

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
PEARL HARBOR SURVIVORS

PEARL HARBOR SURVIVORS
O.H. 1651

Robert W. Stone
Interview
By
Dirk Hermance
On
August 6, 1993

Robert William Stone

Robert Stone was born on July 15, 1921 to Robert James and Jenny Reese Stone. His father was a policeman and they lived on Willis Ave. in Youngstown, Ohio. He attended Monroe School as a child until he moved to 56 Edgehill Road. Under financial hardship, the family moved to 161 Delason Avenue. He attended Princeton Junior High and South High School, quitting school in 1940 so he could enlist in the Navy. He enlisted on October 8, 1940 and went to the Great Lakes Naval Training Center for Basic Training. He was sent to San Francisco and was assigned to the *U.S.S. Ramsey*, a converted 4-stack destroyer from World War I. The ship was sent to Pearl Harbor where the crew was given further training. He was the 'hot shell' man for the three-inch guns on his ship. He was temporarily assigned to the receiving station at Pearl Harbor to attend Mine School on December 7, 1941. On Pearl Harbor Day, he was transported by truck to the *U.S.S. Pennsylvania* where he helped control fires on the ship after the attack. He subsequently became a mine man and was sent to Mare Island Naval Shipyard in late 1942 to assemble mines for the Aleutian region. He was discharged on December 21, (?) 1946, and returned to Youngstown.

Mr. Stone is a widower, having married his wife Betty Jean on March 8, 1947 and they had a daughter, Carol Ann. Mr. Stone was last employed by the First Federal Savings Bank, where he worked in the printing and supply department until he retired on July 15, 1986. He received a Victory Medal, an Asiatic Theatre medal, an American defense medal, and a Pearl Harbor Medal. He is a member of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, and the Aut Mori Grotto. His interests include studying history, particularly the attack on Pearl Harbor.

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
PEARL HARBOR SURVIVORS
O.H. 1651

INTERVIEWEE: Robert W. Stone

INTERVIEWER: Dirk E. Hermance

SUBJECT: Pearl Harbor Survivors

DATE: August 6, 1993

DH: This is an oral history interview with Robert W. Stone, he lives 2455 Chaney Circle, in Youngstown, Ohio. The date today is August 6, 1993, and the time is a little bit after two in the afternoon. He is being interviewed by Dirk Hermance. Tell me a little bit about how you came to be in Youngstown, your family life here, where did you grow up here?

RS: Well I was born in 1921 at that time my dad was a policeman and we lived on Willis Ave. for a few years, I don't recall, I was pretty young. I went to Monroe School, and then later on my dad moved us to, I can't remember how many years we lived on Willis, but from here we went to Wickcliff. My dad had bought a house at, 56, Edgell, and we lived there for about six years, I went to Fitch High School for six years. Then my dad, had it rough. He had to work on WPA for a while, then he worked for FB Smith Chevrolet, as a salesman until 1936. He was a deputy sheriff under Sheriff Ralph Elser. We moved over to West Delason at 161, and he rented a two story house. We lived there for six years. He rented a room to a registered nurse, and a spinster up on the third floor. It was all floored and everything so we stayed there for six years. I went to South High School, I went to Princeton Junior High, after I lived over there until 1940. Then in 1940 my dad started to build his own house, out in Boardman on Staford Ave. Southern Boulevard. Then I joined the Navy, October 8, 1940 for six years. At that time, previously it had been four years. I always remember my dad said, that's a long time son. Well I went in for six years. I went to Great Lakes Training Station, the Great Lakes near Walkigen, Illinois, which I _____ old hometown. I went there six weeks, and I got home for about three or four days after I had been there three weeks. Then I went back to the training station. Then around just the last part of November, maybe the 26th the 27th, we got orders to a train in Illinois and traveled to San Francisco.

DH: This is 1940?

RS: 1940. It would be November of 1940. While we were at Great Lakes we had a nice picture taken of us at our graduation. I was in company 88 at Great Lakes. So anyway we got to

San Francisco, I'll never forget, I forget how many men were in our draft but this chief petty officer asked one of the long shore man where's Pier 46? That's where we had to get on the ship. He said way down there on the dock. Well we had our big sea bags with all our clothes in and they were heavy. Well we had to walk down all the way to Pier 46. To mine layers, they were former destroyers in the first war, *U.S.S. Ramsay*, *Montgomery*, the *Gamble*, and the *Breeze*. So they were all tied side by side by the dock. So we went aboard, I'll never forget, the lieutenant commander was the captain on the *Ramsay* and he started talking to the boys he said, now all of us are green as grass and have never been on a ship in our life. So the compliment on those ships was around 125 men. So the captain was talking and said now you boys do the best at what you don't like so you can get what you do want. That was his pep talk and then he asked how many wanted to go down to the engine room, who wanted to work on the deck force, work on the deck with the boats and stuff like that and the guns. So I selected the deck force, and that was on Sunday night. We got on the *Ramsay* and the other ships, they all got so many men. So on Monday morning we set sail for Pearl Harbor. Now these ships were all built in 1918, they were 4-stackers and they had been converted into mine layers. They carried sixty mines and depth charges on the stern. They had four, four-inch guns and 50 caliber machine guns and a three-inch anti-aircraft guns. They were all built in 1918, even the guns weren't hydraulic like the new destroyers. So they just couldn't push and shoot them up in the air real fast. So anyway, I got on the *Ramsay* and we set sail Monday morning. There were men getting seasick before we even got out of the harbor, San Francisco. "I was never seasick- lucky".

DH: No kidding.

RS: because of the swells. So I'm up on the deck floor sitting, in fact I didn't even have a job. The Bowsin mate hadn't even told me what to do yet. So finally one of them came over and said what are you doing? And I said right now no one has told me to do anything yet. So he got me a job sanding chairs and some others also on chairs. So everyone has some kind of job to do. So I found out later in the Navy, is that seamen, when you first get on there, you don't have a rating. You're not a petty officer yet. You have the job of painting. They have a lot of rust problems, you have to wire brush, you have to use steel wool. You have to use bright work polish to keep the brass shiny. In 1940, all the brass on the ship was shined. The gangway with the brass rails and then all the green from the water from the ocean when we would go out on maneuvers. So you would have to get bright work polish and shine that all up. So that would be your job. It was a continuous cycle. Wire brush, scrape and paint, and get the salt water, was really hard on the paint. So that's what we did on the *Ramsay* going over to Pearl Harbor. It took four days, twenty-five hundred miles to get to Pearl Harbor.

DH: When you got to Pearl, what did they have you do?

RS: Well we got into Pearl Harbor, and the ships went, if I recall, the ships all tied up to the buoys in Pearl Harbor. They called it Pearl City. It's part of the harbor itself. It's tied up at buoys and then they have a Liberty Boat running to the docks when they go on liberty. It brings you back and forth. "I got to Pearl Harbor on December 3, 1940; my ship at the

time of the attack on December 7 was the *USS Ramsey*. I worked for the deck force and was assigned different jobs. I was only a seaman second class. You get these jobs like look out, top of the mast. If you are lucky, you get to be a petty officer third class in what type of work you like later. I picked storekeeper, working supply and pay office. I was pay officer for four years, 1942-1946.

DH: Now this is December of '40?

RS: Yes. This was in peacetime, but then during the year of 1941 all the ships had all brass painted over each ship. They were painted dark gray, they were light gray before. Yeah, this was in '41 I think President Roosevelt declared a National Emergency in the early part of '41. They painted the ships all dark gray, they paint over the brass so it wouldn't shine. We would go out at sea at night on maneuvers, and we would have a little blue light on the stern showing, that's all. So we would go out on maneuvers at Pearl Harbor. We would go out, oh maybe for a week, maybe every two or three weeks, we would go out for target practice and things like that. Dropping the mines, and they used sand, for weight, in the mines in peacetime. They had cables attached to the mines, it was called an anchor mine, it would stay in exactly one place, had to know exactly how deep the water was. They would drop the mine, it would be on a box like on a track. They would release that brake and it would roll off, and the ball would unwind, the big steel cable inside the ball, then the box would go to the bottom and stay on the bottom of the ocean, and the cable would be straight up and down, and they would call it an anchor mine. The mine was ten feet underwater and you couldn't see it. They would have these points, these cone-shaped things on the mine, if a ship came along and hit one of the cones that would set off the charge. It would set off the detonator first, it was like an acid or something that works on a detonator, and then the detonator would blow up the main charge. It would be anywhere from 300 lbs. of TNT in there.

