

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
NUMBER

6 4 7

Interview with
HOBART GATES
May 4, 1984

Place of Interview: Norfolk, Virginia
Interviewer: Ronald E. Marcello
Terms of Use: Open
Approved: *Hobart J. Gates*
(Signature)
Date: May 4, 1984

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Oral History Collection

Hobart Gates

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello Date of Interview: May 4, 1984

Place of Interview: Norfolk, Virginia

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Hobart Gates for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on May 4, 1984, in Norfolk, Virginia. I am interviewing Mr. Gates in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was assigned to the 98th Coast Artillery and stationed at Schofield Barracks during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941.

Mr. Gates, to begin this interview just very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, tell me when you were born, where you were born, and your education.

Mr. Gates: I was born in Fort Yates, North Dakota, on a Sioux Indian Reservation--the Standing Rock Sioux Indian Reservation.

Dr. Marcello: When were you born?

Mr. Gates: February 28, 1920.

Dr. Marcello: Tell me a little bit about your education.

Mr. Gates: Well, I went to high school in Fort Yates. I graduated out of the Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas. After I got out of the service, I went to the State School of Science of Wahpeton, North Dakota. I studied electrical engineering

and drafting. I went there about two years.

Marcello: When did you join the service?

Gates: I joined the service on July 6, 1940.

Marcello: Why did you decide to join the service in 1940?

Gates: On account of the world situation, I guess. I had a scholarship to go to the University of New Mexico, and a friend of mine...we got sort of patriotic and joined the service at Fort Lincoln, North Dakota--Bismarck.

Marcello: Why did you decide to join the Army as opposed to one of the other branches of the service?

Gates: I had tried the Marines, but they were filled. Their quota was filled. Then I went to the Navy, and the Navy wasn't taking anybody for six months. I walked around the corner; the Army took me the same day (chuckle).

Marcello: Where did you take your basic training?

Gates: I didn't take basic training. I was in the National Guard at Haskell Institute, so I just went into regular duty.

Marcello: So you were in the National Guard before you actually entered the Army?

Gates: Yes. During my grade school, I went to Rapid City Indian School, and we always had...like the military. We had to drill, and, you know, so it was just something that sort of fell into all my life. The military came easy.

Marcello: After you joined the service, then, in July of 1940, where did you go?

Gates: I enlisted at Bismarck, North Dakota, at Fort Lincoln. I was assigned to the 7th Infantry Regiment, Vancouver Barracks, Washington--3rd Division. I think I spent six months there. So in March of 1941, I put in for a short discharge and was assigned to 64th Coast Artillery in Honolulu. I arrived in Honolulu, I think, in April.

Marcello: April of 1941?

Gates: 1941, yes.

Marcello: You mentioned that you put in for a short discharge. I think I know what you're talking about, but for the benefit of those who listen to this tape or read the interview, what do you mean when you talk about a short discharge?

Gates: In those times you could serve two years of overseas duty which was equivalent to three years, but when I went to Hawaii, the Japs...they cut that out (chuckle).

Marcello: In other words, the Japanese had a lot to do with your not getting out of the service early.

Gates: Yes. I put in five years.

Marcello: Why did you put in for the short discharge?

Gates: I had a friend of mine who was the lightweight...see, I was a fighter, a boxer. He was the lightweight champ at Fort Shafter. In fact, he was the lightweight champ of the island. So I wanted to go over there and continue fighting. That's why I made Fort Shafter my post to join.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were in Washington, and it was there

when you transferred to the 64th Coast Artillery?

Gates: Yes. I put in for a transfer.

Marcello: And you went over to the Hawaiian Islands as a part of the 64th...

Gates: No.

Marcello: ...to join the 64th Coast Artillery.

Gates: No. They sent me to Angel Island and from Angel Island to Hawaii, and there I was assigned to the 64th.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit more about your career as a boxer. When did you start boxing?

Gates: I started fighting amateur in 1937. I was only about sixteen, I guess. I won the Bismarck, North Dakota, light heavyweight championship; I won the middleweight championship of the Kansas A.A.U. (Amateur Athletic Union); and in Hawaii I won the heavyweight championship.

Marcello: Now you won the heavyweight championship in Hawaii after you got over there with the 64th Coast Artillery?

Gates: No, it was with the 98th.

Marcello: I see.

Gates: I turned professional there after the Japs hit. I turned professional. They gave us that privilege, in other words. They put me on special duty. We trained and put on different bouts throughout the islands, and they gave us the privilege of fighting downtown if we wanted to.

