind, did that really happen? Was I at Pearl Harbor? Or whatever your interest might be.

E: Were you ever under kamikaze attack?

M: No, but on the Island of Vella Lavella there was a zero coming in strafing us, there was Corsair, an American Corsair strafing the zero and a zero on the tail of the Corsair. So he drove this Japanese right into the ground and he could pull out. The other Japanese hit right in the back end of him. It just looked like tail to tail practically, both of them. He just pulled out and went on. You see a zero couldn't maneuver that quickly.

E: Yes, they didn't have that pull out ability.

M: He was just going a little faster but that was funny, he was strafing us, he was strafing the zero and the zero was strafing him, but as soon as he pulled out they went boom, boom right together. I guess that happened about oh, maybe 100 yards on the other side of us where we were coming through the jungle there. We hit a little opening like.

E: I just wondered say some of those people who were at Pearl who were also part of that Kamikaze attack if there was any type of similarities between the Japanese bombings but primarily at Pearl Harbor, it was the ships. This is what they were interested in.

M: Right, definitely. It don't seem like anything else was hit besides them really.

E: Except the planes at Hickam.

M: Right, Hickam and there was a couple other bases, Wheeler Field or something?

E: Wheeler and the Naval Air Stations.

M: See, I knew very little about the names or anything except for Hickam field but I knew very little of it, and Scoc Field, I've heard Scoc Field, it was just on the other side. Other than that I knew nothing of these

other little air forces or air ports.

E: Well, you had just really gotten there.

M: Right, we just got there six days before and even though we stayed there a month or two, I still didn't associate any of the other things besides where I was or the harbor.

E: Were you able to see the B-17's Flying Fortresses come in at Pearl?

M: I remember them but I don't remember exactly at what time. They said that come in about 7:00 or 7:30 in the evening didn't they?

E: Yes.

M: But I don't remember that as well as I did the one in the morning the planes, really I don't remember that one, not that much. I don't even know where they landed.

E: Seeing those planes come in, they even took shots, people were panicky. Then of course the only base that could take them would be Hickam.

M: They were on their way in anyway weren't they?

E: Yes, by the time the attack had come, they had already left the States and they had just enough fuel to make it. They started picking it up I guess, oh, a couple hundred miles out they picked up the news of the attack but they were new to the area and they didn't associate what all the problem was at first.

M: I'm trying to remember what time they came in but I can't. I read an article from one of the pamphlets from there that said something about around 7:00 or 7:30 in the evening but I think it would have to be earlier than that.

E: It seemed to me it was earlier but . . .

M: It did to me too.

E: Well, is there anything else that you like to add?

M: Not right at the present time no. I don't remember anything else.

E: I think I've asked all the questions I had in mind.
Well, thank you very kindly for giving us your time.

M: Yes, thank you very much for the interview.

END OF INTERVIEW