DH: But the ones they gave you were sand?

RS: They were just practice, but what they had at that time they were just used in peacetime, this was just practice maneuvers. They were filled with sand for weight ballast. This was peacetime, no TNT in the mines during 1940. They had depth charges on the stern for submarines in the war. If we went out for target practice they would fire the four-inch guns and they might have a tug pulling the target, you might have an airplane pulling a target. Usually an airplane would pull a target for an anti-aircraft gun, a three-inch gun. I was a hot shell man on that gun. I had to wear big asbestos gloves. When the shell casing comes flying out, you have to catch it. In peacetime you saved the brass shell casing, they were expensive. So you had to watch you don't get hit in the face with it, you had these big asbestos gloves on. So we would practice on the guns, the four-inch guns, on the four ships in the division. Whoever got the best target practice, did the best would get pennant on their mast, on their ship as a reward for the best target shooting. So we would go out on maneuvers, like I said, every two or three weeks, because the ships burned oil, and they had storage tanks on shore, but all this oil had to be brought in from the states to supply these tanks. They had a few tankers, but not that many. In those days we didn't refuel out at sea very often.

DH: Did they have live mines available?

RS: Yes, at the ammunition depot at Pearl Harbor until the war started.

DH: They had them there.

RS: On the ship we had, they dropped practice mines, I can't say for sure. I don't think they had live mines on the ship at that time. I'm quite sure.

DH: They just carried practice ones. Sand ballast or weight.

RS: Just practice ones, because there wasn't any war on. They had nothing to worry about, but they did have depth charges on the stern. Then they had two 50-caliber machine guns, three-inch antiaircraft, four four-inch, and a compliment of one hundred and twenty one men. Usually the captain was the lieutenant commander, the full lieutenant was the executive officer, and then they had a few lieutenants junior grade and second and third class ensigns, and in those days they were all graduates of Annapolis. All Annapolis, no reserves, all straight USN. So I would say the term of the office, or the captain might be under the duty for probably two or three years. Then they would be transferred.

DH: So you were a hot shell man?

RS: Yes. We had to catch the empty shell casing when the gun fired. The shell casing was brass, they were expensive, we had to save them and use the casing over.

DH: Your job was to take the empties from the three-inch guns?

RS: Right, I was working on the guns, and I would have to catch the shell casings when they came out. You had to have a fast hand to catch them, they were hot, you could get burnt bad. We would be firing at an airplane target being towed. This one time we were the plane was coming over, and by the time we got the gun up in the air the plane was too far away. We couldn't even get a shot at it, because this gun was built in 1918, it wasn't hydraulic.

DH: Too slow?

RS: Oh yeah the *Ramsay*, *Breeze*, *Montgomery* and *Gamble* were built in 1918. New destroyers were hydraulic, they were very fast. So like I say so after I got into Pearl Harbor, we got in there on Thursday. So I was there, in Pearl Harbor, let's say December 28th, 29th up until September the 15th, 1942.

DH: All that time?

RS: I was there for a while. I was transferred to the rec station for a month to await my orders. The attack was on 12/41. All the destroyers, mine layers got out of the harbor, never saw

the Jap ships.

DH: Now how did you get transferred? You got transferred off the *Ramsey*?

RS: Well when the attacks were over the ships left Pearl Harbor, and all of the kitchen help and crew meanders were transferred to Westlock, mine ammunition depot Pearl Harbor. I was on the *Ramsey*, so at that time I was an apprentice. When I went into the Navy I was a seaman second on the *Ramsey*, but I still wasn't a petty officer yet. So the highest rating I got, on the ship, was seaman first. Now when you're a seaman first you get a pay raise. At that time when we went into the Navy, twenty-one dollars a month, and when you made seaman second class, you made thirty-six dollars. Then, I think, seaman first was fifty-four. Then once you made third class petty officer you got to sixty-six. Then from there petty officer second was seventy-two, and first class was eighty-four. Then the Chief Petty Officer Tempert-99- end of the year got permanent rating had to have one for one year, before he was a permanent rating. He had to be active one year. He would get ninety-nine dollars a month, and then after a year he would get one hundred and twenty-six dollars. Then every three years you would get five percent added to your base pay. Then every four years you would get a hash mark. If you were a good sailor, good conduct you got gold hash marks, otherwise you got red ones. So there was a few in there, and then your enlistment time in those days, and I think retirement for officers was sixty-five, and probably enlisted men was sixty-five at the most. I would say you became a chief petty officer you could stay in the Navy, and maybe stay in there twenty years. You had to be a certain age to go into the Navy in the first place. I don't think you could be over eighteen and go in the Navy to enlist at that time. Eighteen, twenty around in there. They had a certain age. I think it was twenty-one. Eighteen was the earliest you could join the Navy, and twenty-one, as far as age, you couldn't join after twenty-one. So you signed up for whatever the term was at that time; I signed up for six years. So anyway, let me get back to what I was talking about...

DH: Moving from the *Ramsey* to the *Pennsylvania*.

RS: I was still a member of crew on *Ramsay* when I transferred to the receiving station on temporary duty. All sailors off the *Ramsay* and others never saw the *USS Ramsay* again. I was on the *Ramsay*, in Pearl Harbor, from December or November 1940 up until about maybe two weeks before the Pearl Harbor attack. So you could say I went up to the receiving station from the *Ramsey* around, well the attack was December 7th, I had to be up there only about a week or two before the attacks. So I figured I went up there sometime around November the 20th of 1940, I went to the receiving station on temporary duty, on KP duty to help with the kitchen in the mess hall. Due to the fact, that each ship in the division was sending seamen, second and first class, to line school. They were forming a new rate of mine men, and they had to go to Westlock Ammunition Depot, Pearl Harbor, they had to be Seaman First Class, to learn all about the mine and how it was assembled. So they had volunteers, I don't know exactly how many from each ship, the term for school would usually be maybe four to six weeks. So they were sending two mess cooks, two men out of each ship; that would be eight men would be working the kitchen. Say two men from each ship would be on KP duty for the time period that these men were going to

mine school. They were birthed at the receiving station, they would finish their school in the day, then they would come to the receiving station and eat their meal and sleep there. So that gave extra burden on the kitchen, more men to feed and more dishes to wash. So in turn, each shift furnished two men to help in the kitchen until these men finished their mine school and then we would all go back to the *Ramsey* and the other ships. So I was there on temporary duty.

DH: Were you going to mine school?

RS: I worked on mines, delivered parts for mine No, I was still a seaman, but I had passed an examination for third class shore keeper while I was on the *Ramsey*, but just before I got transferred to the receiving station on temporary duty I passed the exam for third class shore keeper. Now shore keeper worked in supplies or the pay office.

DH: So they sent you to KP, because they had they other guys going to mine school?