Marcello: When you mentioned that you were a boxer, all I could think of was the James Jones book, From Here to Eternity. The Army

put a great deal of emphasis upon sports and athletics during that pre-Pearl Harbor period, didn't they?

Gates: That's right. If you was any kind of athlete, you got preference, which I really didn't do it for that. But, you know, I was a fighter, and they put me in charge of communications. I was a sergeant in charge of communications because of my background in that field--telephone and lineman and stuff like that. That's one reason why they...after Pearl Harbor, well, the general came down and put us all on special duty.

Marcello: What kind of preference and special privileges did you get as a fighter, as a boxer, during that pre-Pearl Harbor period? What advantages were there to being a boxer?

Gates: Oh, it wasn't too much, but we held kind of a little more respected position in the Army. We got treated a little better. Like, we had a special training table where we ate better than the troops. Like, we'd get steaks, and they'd get cold cuts. But that wasn't all the time. When we were in training and fighting, we'd go out and...after a fight they'd take us out for a big party and steaks and beer and whatever we wanted. That was the whole part of it.

Marcello: What did being a boxer mean in terms of promotion?

Gates: It didn't really mean...

Marcello: Could you perhaps get promoted a little faster?

Gates: Well, maybe in the infantry divisions. In my outfit you had to know what you were doing; I mean, you had to be experienced

and know how to lead the troops. I was well-experienced in the communications field. That's how I got to be communications sergeant.

Marcello: Talk a little bit about your background in the communications field.

Gates: Well, I took electrical work in school, and I worked on the outside as a telephone lineman. Of course, I went to communications school when I was with the infantry. I took courses in knowledge of radio, switchboards, and telephone lines. So I was pretty well-prepared. I could probably tear a switchboard apart or telephone apart and fix it. One of my jobs was to train the other personnel.

Marcello: I assume that you did some of your boxing at the so-called smokers that they used to hold at that time?

Gates: Well, when I was fighting...oh, yes, we fought at smokers when I was in the 98th. We started a tournament at Schofield. Of course, that tournament was never finished because the Japs finished it for us (chuckle). After that I fought at Kaneohe Naval Air Station against different guys from the Navy and things like that.

Marcello: Was this after Pearl Harbor that you did this?

Gates: Yes. Then I turned professional and fought downtown. I fought Ralph DeJohn, who was at that time the second ranking light heavyweight in the world. I fought him twice. I fought him to a draw, and he beat me once. That was about the end

of it. I came home after that.

Marcello: When you got to the Hawaiian Islands, which was in March of 1941, did you go directly to Schofield Barracks?

Gates: No, I went to the 64th Coast Artillery.

Marcello: Which was located where?

Gates: In Honolulu.

Marcello: I see. At Fort Shafter?

Gates: Yes.

Marcello: And how long did you remain there?

Gates: I think until about September of 1941. We activated a new outfit. The new draftees were coming in, and we were all regulars, so we activated a new antiaircraft unit called the 98th Coast Artillery. It was an antiaircraft battery, Battery A. We were located...they sent us up to Schofield, but our defense area was at Kaneohe Naval Air Station.

Marcello: So you really were on the ground floor, then, in the formation of a new unit.

Gates: Yes.

Marcello: That probably helped also in terms of your promotion, did it not?

Gates: Yes. From there I made sergeant right off the bat.

Marcello: And it was because you were getting all those recruits coming and so on.

Gates: Yes.

Marcello: Exactly what was the function of this 98th Coast Artillery?

Gates: The 98th Coast Artillery, the antiaircraft outfit, was to defend against any aircraft attacks on the Kaneohe Naval Air Station.

Marcello: And what kind of weapons did you have for that job?

Gates: We had the 3-inch antiaircraft guns; we had the .50-calibers; we had the .30-calibers.

Marcello: Approximately how many of the 3-inch antiaircraft guns would you have had?

Gates: Well, in a battery there's four, and there's four batteries, so there's twelve.

Marcello: And you mentioned that you were in Battery A. Is that correct?

Gates: Yes, Battery A.

Marcello: You were continuing as a communications sergeant?

Gates: Yes.

Marcello: Describe what Schofield Barracks was like. I do know that it was the largest Army post in the world at that time. Take me through your quarters at Schofield Barracks. What would we see? What would it be like?

Gates: Well, my barracks was not like Schofield Barracks. Schofield Barracks was built in quadrangles. Actually, they were for infantry and field artillery. You had your 21st, 27th, 19th, and the...what else was there...the 13th and the field artillery and one other...the 35th Infantry Division. Our outfit was stationed away from Schofield. We were maybe five hundred yards or so...up towards Kolekole Pass.