RS: Right, because at that time there wasn't an opening formally for a shore keeper. They would have to find a place for me before they could, I could get transferred. In the meantime, I was on temporary duty. In peacetime, for that year in 1940 that I was on the *Ramsey* and '41, December of 1940 and all through 1941, up until the attack. I was on the *Ramsey*, it was peacetime. We would have overnight liberty, weekend liberty, and in those days they had starboard port liberty. Half the crew goes on liberty one weekend, the next weekend the port side goes on liberty. So that is the way that worked. Then they had, during the night, during the week, you might have a certain number of days you could go on liberty at night, but you had to be back at eight o'clock the next morning. Our ship had a wash machine, they washed our clothes. They had a barber, someone to do the haircuts for us. In those days, like I said, we didn't make much money, but we had three hundred dollars worth of clothing, get into us at Great Lakes, we had our shoes, our blankets, our mattress, our uniforms, blue and white uniforms. So we had three hundred dollars worth of clothes so we didn't have to buy any clothes for a long time. You take care of things, and everything had to be very clean. They would have inspection on Saturday, the captain would go with the executive officer, they would wear white gloves, and they better make sure the departments are clean. The executive officer was responsible to the captain, make sure the ship was clean. All the sailors would be lined up for inspection in white uniforms. You had to be checked for shaves, haircuts, shoe shines, no spots on your uniform. Before they would go on liberty at one o'clock, when it was parked, the starboard port liberty. They had to pass inspection. If they had any spots on their uniform, the inspecting officer would say you are restricted you can't go on liberty until you change your uniform, so that would throw that out. You had to be clean, haircut, and all that. So that would be inspection every Saturday at one o'clock they would have inspection.

DH: Now during November of '41, was the tension level high? Was there a lot of uncertainty?

RS: Let's say the Army and Navy were worried about sabotage. Army had planes side by side.

Japs set them on fire when they dived down, very few planes were left. They were like sitting ducks. Let me get back to '40 and finish that first. While I was on the Ramsey in that year in '41 in peacetime before the attack our ship would go maybe once every three weeks for maneuvers, target practice, and in those days the brass was still shining and they were painted light gray. But then in 1941, the later part of 1941, President Roosevelt declared a National Emergency, and I think they gave England fifty of these four-stacker destroyers, like I was on. My ship was a destroyer in the first war, they were very good destroyers when they were new, and they were three hundred and ten feet long and a hundred and twenty-five men compliment. I told you about the guns and everything.

DH: Right.

RS: We would go into overhaul once every six months, they'd put in dry dock. They would have to chip off all the paint and repaint the bottom. Take all the barnacles off, and every man on the ship was over the side and works on that. The first thing you do is scrape all the barnacles off as the water is going down in the dry dock. Then we would have to take air hammers and chip the rest of the paint. Then after we're done with that the civilians would come in and sandblast the ship. Then they would put anti-corrosive paint on first and checked for colors and checked underneath, and makes sure there is no damage on the ship and rudders, and they would check it all out. Then they would put anti-folic paint on to keep the barnacles off. Well that would be a job. And once every six months the ship would have to go in there, because the barnacles would way the ship down eventually. So when it would go in the dry dock the water would be level with the ocean. It would move into dry dock and shifted the dry dock waters and then started letting the water out. As the water was going out, they would go around in a what they call a punch. They had a long handled thing, something like a hoe, and they would scrape the barnacles off the side of the ship as they were going down. So by the time the water went out, they had most of the barnacles off. Then they would start the chipping with the air hammers. The chip would rest on big horses, like they had big steel _____.

Each dry dock had horses built that the ship was supposed to be under. Like cruises, battleships, would have certain size horses for them to rest on, and they would just sit in the cradle. So when the water come down they'd go right in that cradle. They had one for destroyers, and that's what the *Ramsay* had. So when you were in dry dock, finally the water would be all out and you could get down there. You would be looking up underneath the ship, and the ship was three hundred feet long, looked mighty big. So I can imagine what an aircraft carrier looked like.

DH: Yeah really.

RS: In those days even the officers had to help. As a rule, when they were going into dry dock they would remove all the ammunition off the ship.

DH: Take it all off?

RS: If they were going to be in there. Sometimes the men would stay on the ship, but they would have all the dangerous materials off the ship at the time as a rule.

DH: In November of '41 were you on alert?

RS: In 1941 President Roosevelt declared an emergency. We still went out on maneuvers, but at night we wouldn't have our lights on anymore, on the ship, the only thing we had was a little blue light on the stern. We would, they had all the brass painted over, the ships were painted dark gray. All four ships would be together on the maneuvers. So one night, the *Ramsey*, we were going along and for some reason they turned the search light on. When they turned searchlight on, the breeze was blowing right across, right in front of our bow. We came mighty close to a collision. I heard the captain holler, back her down full speed. Everybody grabbed hold of something, and we thought for sure we were going to run right into the *Breeze*. Now how they got there I don't know, but they got out of position somehow. So we were lucky there was no collision. Those ships, their plates are only about a quarter of an inch thick and three hundred and ten feet long, and the bowl was pretty sharp. So if we would have hit them we probably would have cut a hole right in it. Then one night we were out on maneuvers and a sailor had appendicitis. I think it was on the *Breeze*, and they had to go right back into the harbor and get him off so he could get operated on. But in '41, after the emergency we never went with our lights on our ships. All the portholes were close so no light showed out. The only light we had was our search light, and it was turned off, but they could come on if we needed them. But we were alerted for submarines or anything like that. The Japanese were getting restless. Nobody knew for sure or expected any attack at Pearl Harbor though. We would go out on maneuvers and we would be out of sight of the islands, so I don't know how many miles out we would be. Then in peacetime, 1941, we had to have boats ready if planes crashed on take off or landing on the aircraft carrier, *Lexington*. We had to stay close in case of a plane crash there. Long with a motor on it. Our job was have a boat ready to lower in case a pilot crashed his plane, either taking off or landing, and we would have to go pick up a pilot. So we would have to go along with the aircraft carrier. So we had to be prepared in case anything even happened. Well, fortunately, we never had to pick up any pilots, but we had to refuel often and that took a lot of time. I was up in the crow's nest and, the crow's nest was right even with the flight deck. The *Lexington* and the *Saratoga* were sister ships. The *Saratoga* was on the East Coast and they were about 900 ft long. They were the biggest carriers there were. They were originally battle cruisers, that's what they were labeled, battle cruisers, but then they were labeled as battle cruisers. So they were very big ships. I was up in the crow's nest, a come along side, and that is one job. The heaving line is like a rope, it had this knot on the end. Well they have to, when the ships are close together, they can't get too close or else they would smash each other and damage each other. So they had to stay so many feet apart when they are refueling, and these hoses are big. Well they get the hose over there and first they have to throw a heaving light over there. That's either shot by a gun or, if they are close enough, they can throw it over. Well when they get that and it's fastened to the big lines, then they would fasten that to the holds, then they pull the holds over. Then they would have to connect the hoses. Well then the ships have to be so close together, so it won't snap the hoses and break them apart. So then they would refuel, because the destroyer can't carry enough oil to go the distance like an aircraft carrier. So they would get them refueled, and we did that maybe twice. Then the target practice and everything and we had liberty on the

week, every other weekend. At peacetime they were very strict in the Navy. Everything had to be clean. I was a mess cook on the *Ramsey*, if you were an unrated man, I was a mess cook. I was captain of the head, and when they said, oh your going to be captain of the head I didn't exactly know what that was. Well I found out, well it's captain of the latrines. So I did each of those jobs. When you are seamen second class or seamen first class you get all these jobs until you are a petty officer, third class. That gives you a reason or, say a desire to be a petty officer so you can get away from those types of jobs. So in the meantime while you are on the ship you are on the deck force, you're a lookout, you have to help with the boats. You had to keep the decks clean in the compartment, you had to swap the decks in the compartment, they had linoleum floors, we had to use creosote. We used to wash the decks down with salt water, and they had evaporators on there to make fresh water. So we had to be very conservative on our showers, so we didn't use too much fresh water, because it was a very hot job for the, lack gang they called them, that worked in the engine room to evaporate water and make fresh water all the time. So that was a big job for them.

DH: How did you end up on the *Pennsylvania*?

RS: When the attack started I was in the receiving station during the start of the first wave attack. Three trucks pulled up, 300 men at the receiving station and I got on the trucks. It left me at the ship *USS Pennsylvania*. On the *Pennsylvania*, do you want me to tell you about the attack when it first started or no?

DH: Well yeah, you were on the *Pennsylvania* or....

RS: during the 1st wave attack. I hosed water on he two crashed down destroyers in dry dock. It had been bombed, and the oil tankers were burning. No I was, well I will tell you exactly. Alright 1940, like I said I was there in peacetime, and you want to know what exactly I did on the *Ramsey*? Well I was mess cook, I was chief petty officer's mess cook for approximately a month. We had to carry trees to the vessel, and the ship would be rolling and rocking while we were out at sea. It would be rough, you had to watch. We had steel decks so a lot of the men would sleep on the decks at night out at sea. It was pleasant. We wouldn't get much rain and it was cooler. So like I said I was on the *Ramsey* up until the Pearl Harbor attack. About two weeks before the attack I was transferred off the *Ramsey* to the receiving station at the fleet landing at Pearl Harbor. I was sent there as on KP duty as a mess cook. They call them in the Navy, mess cooks. So I calculated there was at least two of us from each ship, so that would give them eight mess cooks. There job was to work in the kitchen, and they had regular conveyers thing, they had trays, metal trays, they had plates and everything. They had to be washed, and they had to be in scalding water and all that. The Navy was very clean. The mess hall was all yellow tiles. The mess hall was immaculate. The Navy was very strict about cleanliness, ships and everything.

DH: Where were you Pearl Harbor morning?

RS: Pearl Harbor morning I was, when the attack started I was on the third floor and I heard these explosions and I looked out the window and I could see this black smoke coming up.

I want to insert one thing before I keep on going. A week before the attacks, they had Army and Navy maneuvers, mostly Navy, and they had 50 caliber machine guns up on the roof of the receiving station. They were stimulating an attack, and they were having maneuvers, and about a week before they had a wench on one of the ships exploded. It made a lot of noise. So when we heard all these explosions at Pearl Harbor on the 7th, that was about five minutes to eight when they hit. It was five minutes to eight when the Japanese came in with their attack. So we heard these explosions, we didn't think too much about it. We thought, well maybe another wench blew up on the ship or something. But I looked out the window, and I think it was the north side of the building, I'm not sure. I can't say positively, but anyway I could see this black smoke up in the air. Well that was Scolefield Barracks, Wheeler and Hicum Field getting bombed by the Japanese. It hit the airfields first. Then Scolefield Barracks was on an airfield, but it had soldiers and Army there. They got, I think, a couple bombs, but they didn't destroy the barracks at all. I don't think they had too many killed or hurt there at Scolefield. Wheeler, Hicum, and Ewa, the Navy airfield, and Fort Allan. Fort Allan was a Navy airfield. They got hit. They tried to catch all the planes on the ground, which they did. They destroyed most of the planes on the ground, but that was the noise and the bombing we heard. But we still didn't think too much about it. We still didn't think it was the real air raid. Well, so I look out the window and I see this plane go right past the window. It was a Japanese. I saw the circle on it, and all I remember is what I said. "The war has started". Then I could look out on the west side, I think it was, it was facing the harbor anyway. I'm looking right down on the harbor from the receiving station third floor window. I could see the battleships all out in the harbor tied to the buoys. Then I saw the Japanese dive bombers come in, and there was men going to church in their white uniforms, because the Navy would let you go to church on Sundays, but then you had to go back to your ships after church. You could be gone for an hour, but then you had to go back to your ships. At the time of the Pearl Harbor attack half the crew was on each ship, each ship had half their crew on their ship at all times.

DH: Right.

RS: Church service in the Navy, they had priests or preacher on large ships. Battleships carriers or shore stations used the recreation center. So there was no scullery crew on there, they had half the compliment. There was a twenty-two hundred men crew they had eleven hundred on there. When I looked out the window, I saw these planes come over, and they dived bombed. They were shooting machine guns the sailors walking across to the recreation center, right across from the receiving station. They were walking across there for church services. I didn't see anybody get hit. Then about five minutes later, over the loudspeaker, came clear the building. So there was three hundred men in there on temporary duty, and the receiving station is where they keep men until they find an assignment for them.

DH: Right.

RS: Then they write up their orders and transfer them out. Also, if you're going to school the men will stay there at the receiving station. They were birthed there, and that's the reason we were mess cooks. Each ship was sending maybe four or five men to mine school for

approximately four to six weeks at Westlock Ammunition School. So while they were going to school these men, including myself, would have to be mess cooks. The eight of us would be mess cooks at the receiving station, work in the kitchen until they finished school. We would all go back to the *Ramsey*, *Montgomery*, the *Gamble*, and the *Breeze*. That's where they were four ships, and then there was other men at Westlock, from other ships going to mine school. It was a new rating and they had to learn how to assemble these mines.

DH: So they said Clear the building, where did you go?

RS: So they cleared the building, they told us to get outside go across the street in front of the recreation center. They had the ground dug up and they had piles of dirt, they must have going to been landscaping. So we lay on the ground. I could look up in the air and I could see some planes up in the air dog fighting. It looked like our planes and the Japanese, but I didn't see any come down and crash. So in the meantime three trucks pull up, and they told us to get in the trucks. I didn't know where I was going, so I got in the one truck, and the rest of them, it was a big dumpster truck. It held quite a few men, I would say fifteen or twenty-five men in each truck. So they had three hundred men in the receiving station, you split that up in three, and that took care of all the men. They took us out of the building for protection, because we had no guns to protect ourselves. Except, they had rifles for their armed guard. They called the armed guard out at the receiving station, now how many was in the armed guard I don't know. But the rest of the people that were there were on temporary duty, we cleared the building. We could have been bombed, but we were lucky.

DH: Where did the trucks go?

RS: The one truck took me and the other fellows to the battleship *Pennsylvania*. It was in dry Dock, it could only get bombed. So I get down there and they said board the *Pennsylvania*. So I go up the gangway and they're casting down two destroyers were laying on their side in the dry dock. All three of them were in there for repairs and overhaul and repainting them and everything. Two cassin-down destroyers had been on their horses and everything and the Japs had bombed those two destroyers and ruptured their oil tanks. So how many men were hurt and killed on them I don't know. But they were all laying on their sides burning and smoking. The lieutenant, when I went up the gangway he said man this fire hose. I'm manning the fire hose squirting water on the destroyers. They got so many men helping on the guns, some of the men from the receiving station are helping on the guns, second or third loaders. They had four or five inch guns going, machine guns that's all they could fire from the harbor.

DH: So you went down there pretty quickly?

RS: Oh yeah. I was in the receiving station about, when they call the armed guard up, only about ten or fifteen minutes. It couldn't have been too long. Maybe ten minutes, within ten minutes they called the armed guard up.

DH: This is just after...

RS: After they realized that it was a real air raid.

DH: This is just after eight in the morning?

RS: Yeah. They came in, the first attack was at five minutes to eight. They had three hundred and fifty planes all together, and one hundred and eighty in the first attack. They had high flying bombers, they had dive-bombers, they had torpedo planes, and the Japs had practiced at a harbor up around Japan. The harbor was similar to Pearl Harbor's and they had adjusted their torpedoes, they knew how fast their planes could fly, how low they could drop their torpedoes. They had electric torpedoes. They were very, and they were twenty-one feet long, they were big. I don't know how many pounds of TNT in them, but they were horrible. They adjusted and practiced, so when they hit Pearl Harbor they knew just how low to fly to the water, how fast to be moving, and when to unleash their torpedoes to hit their target. When I was still at the receiving station, I looked out the window before I went. I could see them hitting battleships with torpedoes. I could see the water going up in the air. I'm looking right down, and the stipulation to be a Pearl Harbor survivor, you had to be three miles within the island. Well, when I was in the receiving station I was looking right down in the harbor. That harbor, where the ships were at, wasn't even a half a mile, a half a mile.

DH: No wonder you got down there so quickly.

RS: Yeah.

DH: So they came along in trucks, you must have down in the Pennsylvania by when? About eight-thirty?

RS: Oh yeah before, because the first attack was still going on when I got on...

DH: You went down there almost immediately.