Marcello: Were you in a regular barracks-like structure, or were you living in tents?

Gates: Yes, we were in barracks-like structures--one of those "prefabs," I guess you might call it. We had about twenty to a barracks or thirty to a barracks--something like that.

Marcello: Was this a small barracks as compared to the quadrangles at Schofield?

Gates: Oh, yes. See, Schofield was bigger than this motel, and each company had a barracks. They were all connected--square.

Our guns was right with us, but on the day of the attack we were on a fifty-fifty alert, so it didn't take us long to get out of there. When we heard the first...well, I was having breakfast with...I was in the mess hall with another kid named Corporal Ralston. He was from New Jersey. We were both having breakfast together. That's when we first heard the guns or the planes. When we run outside, we saw those Japs.

Marcello: This is getting a little bit ahead of our story because I have a few more things I want to talk about before we get to that point. Now take me through a typical training exercise in which the 98th would participate in that period prior to December 7, 1941, and I assume that you were constantly training.

Gates: Well, yes. We'd go out to shoot at sleeves. I forgot the name of that place. It was a point...Barber's Point. We'd take our guns out there and then, of course, we in communications would lay out our spotters and all the communication

lines needed to function... a height-finder unit and range units and, of course, the control station. The planes would fly and pull those sleeves, and we'd shoot at them. We had a good outfit, too.

Marcello: Would this kind of practice occur several times a week?

Gates: Oh, no. We'd be out there for maybe two weeks, and then we'd come back in. Then we'd be studying antiaircraft identifications, cleaning our guns. Every day they worked on those guns to keep them in working order.

Marcello: As one gets closer and closer to December 7, 1941, and as conditions between the United States and Japan continued to get worse, could you detect any changes in your training routine?

Gates: Yes. They were getting us in aircraft identification more, and in the training of their gunners...like, say, they're firing twenty-five rounds in so many minutes, well, they were speeding it up, getting the guys to fire more--be more efficient and to fire more ammunition. Some of the guys were good.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that the primary purpose of this unit was to protect Kaneohe Air Station. Did you ever take your guns out and set them up in positions where you could defend Kaneohe?

Gates: We never did.

Marcello: And this unit had been formed for how long?

Gates: Well, since September.

Marcello: From September to December, those guns had never really been set up around Kaneohe?

Gates: No.

Marcello: You would always take them out around Barber's Point to fire?

Gates: Fire them out over the ocean.

Marcello: Were these guns drawn by trucks or pulled by trucks?

Gates: Yes, pulled by trucks.

Marcello: I do know that one of the things that was feared by the Army, in case war did come with the Japanese, was sabotage. There was a lot of Japanese-Americans who lived on those Islands, and it was feared that they would commit acts of sabotage. Did you and your unit undertake any training to guard against sabotage?

Gates: I don't know. I don't recall anything of that nature, but, of course, we never did get along with those Japs. We didn't have too much to do with them. Our unit, I don't think, was ever instructed as to what to do against sabotage.

Marcello: That was perhaps somebody else's responsibility.

Gates: Yes. There was a Jap called Hasebe, and he operated a beer parlor and a steak house right next to us. From what I hear, they went and shot him because he had a radio and was giving directions to the Japs coming in. They must have known about him for a long time because they walked right on him, and they killed him right there, from what I understand.

Marcello: Yes, I've heard about him before. Did you ever perchance go over to his beer parlor?

Gates: Oh, yes. It was just across from our outfit. I'd go over

to eat steaks and get drunker than hell (chuckle).

Marcello: Did you know him?

Gates: Yes, I knew him.

Marcello: I think his first name was Charlie. Charlie Hasebe, wasn't it?

Gates: Yes, something like that. We used to drink, and he knew me because I was a fighter. We would talk, but I never was ever too friendly with him. I went over there to drink, that's all.

Marcello: Did he seem one to want to mingle and mix and talk to the guys?

Gates: Yes. He seemed to be overly friendly, and I understood why after the attack.

Marcello: What kind of a tavern did he run?

Gates: Well, he ran a pretty nice tavern.

Marcello: Now as you get closer and closer to December 7, do you have more alerts and so on?

Gates: Well, they put us on fifty-fifty alert.

Marcello: What does that mean?

Gates: That means half the guys can go off base on leave, and half stay at the base on duty.

Marcello: When did that happen?

Gates: That happened about a week before the attack.

Marcello: Now before that time, how did the liberty routine work?