RS: I was there, the attack started at five minutes to eight, I would say. When they realized it was the real thing, and they saw all these explosions, and they saw them bombing the ships, they knew it was the real thing. That was right at colored, they were hoisting the flag for colors. So they came in at five to eight, that's when they came in. It was a cloudy day, also they had some B-17 bombers coming in from California, but know guns on them, and they were brand new planes. But the Japs were north. When their carriers anchored off Hawaii they were about two hundred miles out. So they had a great distance for the planes to fly over Hawaii and back without running out of gas. So altogether they had two waves the planes came in. Altogether they had three hundred and fifty-three planes. They had two battleships, two heavy cruisers, light cruiser, five submarines, six carriers, six big tankers, plus the five midget submarines. The midget submarines were attached to the big submarines on the way over. They came the northern route, because no one would ever expect them to come that way. Luckily, they were never discovered. They kept their

radios silent. So when they got off Hawaii they were two hundred miles north off of Hawaii.

DH: Ok, so you're still on the *Pennsylvania* at first wave?

RS: I boarded the *Pennsylvania*. The first wave started at 8:15 or 8:20. the first wave was leaving. Some 300 men left in three trucks, mainly, all these men from the receiving station went on the *Pennsylvania* and these other ships, that were in the harbor. I don't know what other ships they went on. So many of us went on the *Pennsylvania* from this one truck.

DH: Ok.

RS: So some of them were helping on the guns, the four and five-inch guns were firing, 50 caliber machine guns. They could only use so many men on the guns, and I was manning the fire hose during the first attack. That attack, I would say, started at five minutes to eight and probably lasted maybe fifteen twenty minutes. The second wave came in around twenty minutes after eight. So they had just about finished up their first wave, and I went on the *Pennsylvania*. So far the *Pennsylvania* hadn't been bombed yet. I was on there manning the fire hose. Pretty soon somebody said the second wave is coming in. so I was on there for at least, it seemed to be I was on there for at least ten minutes before that second wave came in. I was manning that fire hose, and the guns were all firing, you could hear the bombs dropping. You couldn't tell who was getting bombed though. But luckily the *Pennsylvania* hadn't gotten it yet, but the two destroyers had been bombed before I got on the *Pennsylvania*.

DH: Right.

RS: It must have just happened before I got on there, because they were all burning and black, and smoking. They just manned the fire hose, they were spraying salt water on it.

DH: So you're there hosing water. What happened next?

RS: So then when they said about the second wave coming in this lieutenant told me drop your hose there and you and the rest of these fellas go back on the stern of the battieship and go down that hatch by the big guns. I had never been on a battleship in my life. The *Ramsay* was three hundred feet long and the battleship was about seven hundred feet long and a lot wider and bigger and more men. So the battleship crew was approximately two thousand men. So on the weekend they would have at least eleven hundred men on that ship, at least half the crew. So I went down to that hatch, and we all went down to the hatch. Opened the hatch and closed it, and were down in the cruise vessel. I could hear the guns going, and I was down there maybe five minutes. All of the sudden I heard a big thud. That was a bomb hitting. A bomb dropped in the middle, the mid-ship of the *Pennsylvania*. I would say the hole was at least twenty feet in diameter. It was a big, big hole. They had fifty foot wooden whale board up in the divots. It had big steel splinters going right through the side of the boat. So I saw all this after I came out of the harbor. I was down there after that bomb hit. I was down on the stern of the in the mess hall compartment of the

Pennsylvania. I had to flood the gas storage. If that bomb had hit on stern I would not be alive. I was in the mess hall during the second wave. They have gasoline tanks on the ship for their motorboats. They have gasoline engines, so they had to have gasoline. They also carried, usually the battleships had a seaplane on them.

DH: Right, yeah.

RS: On the stern. So they had to have gasoline for that. So they had gasoline tanks for that. So he was asking permission to flood the gasoline tanks. Now don't forget to when the raid come off, in peacetime certain people had the keys for all the magazines. So at the time of the attack they didn't have time to go around looking for the person who had the keys made, who ever had keys for these here magazines. To get the ammunition out for the guns and the machine guns. So they just had to break the locks and get it out. So they had to have a first, second, and third loader on the four and five inch guns. They probably had some of their experienced men working on the guns, but the men from the receiving station when we came in. we could be loaders, but we didn't know too much about the guns. So my job was manning the fire hose. When I got down to the compartment in the mess hall the bomb hit. I would say I was in that compartment, it seemed to me, at least fifteen, twenty minutes after the bomb hit. Then pretty soon, over the loud speaker, you heard; all clear and go back to your station. Well I get up on the deck, and that's when I see what the bomb hit. It was armored piercing bomb, it had to be, to do the damage it did, was probably a 500 or 1000 pound bomb. The smaller planes carried five hundred pounders, and I don't think a five hundred could have done a hole like that. It was probably a 1000 hundred on the bomber. Maybe a highflying bomber dropped it. All the bodies were gone, but I looked down in the hole, where the bomb went through, the four five inch guns were sitting down there, that had been sitting up on the deck. They fell through when the bomb hit, and there was a headless sailor down there with his uniform all black. Then I looked around and I saw the boat had wooden splinters straight through it. At the time, I didn't know how many men were actually killed, but they had removed all the bodies except that one body. Then later one I had read that they killed twenty-six Marines, and how many were wounded I don't know. But there were Marines manning guns, they had Marines on the battleships manning guns. I get back to the receiving station, and helped in the kitchen for awhile, and everything was high tension. Nobody knew where the Japs were at, and they didn't know if they were coming back. In the meantime, when they called the all clear the Japanese had left. On the second wave had left, they had gone back. So they said approximately around quarter to ten all the planes had gone. All the Japanese had disappeared. Out of all the planes the Japanese attacked with, out of three hundred they lost twenty-nine planes. That's all. That's all they lost twenty-nine planes out of the whole thing. They destroyed practically all the Air Force at the Army fields, Wheeler Hicum Fields all destroyed. Fort Allan, where they had the planes from the carriers come in. They would take off from the carriers when they were coming in, and they would fly there maybe for repairs and overhaul. They had PBV, and they were patrol planes. They would patrol out around the island every day. Each PBV would have a sector to fly to. So they might go out maybe a hundred and fifty miles to the south, to the north, so forth. Each plane, but they had a shortage of a PBV's. the pilots had been working overtime. So we don't know if the north sector probably was not, they did not go out as far as the

Japanese carrier, two hundred and thirty miles. Our patrol planes probably went a hundred miles or so, and it was a real cloudy day. The Japanese kept radio silence, so we had no way of knowing that the Japs fleet were out there. Then your B7D's coming in from California, when that private in the Army was fooling around with the radar, which was a new thing in those days. He saw the blips on radar screen. He called a lieutenant and told the lieutenant about it. He said there is a lot of blips up there, the lieutenant said, well probably nothing. He thought it was the B-17 bombers coming in from California. The new bombers, and they were coming in from the northeast. He tracked them all the way until eight o'clock. All these blips until they hit, until they bombed. The private got a commission out of it. But the lieutenant didn't want to bother the general, he didn't want to bother nobody. Then the shore aboard caught one of the small submarines coming through the harbor gate. They opened the gate and let a ship in. It's a big cable net like. They close off the harbor so they can't get out or get in. So when they opened it, the ship comes in the midget submarine following right behind the ship, and got right into the harbor. But the destroyer ward spotted the submarine periscope and they sunk it. Then they called in to headquarters and reported it to Navy headquarters that they had sunk a submarine. But they still didn't realize there was going to be a real air raid.

DH: You went back to the receiving station...