Gates: Well, sometimes they worked half a day and were off half a day. Maybe you'd sleep or go downtown or go over to the beer garden--whatever you want to do.

Marcello: In other words, up until that time, perhaps as late as a week

before the attack, you were still on the tropical work hours?

Gates: Yes. Yes, we weren't prepared. Really, we weren't as alert as we should have been.

Marcello: When you were on those tropical work hours, how did you spend your afternoons?

Gates: Well, I was training. I'd get up in the morning at four o'clock or five o'clock, and I'd run. I'd go back and have breakfast and then do what I had to do. Then in the afternoon, I'd go down to the gym and work out to four o'clock, five o'clock, something like that. Then I stood in formation for retreat, liberty.

Marcello: And like you said, up until that fifty-fifty alert, it was pretty easy to get a pass to go into town.

Gates: Oh, yes.

Marcello: Did you have a Class A pass?

Gates: Yes. Yes, we just got them from the sergeant. When you wanted to go, you got your pass from the sergeant.

Marcello: How far were you from Honolulu?

Gates: About fifteen miles.

Marcello: How did you get there?

Gates: Bus. They had buses running to Schofield. Sometimes you'd call a cab. On paydays we'd call a cab and go on down.

Marcello: When you went into Honolulu, what would you do? What was your liberty routine?

Gates: Oh, hit the bars, and that's about all.

Marcello: What was the attraction of Hotel Street?

Gates: That was where all the whorehouses were--there and on Canal Street. You'd see those guys line up there like a chow line (laughter).

Marcello: Was that before the war, too?

Gates: Oh, yes.

Marcello: How about you? Were you in line?

Gates: Oh, yes, a lot of times (chuckle).

Marcello: How much did a trick cost before the war?

Gates: About two dollars.

Marcello: Those places were all evidently more or less inspected by the government, weren't they?

Gates: Yes. The girls had to have their health cards. They were inspected by the government. Any girl that came over had to be registered. They made a lot of money there.

Marcello: I notice you don't have any tattoos, so I guess you didn't hit those tattoo shops.

Gates: Yes, I got one right here (gesture), but I did that myself when I was about eight or nine years old. I put a "RC" on it for Rapid City and "IS" for Indian School. It had a scab on it. I got in a fight with a kid and skinned it off, and that's all that is left of it (chuckle).

Marcello: You are pointing to a small tattoo on you wrist. But you didn't get any over in Honolulu?

Gates: Oh, no. I wasn't that goofy (laughter). We had a guy in

our outfit with tattoos all...he even had one on his "dingus" there.

Marcello: Where?

Gates: Right above the head, he had "Hi, Doc."

Marcello: "Hi, Doc?"

Gates: Yes (laughter). When he had a "short-arm" inspection by the doctor, he'd whip that thing out, and it said, "Hi, Doc."

(more laughter) Oh, there were some "Asiatics" on our base.

Marcello: (Chuckle) I lost my whole train of thought. Normally, when you went to Honolulu on liberty, would you stay overnight, or would you come back to the base again?

Gates: We'd get a three-day pass, and we'd get rooms. Some got rooms at the YMCA. I used to go down to the Moana or stay with some of my Hawaiian friends. I had a lot of good friends there.

Marcello: You went down to the Moana Hotel?

Gates: Yes. I'd stay down there sometimes. I never did stay at Waikiki.

Marcello: Which one was down at the Waikiki? Is that where the Royal Hawaiian was located?

Gates: Yes, that's that one that I'm talking about--the Royal Hawaiian. The Moana was right up next to it.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that just prior to the attack you were on that fifty-fifty alert. How did that affect you personally?

Gates: Well, it didn't bother me at all. I was a soldier, and I did what they told me to (chuckle). If I couldn't go on pass, I

couldn't go on pass.

Marcello: What kind of recreation was available there at Schofield Barracks itself?

Gates: Well, they had a big gym there at Schofield where you could go and work out--play basketball or do anything you wanted.

Marcello: They had a beer garden and all that sort of thing there, too, didn't they?

Gates: Oh, yes, they had a big beer garden at Schofield Barracks, and, of course, we had our own, too. I used to go down to Schofield a lot of times. I had friends down there in the infantry. They were Indians from...there was two of them from my reservation stationed down there. I used to go down and visit them and drink beer all night long.

Marcello: I think this leads us into those days immediately prior to the attack. In your bull sessions, when you and your buddies sat around and talked, did the subject of a Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor ever come up? Did you ever talk about it?