RS: So I'm at the receiving station for approximately a week. Sunday night I was up on the third floor after mealtime, and all the lights were out, everything was blacked out. Planes were coming in, and they put the search lights on trying to see the planes, and they were firing their guns. There was different ships in the harbor. I could hear people hollering, don't fire those are our own planes. They were Navy pilots that were coming in from maybe Wake Island from the carriers. I don't know how many there were, but I think they shot a few of them down. The planes that were at Pearl Harbor, at the Army airfields, were practically all destroyed. I don't think there was any left. They had two Army Lieutenants that took off and did shoot a couple Japanese planes down before they got shot down. Our planes were slower, they were obsolete compared to the Japanese planes. They were too strong. But those two pilots were about the only ones that did anything at all against the Japanese attack.

DH: What was your next assignment after?

RS: I was transferred to the ammunition depot to work on mines. All the men from the Ramsay and the rest never went back to ships. All worked on mines. I was at the receiving station for about a week. I could look out the window, I could see them working on the battleship Oklahoma. Now the Oklahoma, there was approximately thirty-two men trapped inside when it capsized. It turned over. They were in there for I think about twenty hours. First, they got a burning outfit and they tapped on the steel of the ship for the attention to get the people on the outside of the ship. So they knew there was men alive in there. Naturally, there were no lights inside, everything was dark in there. They were inside the haul, so they tapped the on steel and attracted the attention, got burning outfits. They burned a hole in the bottom of the ship. The fuse killed two of the men that were trapped in there right off the bat. They had to change their procedure. They had a mechanical tool, cutter tools,

that they cut the plate out. They cut a plate out. Then the people in there had to get out fast because, there was an air packet in there. As soon as air would come in the bottom would fill right up to the top and they would drown. They rescued approximately thirty-two men. I'm at a convention I asked this one man which ship were you on? I was on the Oklahoma. I was one of the survivors.

DH: Really?

RS: He was one of the ones trapped in there, he got out. He was lucky. At the receiving station there was a lot of hectic times. That night, on Sunday night, they were firing our guns, they were shooting tracer bullets, lighting the sky up. To me in those days, I knew it was a war started and everything, but I wasn't frightened too much. I surprised my self, I was so calm. We were on the third floor, we could have been bombed or anything. We didn't know if the Japanese were coming back in or not. We never knew. I didn't know where they were at. So the Japanese fleet got on their way after the attack. They were heading back to Japan and they were never discovered. They had six carriers in that group, two heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, six oil tankers, and oil tankers are slow. They went back the same way, and were never discovered. Out of the three hundred, three hundred fifty planes the Japanese lost twenty-nine. We lost almost of our Air Force down there, Army and Navy, except those on the carriers. Luckily, the carriers weren't in the harbor, because if the carriers had been in the harbor there would have been an inferno. The *Lexington*, the *Yorktown*, I think there were three carriers stationed at Pearl Harbor. The *Saratoga* was on the East Coast, and they had the *Lexington* and three carriers there with gasoline on them, torpedoes, bombs. Then the gasoline in the engines of the planes. They would have had an inferno there. The Japanese did not bomb the oil storage tanks. They could have also bombed Westinghouse Electrical Plant in the harbor on the docks. If they would have bombed all the Westinghouse Electrical stuff they would have knocked out all the repair faculties and they couldn't have repaired the ships. All the electrical power would have been off, they would have lost all that. If they would have bombed all the oil storage tanks they would have hurt the fleet, because the oil comes in from the States by oil tankers. At that time Admiral Rimple had wrote letter after letter, I read a book by him, to Washington requesting oil tankers, because he didn't want to keep these ships in the harbor all the time.

DH: That leads me to a question. I have been told by others that there was an inspection of the fleet planned. Do you recollect anything about that?

RS: There was to be an Admiral inspection on Monday December 8, water tight door open for the inspection.

DH: There was supposed to be, I have been told, that there was going to be an inspection of the fleet, which is part of the reason why there were so many ships in Pearl Harbor at that time. There was supposed to be an Admiral's inspection on December 8; the water tight doors were to open for inspection. There are no oil refining companies. The oil comes in by tankers, so ships can't go out too often or stay out too long, they have to watch the oil supply. Now the eight battleships were out in the harbor, the *Pennsylvania* is in dry dock, the *Utah* was the next battleship, but it was being used for target practice at the time. They

had removed all the guns and they dropped flour bags on the *Utah* for bomb practice.

RS: One thing I did hear was. Now the eight battleships were out in the harbor, the *Pennsylvania* is in dry dock, the *Utah* was the next battleship but it wasn't being used at that time, they had removed all the guns...

DH: That was a target ship?

RS: They had put wooden planks on the decks and they used it for target practice. So the *Oklahoma* was still in commission. There were eight good battleships, and they were all tied to buoys, except the *Pennsylvania*, which was in dry dock.. The *Pennsylvania* went into dry dock on Saturday afternoon. The dock where the *Pennsylvania* had been tied up, a large mine layer, the *Olagla* was moved up and tied up to that dock. The *Olagla* was torpedoed and capsized, but was righted and repaired and back in service during the war.

DH: Right.

RS: The _____ got torpedoed and turned upside down, capsized. They got it to float again, and repaired it and got her back in service. But it was capsized and it was torpedoed. The *Pennsylvania* had gone in Saturday afternoon into dry dock, they checked the propellers, the rudders, checked all the plating, make sure there is no damage on anything, if it has to be welded or anything like that, fixed up. Then we would paint it and overhaul the ship and whatever has to be done. They were in there once every six months, and they would be in there maybe two weeks.

DH: As far as you know, supposedly there were ninety-eight ships in Pearl Harbor that day.

RS: Counting all types, it's possible that ninety-eight ships were at Pearl Harbor that day. The *West Virginia* was in bad shape, it got torpedoed. The *Nevada* got repaired. from what I understand and their records and Skivvy told me, he was a _____ mate on there. They had received nine bomb hits, two torpedoes on the *Nevada*. The *Nevada* got underway, they were quarter mass, they got the ship underway. At first they were going to go out and try and get out of the harbor. Then they decided the Japanese, the second wave was coming in, they decided they better not take a chance and block the harbor entrance. So they couldn't get ships in or out. So they ran it aground so it wouldn't sink. The *West Virginia* got torpedoed, the *Pennsylvania* got one bomb hit in the dry dock, the *Tennessee*, Bob Bishop was on the *Tennessee*, it was near the *Arizona*. The *Arizona* was a complete loss. When that bomb came down it went right through the main deck, it hit the magazine. It had to be a 1500 or 1000 hundred pound bomb. Actually, they used, the Japanese used an armored pershing artillery shell, and they put fins on it and made it a bomb. That bomb went right through the decks and hit the *Arizona* or the *Pennsylvania*, which had stored black powder in. They had all their different shells in there, they had fourteen-inch guns, fourteen-inch shells, all their four and five inch shells, fifty caliber machine-guns, bullets, everything. It started the fires probably and pretty soon the heat just blew everything up. The boilers went up, they had one or two borders going to fly electricity to the ships tied up in the buoys. They weren't tied up to the shore

installments for electricity.

So it takes a battleship, from what I heard, about 45 minutes to an hour, on full power to get underway so you don't hurt the engines. There are four boilers on a battleship. It takes a small destroyer maybe twenty minutes or a half hour to get underway.

The *Nevada* got out underway fast. The destroyers got underway, they could get out of there faster. The *Ramsey* and the ships I was on got underway right after the attack and got out of the harbor. They could get out. They went on patrol duty. So while I was at the receiving station after the attack, I was there for about a week. I was notified that I was transferred with the rest of the mess cooks, we all, and the men at Westlock that were going to school, we all were transferred to Westlock to work on mines. So I was working on mines, even though I had passed exempt for third class shore keeper. I never had a vacancy for it or an opportunity to use the rate. So I went over there and worked at the mine depot, hauling mine material around. While I was there I got a hernia lifting mine material and everything. We had to stand watches at night. I was airplane lookout, and these buildings were pretty good size. There were two large buildings, where the mine detail was at. We had maybe a hundred mines in the building at one time down the tracks. They had railroad tracks there. They would pick up mines on a railroad car, and take them down to the dock, and then they would pick up the mines with the crane. Their job at the mine depot, where I was at, the mine assembly base at Westlock, we had to learn how to assemble the mines, and learn how to put everything together. The detonators in them, and they had to learn how to put everything together. So that's what I did up until September almost October 1942. In the meantime, we stood watches, we ate there, we never went back to the receiving station.