Gates: Yes. Yes, we used to discuss it. We figured that eventually we were going to fight because there was already fighting in Europe. We had an idea that something was going to happen, but we didn't know when.

Marcello: But even if war did come with the Japanese, did you suspect that there would be an attack at Pearl Harbor?

Gates: No.

Marcello: Incidentally, you mentioned awhile ago that the unit was

basically made up of draftees.

Gates: That's right.

Marcello: What was the morale like in the 98th?

Gates: Well, at first, you know, draftees...a lot of them had a little dissension. They didn't want to be in the service. They were all talking about the good jobs they left back home and all that. We had an ol' Irish sergeant--topkick--John F. O'Donnell. He lined them all up when he first got them, and I'll always remember. They had these draftees come in off the boat--fresh off the boat. Goddamn, they were an awful-looking bunch--fat guys, short guys, and great, big, tall guys. O'Donnell was a soldier--an Irishman from Dublin, Ireland, and he had a stiff brogue. He said, "You bloody guys! I don't know what I'm going to do with you guys, but, by golly, I'm going to make soldiers out of you! I didn't send for you! President Roosevelt sent you to me! But, by golly, you bloody guys are going to be soldiers!" And they were soldiers, too. I was awful proud of those guys.

Marcello: Okay, this leads us to that weekend of December 7, 1941, and, of course, we want to go into this in as much detail as you can remember. What did you do that Saturday, that is, the day before the attack?

Gates: Saturday?

Marcello: What was your routine on Saturday?

Gates: On Saturday, I came back from Honolulu on a pass. I used to run around with Ralston, this little kid from New Jersey.

In fact, he was one of my spotters. What I mean by "spotter," they had points out, and they'd spot the burst at the sleeve to see whether you're over or you're under. They'd spot. A lot of times they fired on imaginary targets, and they'd spot to see how close they came. You come within twenty feet, and you've got a hit.

We came in that evening. Like I say, we had a little beer. At about seven o'clock, I got up, and we went over and had breakfast.

Marcello: So you spent most of Saturday down in Honolulu.

Gates: Yes.

Marcello: Do you recall where you went?

Gates: Yes. I was out at the Black Cat, and then I was over on Virginia Street. A friend of mine ran a bar there. He was an ex-fighter. I can't recall his name. But it was always one of my main stops. I'd sit there and drink with him.

Marcello: What was the name of that place? Do you know?

Gates: I can't remember it.

Marcello: What was the attraction of the Black Cat cafe?

Gates: I don't know. They had a lot of women and girls waitressing, and it was right across from the YMCA.

Marcello: So that was the first stop.

Gates: Yes. You'd get started there first.

Marcello: And I guess the taxis stopped there at the YMCA.

Gates: Yes. Then we'd go down to Waikiki Beach or...you could go

anyplace you wanted to. Maybe the Kauola Inn. I used to go down to the Kauola Inn and have dinner. They had one of the better restaurants, you might say. It was on the riverfront.

Marcello: When did you go into Honolulu? About what time on Saturday?

Gates: We usually left after one o'clock, two o'clock.

Marcello: And what time did you get back on the base that night?

Gates: We came back in at about maybe ten o'clock, something like that.

Marcello: What kind of shape were you in?

Gates: Well, I was in pretty good shape. I never used to get too drunk.

Marcello: Were there very many people back in the barracks that night when you went in?

Gates: Yes, there were quite a few.

Marcello: Okay, this takes us into that Sunday morning of December 7. Now you mentioned that you got up at seven o'clock.

Gates: Yes, and I went over and had breakfast at the mess hall. I remember we had a kid from Kentucky there--mess sergeant, a pretty good friend of mine. He asked me what I wanted, and I said, "I want some ham and eggs." So he cooked me some ham and eggs and put some coffee on a tray, and I sat down. I and this Ralston was talking. We had hit a crap game, and we had won about \$300, and we were talking about sending it home.

Marcello: When were you in this crap game?

Gates: Payday. I think it was the second.

Marcello: Of December?

Gates: It must have been the first.

Marcello: When was payday? What day of the month?

Gates: It was about three days before the seventh.

Marcello: Okay, the seventh was on Sunday. The sixth would be Saturday. The fifth would be Friday.

Gates: Yes, that's when it was. We hit a crap game there.

Marcello: Right on the base?

Gates: Yes. We must have won about \$300. We banked the game and cleaned them out. So we were talking about sending money home. I was banking at the Bank of America in San Francisco. Of course, I sent some to my mother and dad.

Marcello: How widespread was gambling at Schofield in that pre-Pearl Harbor period?

Gates: Very wide. In fact, at Schofield was about the biggest games there was. Probably the Navy is the same way. They'd get hundreds.

Marcello: Now this was all illegal, was it not?

Gates: It wasn't illegal on the base. Nobody ever stopped it.

Marcello: Of course, that didn't mean it was legal. It just was never enforced.

Gates: No, no, that's right. There was a lot of guys who'd lend money at 20 percent, too.

Marcello: I've heard about the 20 percent men.

Gates: They cleaned up. Getting back to December 7, we were sitting there talking, and the first thing I know or became aware of

was planes in the air. So I said to Ralston, "Goddamn, we got a lot of planes out there!" Ralston said, "It's probably the Army and Navy having maneuvers--Red and Blue maneuvers." Then I heard a machine gun. Then I heard something like a l.l. These Japs had these l.l. guns. I heard them, and I said, "That's not a .50-caliber," because it was too slow for a .50-caliber. The next thing I hear is this terrific explosion. I guess they dropped a bomb on Wheeler Field. I looked down and my damn tray was turned upside down. I hit that door.

Marcello: This was an explosion that occurred down at Wheeler Field?

Gates: Yes. And it turned my tray right upside down. I hit that door, and I look out and see those Jap planes. I didn't want them to be Japs, but, Goddamn it, they were Japs (chuckle).

Marcello: Describe what you saw.

Gates: I see these two planes come over and bank, and I could see the pilots very clearly. He had his fur cap on, his flying goggles, and he was looking right down at me.

Marcello: About how high were these planes?

Gates: Oh, I'd say it wasn't over two hundred feet in the air--very close. He had just dropped a bomb on some decoy tanks. He dropped some bombs on them. I told Ralston, "They're Japs!" You know, we'd studied aircraft identification for so long that I could pick out a Messerschmitt or any other type of enemy plane at, hell, a couple miles distance just

by the contour of the aircraft. "Oh, no," he said, "those are maneuvers." I said, "Bull! Maneuvers my ass!" We hit for our trucks. By that time everybody was out there. Of course, we was all loaded, anyhow.

Marcello: Now your particular section was not coming under any direct attack?

Gates: No. The only attack we had was strafing attacks. When we started for the trucks, these two Jap planes came around again, and they strafed. I can see them today--strafing that area. I ran between two buildings. They were fish-tailing like this (gesture) and scattering everybody. They'd come back like this (gesture)--fish-tailing.

Marcello: So as they came in, they were fish-tailing in order to scatter and spread out their machine gun fire?

Gates: Yes. And then I heard a B.A.R. go. Later on, I understand it was one of our lieutenants, and he shot one of those planes down. I could see it smoking when it hit into a cane field. That's when I was climbing into my truck. Some of the guys had started over from another outfit down below. They started over toward that cane field. But our orders were to move out.

Marcello: Where were you to go?

Gates: To Kanehoe.

Marcello: But you'd never really been out there and set up your guns or anything before.

Gates: No. We just went out there.

Marcello: By the time that you get over there where your guns and vehicles were, how many other people were there? Were most of the people there, or did most of the people eventually get there?

Gates: Eventually got there, yes. We got caught in that traffic when they were bombing Pearl Harbor. See, we had to go through by Pearl Harbor and up into a pass called the Pali. When you got to Kolekole Pass, you could look down at Kanehoe Naval Air Station. We got up there, and I could see, hell, that there was nothing we could do. It was all burning. The planes were burning; the hangars were burning. We had to go down a winding road and set up, and the guns came and we all set up and were ready to fire. They weren't even trenched in, but they were ready to go.

Marcello: Where did you set up those guns then?

Gates: Right outside of Kanehoe.

Marcello: Okay, you mentioned that you gather your guns and your vehicles, which were essentially ready to go, and you head toward Kanehoe. Are there officers there who were giving orders?

Gates: Yes. We had our communication officer, gun commanders, and the battery commander.

Marcello: So everything was being done in a rather orderly manner at this time?

Gates: Yes, ours was.

Marcello: Describe for me your journey from Schofield through the traffic

down at Pearl until you got up to the area where you were going to set up there at Kanehoe.

Gates: Well, it was pretty well congested when we got in there. Everyone was trying to get to their defense area, where they were supposed to go. But we got caught in the traffic jam, so I told this driver, "Goddamn it, they're bombing the hell out of Wheeler Field!" We was right near Wheeler Field. We had passed Schofield back here. We got caught in this traffic jam, and Corporal Ralston was in the van, and he says, "That son-of-a-bitch just wants to get us killed! He wants to see what's going on!" (laughter) I told this driver, "Pull off here. I know a side road over here." So we pulled off on a side road, and we went around that traffic and got back on the highway. That's when they were hitting Pearl.