All the men were sleeping and eating right there. They had marine barracks down the road and, and they would assign the alert. They would call us on the telephone if there was an air raid alert. As soon as there was, they had a horn rigged up in the building, like a little model A horn, and it would make a lot of noise. We had blue lights on the building, real small blue lights, we slept on cots. We had to have mosquito nets because of the mosquitoes. We stood watches, four-hour watches, we had air raid alert. I had to get up and block the, get up on the roof, watch for airplanes. At that time, shortly after the Pearl Harbor attack, we had rumors that the Japanese were going to come in landing crafts, land troops and everything. We never knew for sure if they were or were not. Everybody was nerves, there were a lot of rattled nerves. We were all tensioned up, because we didn't know what was going. Every time there was an air raid alert, we never knew for sure if the Japanese were coming back or not. We never knew how many ships the Japs had, we never knew nothing about it until later on. I never saw the *Ramsey* again, and the other men were all transferred permanently to Westlock. I worked on mines until October '42. They got an order in, and they were going to send sixty men back to Mare Island, California, near San Francisco. They were going to lay up, or float up or assemble thirteen hundred mines for the Lucian Islands. Well I was one of them even though I hadn't gone to mine school I worked on the mines. Those mines had anywhere from two hundred and fifty to three hundred pounds of TNT in them. They had big mines out there, it looked like a big torpedo. They had all the mine material there and the cable. Their job was to learn how to assemble the boxes, get the cable in, the big steel cable had to be greased and all that, on a big reel.. Then when the mine was assembled, and detonator put in it later on. When they had put everything together in the

mine the ball would be sitting on top of this box. The box would be all plated, it had a wheel on each corner, steel wheels, and then on the ships, the minelayers, they carried sixty mines, thirty on each side. They had depth charges on the stern, and they had the four four-inch guns, the fifty caliber machine guns. Now our ship didn't have the depth charge gun thrower, we rolled them off. When they roll the mines off, they knew how deep, they had to check the water to see how deep it was. When they set up mine fields, they had to have the latitude the longitude exactly where to drop those mines. When they drop the mine off, the box would unreel from the ball, and the box would go to the bottom. They were all steel plates and heavy. Itself would unreel and then, when it was properly done, the mine itself would be ten feet below the water, and would have these cone shaped metal things sticking out, like metal cones. They would be all over the mine, the ball. The mine has a detonator in it, and when they hit one of these cones it sets off an acid, which sets off the detonator, and the detonator sets off the main charge, but it all happens in seconds. They have to be at a certain draft so a destroyer, or any ship, will go over top of it. They were called anchor mines, because they were held by this steel cable. So when the mine was properly laid the line would be ten feet below the surface of the water. It was painted black, you couldn't see it. So when a ship came along it would hit one of those cones, it would blow a hole in that ship. The smaller the ship, the worst the damage. A battleship could probably take a mine explosion, but a regular destroyer it might completely destroy it. It all depends on how and where the mine hits. Then on the *Ramsey*, on these ships, they had what they call a degaussing gear. It's a big cable running around level with deck, on the outside of the decks. On the outside of the ship like, was a big round cable, that was the degaussing gear, and that. In the first war the German Navy had what they call a magnetic mine. The magnetic mine would be attracted, they would move in the water, they wouldn't be anchored down. They would move against anything steel and explode. Our navy come up with this degaussing gear, it demagnetizes the ship. So they could not attract these magnetic mines anymore, so they didn't have to worry about those. Then during the war they had acoustical mines, they had mines that were set off by the concussion in the water from the propellers in the ship going over, it would blow them up. They had all different types of mines that the Germans come up with and the Japanese. But the main one was the anchor mine, just like they used in the Persian Gulf and in Iraq. Those were anchor mines. The anchor mines were held by steel cables and the ones that the cables didn't break the mine would never move. The only way they could ever spot a mine would either be a different type of mine outside the anchor mines, or floating mines. They could shoot them and blow them up with a gun. In the navy they had mine sweepers. Now in peacetime the minelayers would go out lay the mines, they would had to chart the water how deep the water was. They used sand in the mines to weight them down. When they dropped those mines off the track they would go down and unreel the cable would be straight up and down. The would be maybe ten feet below the water. They would know the latitude and the longitude, because if they didn't, if they were careless in setting up the mines in the mine field, and didn't have the right latitude and longitude they could roll their own ships over. So they had to be real careful.

DH: Let me ask you one thing, for somebody listening to this tape say thirty or fifty years from Now, what's the one thing they really should know about Pearl Harbor?

stuff in a surprise like the Japs did us exactly. They never expected the Japanese to attack Pearl Harbor. The Japanese would never think of bringing all their ships out, even though they had a lot of ships. They had six carriers, they had to take the chance of not being surprised. They didn't know if there were spies over there. They fooled the public, because they issued cold weather gear to all these sailors. So everybody was looking, and they were like these ships must be off to Lucias. They never thought they would be going to a warm weather climate. That's why they went to the northern route. It was rough foggy, cold, rough waters. Instead of going the southern way, which would have been nice and quiet, calm, and sunny, they went the northern way, because no one would expect them to go that way. So they surprised us, so never underestimate your enemy. That's my motto. The Pearl Harbor attack, Pearl Harbor's motto was stay alert and don't let it happen again. That's what I would tell anybody in history. Never underestimate your enemy. What you think he can do, and I thought the Japanese were copycats. They couldn't do this, they couldn't do that. They weren't intelligent enough to wage a war, and build guns and airplanes and all that.

When they built the zero fighters, our planes were obsolete compared to theirs. Our planes were too slow. We lost a lot of planes, our torpedoes didn't work right. We had defective torpedoes. Our submarines would go out and fire torpedoes and they wouldn't go off. They would hit the ship and not explode. They'd go under water, they would go the distance and sink. So that farm pin problem, the Japanese had perfected the electric torpedoes. They were very, very good. So they had practiced and practiced, and their pilots were A-1. So they come out with their torpedo planes their dive bombers and their highflying bombers. They had their plan all worked out. Two hundred and 200 miles away, they had enough fuel to get over there and back. So a few planes got in a dogfight, and they did crash. A couple of planes shot some of them down, but until the second wave came in they didn't have any defense at all, because nobody expected anything in the first wave. The second wave they had some guns going in the harbor. The only thing they could fire was machine guns and they didn't have pom-poms on the ships in those days. They had hydraulic guns on the destroyer or the *Ramsey*, the *Breeze*, and the *Montgomery*. They had a handgun like they had to wind it with a wheel. They were hydraulic where the _____ goes right up. So they could fire good at any flying targets. The guns we had weren't suited for anymore. In the old days, World War I, they had bi-planes and so they weren't fast like the planes we had today. They were just too slow. That's what I would say, always remain alert, and never think that your enemy, if you have one, can't do this or can't do that. I think in the future more it's going to be submarines, even the aircraft carriers might be obsolete eventually. Who knows? The aircraft carrier could get reinforcements close to the land. The aircraft carriers will probably be around for awhile yet, because they are like a regular island. They had their planes on there and everything, it's jets now, they are much faster than the propeller planes. I think if another war came along the carriers would still. I think your main thing in the future war is going to be missiles. They have missiles that were aimed right at the exhaust of the plane, which rarely miss.

DH: They don't miss.

RS: Heat attracts them don't it?

DH: Yeah.

RS: So I have read a lot of books about battleships. I read that, I've read about battleships in the first war, British battleships. They've had a lot of controversy about their torpedo blisters on the ships. At one time the blisters were too low on the ship, they weren't up high enough. The battleship has they torpedo blisters, and the *North Carolina* got a torpedo hit. The ship didn't have to go out of commission because of it, because they had a double haul. I would say that the guns they have today, now they have pom-poms. During the war they had suicide pilots. I read about them. Those poor sailors on those ships, they took a beating. Those Japanese came in there and just crashed their plane right on the ship. They didn't have a chance. They could shoot, shoot, and shoot, and unless the plane blew up, it would get through. It hit that ship and blew up. They were burned up bad. Either killed or burned up for life.