Marcello: Was this a two-lane highway that you now got on?

Gates: Yes. Well, it wasn't a two lane. It was just a single road, kind of like a road in the cane field. I knew those roads. When we got through, I could see those poor bastards at Pearl Harbor. They were catching hell. Before I got there I saw one of them destroyers explode, and, man, it went so fast.

Marcello: I guess at the time you didn't know which one it was.

Gates: No, I didn't know until after I'd read about it.

Marcello: And which one was it?

Gates: I can't recall now.

Marcello: Was it the Arizona?

Gates: No.

Marcello: The Shaw?

Gates: I knew the Shaw. It wasn't the Arizona. It was a smaller ship.

Marcello: The Shaw. How long did it take you to get from Schofield to Kanehoe? You'll have to estimate this probably.

Gates: I'd say about forty-five minutes, something like that.

Marcello: And normally how long would it have taken you to get there had it not been for the traffic and all that sort of thing?

Gates: About the same time. We made pretty good time. We were really hitting it because we weren't pulling nothing.

Marcello: Oh, I see. You were not pulling anything.

Gates: No, we had just had our communication gear on a smaller truck.

Marcello: Okay, so what do you and your truck and its occupants do when you get out there to Kanehoe?

Gates: Well, we lay out our communications at the different points where the guns are. We rigged the telephones, and then we rigged our CP, which includes our switchboard and radios and such, and we run a line into the main control station where the battalion commander is in order to have direct communication with him. When the guns came in, all they had to do was just set up. Of course, they have aiming stakes. They also had their height-finders and everything, and they had another

thing but I forgot what they call it. It computes the altitude.

Marcello: Would he have a range-finder and a height-finder and all that sort of thing?

Gates: Yes. A range-finder, I think, is the one that gives you the distance. This other one gives you the speed. The height-finder gives you the altitude.

Marcello: So what did you do the rest of the day, then, while you were out there?

Gates: Well, it was pretty much turmoil. We was getting all kinds of messages that the Japs were going to land, were coming in for us. We had several alerts. I guess some scout planes flew over, but we didn't fire, though. We did fire at...they said it was a midget sub out there that we were supposed to have knocked out. I believe they beached it or something.

Marcello: Go into this episode in a little bit more detail. What do you remember about that, that is, the battery firing on that midget submarine.

Gates: Yes, we heard that there was a sub out there, so they did the coordinates and...see, we could fire a slight trajectory with the anti-aircraft guns. They said they knocked it out and that they had captured one of the crew. Apparently, they did capture one of them. The other one killed himself or something. I don't know. I only knew what they said. They hear what the other people say. That night was a hectic night.

Marcello: Describe that night.

Gates: That night I, honest to God, thought that we were really being invaded. We had so many reports, and we had these guys out on the beach, and they were shooting at waves, and they said the Japs were landing at Mokapu Point and down there by Diamond Head. Christ, we thought they were coming in.

Marcello: I guess you believed all those rumors..

Gates: Oh, yes. It came over our loudspeaker, right in our command post, that the Japs were landing at the Diamond Head area. I believed it, really, but the next day...we had several alerts after that, but nothing happened.

Marcello: I guess it wasn't too safe to walk around that night.

Gates: A guy got killed in our outfit. He went out to take a shit, and he came back, and he didn't use the password. And, you know, the guys were pretty edgy on their trigger, and they shot that bastard deader than hell. The guy that shot him was awful sorry.

Marcello: Not as sorry as the guy that got shot (chuckle).

Gates: No, damn right. Some of those guys..hell, I stayed in that damn CP. I wasn't about to go outside and walk around because they were all hillbillies from Kentucky and Pennsylvania, I believe. They were a tough bunch of rascals.

Marcello: Did you get much sleep that night?

Gates: I didn't get no sleep for two days. I didn't hardly eat, either. Finally, they got out there with our rations. They had the Marines there at Kanehoe--a Marine detachment--and

we teamed up them. We had a Sergeant Gilroy, who said, "Well, the Marines are doubling their guard. They're putting two on a horse." They had to ride horseback. They doubled their guard. Two of them were riding a horse (chuckle).

Marcello: That's correct. I remember interviewing some people that talked about those Marine horse patrols. While you were out there, did you dig any foxholes or anything of that nature? Any kind of bunkers or anything like that?

Gates: Oh, yes. We started building bunkers and digging in our guns and digging in our CP. Of course, we had, like, a tent, and, of course, we had places we could fall into that was all coral. It took us about a month to really dig in our position. We dug through solid coral, and our CP was solid coral with about three feet of concrete over it. I imagine it's still there.

Marcello: So you spent quite a bit of time out there around Kanehoe after the attack. Did you more or less just move out there permanently?

Gates: We were out there permanently. So after that things quieted down, we'd shoot every so often. We'd have our gunnery practice. Of course, I was on special duty. I was fighting --putting on boxing shows.

Marcello: When did you finally get off the island?

Gates: I left out of there in March of 1943.

Marcello: And where did you go?

Gates: I went to Fort Bliss, Texas. They put me on a training cadre.

We were training antiaircraft troops in Fort Bliss, Texas.

In 1944, they busted us up. America started getting on the offensive, not on the defensive anymore, and they started using the infantry, so they threw us all in the infantry. I was shipped to Camp Chaffee, Arkansas. I took infantry training there, and from Camp Chaffee I went to Baltimore, Maryland, and from Baltimore to Camp Standish there in Boston, and then I was shipped to Europe. I landed in Liverpool, England, in August.

Marcello: Of 1944?

Gates: Yes, a couple months after the invasion. They were still fighting in France in the hedgerows. I was there for about two weeks, and we sailed in and hit Cherbourg Peninsula. I hit Omaha Beach and was assigned to the...well, I wasn't even assigned to any outfit until I got there because I was still classed as an infantryman.

So when they looked over my MOS and seen I had the communications background, they put me in the 216th Field Artillery, which was the 35th Division. That was Battery A, 216 Field Artillery. I don't know what battalion it was. It was a combat battalion, they called it.

Marcello: And did you end the war in that unit?

Gates: Yes. I joined that outfit in the hedgerow country in France. We fought with Patton's 3rd Army clear across France. We went into Nancy, France, and we fought in the Gramercy Woods

for about ninety days. We never got off the line there for ninety days.

Marcello: What woods were you fighting in?

Gates: Gramercy Woods.

Marcello: Gramercy Woods.

Gates: I was a forward observer for the 216 Field Artillery. We worked with the infantry. When they jumped off, we jumped off. We worked right on the point. You've got one man on the point, and they got about ten men behind them, and we were right with these ten men, and then the main body would come up behind. From the Strasbourg area, we moved to Metz, Germany. They had that breakthrough up there. On Christmas day we was in Metz, and I had Christmas dinner there. We moved into Bastogne, and there we really had it tough. We broke through to the 101st Airborne Division.

Marcello: So you were part of the group, then, who actually helped to relieve the 101st at Bastogne.

Gates: Yes, our group was one of them. Out of 130-some men, there was only seventeen of us that came out of there alive. This ol' Indian was one. I was digging foxholes, and it was cold--about twenty-five degrees below zero--with two or three feet of snow. You never can tell how much the human body can stand. I didn't think we could ever stand it, but we did. It was about twenty-five degrees below zero. I saw a lot of poor boys die there. They died just by getting hit in the arm,

by exposure--you name it. But we broke through there at Bastogne, and after Bastogne they pulled us out, and we started to cross the...what river is that?

Marcello: The Rhine?

Gates: No, it was another river. They started the offensive. I forget the name of that river. They started across there, and then we got to the Rhine. We crossed the Rhine at Rhineburg, and from Rhineburg we went to...it was about forty miles from Berlin when the war ended. They pinched us out and gave us an area to patrol.

On May 7 they let everybody who had over seventy-five points--I had 122 points--go home. I had thirty-seven months of combat and almost five years in the service. So they shipped me home. They shipped me to LeHavre to Boston and from Boston to Fort Snelling. On June 17, they discharged me.

Marcello: Fort Snelling?

Gates: Fort Snelling, Minnesota.

Marcello: Okay, well, that's probably a pretty good place to end this interview, Mr. Gates. I want to thank you very much for having taken time to talk with me. You said a lot of interesting and important things, and I'm sure that students and historians are going to find your comments valuable.

Gates: My biggest experience was in Europe, really. That's where I really was under fire all the time. I worked with the infantry there. We fought for every inch of ground, and we

earned it.

Marcello: That's sometimes one of the unfortunate things about these interviews with the Pearl Harbor survivors. A lot of you guys have had some interesting stories after Pearl Harbor, but, of course, for this project we're interested in the Pearl Harbor interviews.