DH: Let me ask you one last question. How does it feel to go back to Pearl Harbor now? What do you feel?

RS: Well, when I go back there right away. I was there for two years, it is a beautiful climate. I think it's so beautiful and everything. But, as soon as I get off the plane, '79 was my first as a tourist, I wanted to get over and see the *Arizona*, and remember those poor fellows that were in the *Arizona*. Just to look at the Navy Yard again. Now when you go down there now it doesn't look like the harbor anymore. It doesn't have any ships in it. When I was there we had cruisers, battleships, carriers, submarines, destroyers, and a hundred thousand men there. The harbor was just crowded with ships, tied to the docks. Two buoys in water and all that, battleships and heavy cruisers. When the aircraft carriers were in we had a crowded harbor. You go down there now, and you see one or two ships. There supply ships. I said to one fella, I said where's all the ships at, don't they come in at all? He said oh they come in on Friday. They come in on Friday afternoon and stay for the weekend. There might be two or three destroyers or frigates or something like that. So they don't keep the ships in the harbor anymore. When you look back Kimble had written letter after letter and he never got all the information from the generals and the admirals, him and Sharp. They were in the dark, they didn't know. What could they do? All they can do is keep alert as much as they can, but they had no warning what so ever. They never even had a hint that they would attack Pearl Harbor. They never thought for an instant they would attack Pearl Harbor. So what can they do? They painted the ships gray, covered the grass up. I think they stopped the weekend liberty. Just at night, two days a week now. I don't think they had weekend liberty. National Emergency declared by Roosevelt. They leased fifty of those four-stacker destroyers to England to help them out. All they could was that the Japanese were looking for oil so they were going to Java and Borneo, all those places where you could find oil. Once they got the oil embargo on them, they had been building all these ships that they had, the carriers and stuff. They had one giant carrier, the *Shenoa*. It was on its maiden voyage when one of submarines sank it. It was big.

RS: Heat attracts them don't it?

DH: Yeah.

RS: So I have read a lot of books about battleships. I read that, I've read about battleships in the first war, British battleships. They've had a lot of controversy about their torpedo blisters on the ships. At one time the blisters were too low on the ship, they weren't up high enough. The battleship has they torpedo blisters, and the *North Carolina* got a torpedo hit. The ship didn't have to go out of commission because of it, because they had a double haul. I would say that the guns they have today, now they have pom-poms. During the war they had suicide pilots. I read about them. Those poor sailors on those ships, they took a beating. Those Japanese came in there and just crashed their plane right on the ship. They didn't have a chance. They could shoot, shoot, and shoot, and unless the plane blew up, it would get through. It hit that ship and blew up. They were burned up bad. Either killed or burned up for life.

DH: Let me ask you one last question. How does it feel to go back to Pearl Harbor now? What do you feel?

RS: Well, when I go back there right away. I was there for two years, it is a beautiful climate. I think it's so beautiful and everything. But, as soon as I get off the plane, '79 was my first as a tourist, I wanted to get over and see the *Arizona*, and remember those poor fellows that were in the *Arizona*. Just to look at the Navy Yard again. Now when you go down there now it doesn't look like the harbor anymore. It doesn't have any ships in it. When I was there we had cruisers, battleships, carriers, submarines, destroyers, and a hundred thousand men there. The harbor was just crowded with ships, tied to the docks. Two buoys in water and all that, battleships and heavy cruisers. When the aircraft carriers were in we had a crowded harbor. You go down there now, and you see one or two ships. There supply ships. I said to one fella, I said where's all the ships at, don't they come in at all? He said oh they come in on Friday. They come in on Friday afternoon and stay for the weekend. There might be two or three destroyers or frigates or something like that. So they don't keep the ships in the harbor anymore. When you look back Kimble had written letter after letter and he never got all the information from the generals and the admirals, him and Sharp. They were in the dark, they didn't know. What could they do? All they can do is keep alert as much as they can, but they had no warning what so ever. They never even had a hint that they would attack Pearl Harbor. They never thought for an instant they would attack Pearl Harbor. So what can they do? They painted the ships gray, covered the grass up. I think they stopped the weekend liberty. Just at night, two days a week now. I don't think they had weekend liberty. National Emergency declared by Roosevelt. They leased fifty of those four-stacker destroyers to England to help them out. All they could was that the Japanese were looking for oil so they were going to Java and Borneo, all those places where you could find oil. Once they got the oil embargo on them, they had been building all these ships that they had, the carriers and stuff. They had one giant carrier, the *Shenoa*. It was on its maiden voyage when one of submarines sank it. It was big.

DH: When you visit the memorial, if you could say something to those, what would you say?

RS: Well don't forget. I would tell them all; fellas you all died for your country. You fought good for your country. You lost your life. I hope the future generations will never let this happen again. Remember what happen, you will be remembered forever. Now don't forget there were men there, there was a fella from Youngstown there with me. I've got to mention him. I never had a chance to see his mother or father, or sisters or brothers. But Alvin Root was at Great Lakes Training Station with me, and there was another one there from Youngstown, Frank Heisy. He stayed in the Navy for a couple years after I got out. I got discharged in 1946 after six years. I think Heisy spent twelve years in. Then there was different fellas from Ohio. One from Springfield, one from Shelby, Ohio, whatever happened to them I don't know. But the fellas from Youngstown were in my draft that went to Great Lakes. The only one I can remember from Youngstown is Melvin Roots. At the training station, before we left, they asked what kind of ships would you like. I said I wanted a destroyer and Melvin wanted a battleship. He got the *Arizona*. He was killed on the *Arizona*. What his rating was at the time, he was on the deck force or Class Petty Officer, I don't know. But I never lost contact with him after he got on May 3, because I don't know where he was during peacetime. I found out later he was on the *Arizona*.

DH: You said *Arizona*.

RS: Yeah he was on the *Arizona*, the one that blew up. When they asked what ship he wanted, he boarded the *Pennsylvania*. The *Pennsylvania* might have been in San Francisco it might even have been in San Diego. I don't know exactly where he boarded the *Arizona*. He was lost there. All I can say is when I go and look at the memorial, I am glad that the good citizens and the Navy and the Army. I'm glad they had good sense to make a memorial out of the *Arizona*, since they were going to raise it. There was almost eleven hundred men entombed in the *Arizona*. There was no way they could have gotten the men out after it blew up. It just blew up like an accordion, the smoke and all the powder burning and everything. They couldn't have survived, they couldn't have survived, because the concussion would have killed them all. I think. The explosions and all the smoke. They lost eleven hundred men there, and at first they were going to raise the ship. They had two or three divers dive trying to get in there and look around. Then they finally just decided to make a memorial out of it. Which I think is good thing. Now that the *Utah* is still down there, it's still bottom up. The *Oklahoma* was salvaged. It was in pretty bad shape. They got it back together, but they took all the guns and decided to decommission it. So the *Oklahoma* was bought by some shipping company in California. He sent tugs over there and they had to haul it on a tilt. So they left it buoyant. They were going back to California with it, in rough waters. It started getting rough, the water and everything, and the *Oklahoma* started keeling over to the port side. I think. It was about ready to capsized. They had to get axes and cut the ropes off or they would have sunk the tubs. So they cut the ropes and everything and the *Oklahoma* went down. That was the end of the *Oklahoma*. So like I say, when I see that memorial down there, Dirk, I think if all the poor fellas and the receiving station. Now don't forget I went back to the receiving station after the attack. I was back there around 10:15. The receiving station was clean

and immaculate. These fellas were coming back in from the harbor covered in oil and burnt. In the receiving station they had painted the names of all the ships on the wall in black paint. (tape ended)