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Intervie with

JOHN R. ZANCA

November 14, 1987

Place of Interview: Kenner, Louisiana

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Oral History Collection

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Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing John Zanca for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on November 14, 1987, in Kenner, Louisiana. I am interviewing Mr. Zanca in order to get his reminiscences and experiences while he was aboard the cruiser USS Honolulu during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Mr. Zanca, 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--that sort of thing.

Mr. Zanca: Well, I was born on the 6th of October, 1921. My father was an Italian immigrant, and my mother was American-born but of French ancestry, so I'm French and Italian. I attended public schools in the city of New Orleans up until the ninth grade, which at the time I quit school, like so many others did of

this time, and went to work to supplement the family income.

Marcello: Was your father from the Old Country, or was he born here?

Zanca: He was born in Palermo, Sicily. He came to this country when he was nine years old, and he is still alive today. He's ninety-five. My mother, fortunately, is still alive, and she's eighty-seven.

Marcello: When did you join the service?

Zanca: I went into the service on September 30, 1940.

Marcello: And why did you decide to join the service?

Zanca: I had a life-long ambition at that time of wanting to become a Navy chief. I used to go on the riverfront a lot, and I saw Navy ships, and Navy chiefs were my idol. I felt like this was the ultimate goal for me to achieve, and it also offered a good chance for retirement. It offered a chance to travel, which I knew I could not do on my own. I knew my finances would never allow me to travel the way I did with the service. So this was what I wanted to do. It was also a steady job, which at that time was something you hoped to get (chuckle).

Marcello: I was going to ask you whether or not economic considerations played a role in your decision to join the Navy, and I think to some extent you've just answered that.

Zanca: It was a big factor, plus the fact that I loved being around water, being aboard ships. As I said, I used to go out on the river quite a bit. I never lived very far from the river, living in New Orleans, and as a child many a time I should have been someplace else, but I was out on the riverfront going aboard ships.

Marcello: At that time, that is, in 1940 when you entered the Navy, how difficult or easy was it to get in?

Zanca: They were just starting to relax the strict ration or quotas that they had established. It was the beginning of the build-up because the Selective Service was coming into effect. Also, the Navy was starting to expand, and they were taking people in in a much shorter period of waiting than they had been in the past. A year before that, you had to wait at least six months to almost a year to possibly be considered. At the time I volunteered, it was just a short wait of six weeks because they were starting to increase their quotas. In fact, I was scheduled originally to go to Norfolk, Virginia, for training, and then when I went for my pre-swearing in, I was told Norfolk was full, so I would have to go to Great Lakes. When I finally raised my hand and said, "I do, I was told I was going to San Diego because the Great Lakes had filled up. This was due to the increase of enlistments. There was no shortage of volunteers because a lot of young men were

volunteering to avoid the draft. They were becoming conscious already of the draft, and they were volunteering to get in to avoid being drafted into a service they did not want. In my case, I had not even registered for the draft--I was not required to--and I did want to get into the Navy, so I did. My mother said that from the time I was knee-high to a frog, I always said, "Navy! Navy! Navy!" This was my first love of a job.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you took your boot training in San Diego. How long did boot camp last at that time?

Zanca: We were the first company to be reduced from the twelve-week training to six weeks. Company 4070 was the pilot company for the reduced time of six weeks only.

Marcello: Your company was 4070?

Zanca: Yes, 4070.

Marcello: Was there anything eventful that happened in boot camp that you think you need to get as part of the record, or was it the normal Navy boot camp?

Zanca: I think it was the normal training that was given, but on a more or less accelerated version of it. Where the other company had spent two weeks in tying knots, we were cut for one week; where they spent probably two weeks drilling with the close-order drills, we were cut to one week of close-order drill. Everything was really reduced in length of time, but nothing was eliminated

from our training.

Marcello: Well, the fact that your training had been cut from twelve weeks to six weeks is indicative, I think, of the seriousness of the situation at that time. They were wanting to get you guys out into the fleet as quickly as possible.

Zanca: Yes, they had to get us through. The facilities for training were very limited, so they had to get us through quicker so they could get more companies in to train them. They were already starting to consider a "tent city" at each training station. I was assigned for two months additional on temporary duty, and I got to hear a lot of things that the "boots" that just came in and went out did not get to hear. I became part of the station's company for two months, and this gave me more or less a privileged position to pick up what we called "scuttlebutt, which is the Navy's version of gossip.

Marcello: You've more or less answered my next question. So when you did get out of boot camp, you stayed right there as part of the base's company until further assignment?

Zanca: Yes, I was assigned as a volunteer to the fire department to work on the fire engines and maintain a firefighter's station for a two-month period before I was being shipped out. I did this because it gave me a chance to get a little more mature in the Navy before I

went to a ship. I figured that with two months more of experience, I would know more about the Navy, and I didn't want to go to sea completely green.

Marcello: What particular rating were you hoping to strike for?

Zanca: I wanted to be a chief machinist's mate. I wanted to be an engineer.

Marcello: Did you have an opportunity to receive any training in that rating during that two-month period here at San Diego?

Zanca: No, no.

Marcello: Okay, after you spend your two months there, then where do you go?

Zanca: Well, from there I was sent to the USS Relief, a hospital ship, for transit purposes, and it was at Long Beach, California. I stayed aboard it for one month as a temporary member of the crew, and I was assigned to the deck force. I worked as a seaman in the deck force, and I learned deck force duties at that time. I was transported to Pearl Harbor, where I was then transferred to my permanent duty aboard the Honolulu.

Marcello: When you went aboard the Honolulu at Pearl Harbor, approximately when was that?

Zanca: This was February 1, 1941.

Marcello: So you were on there for about ten months--nine or ten months--before the attack actually took place.

Zanca: Yes, yes. I was fortunate enough to have experience

aboard before the attack started.

Marcello: When you went aboard the Honolulu, describe what that ship was like. You are still not very long out of boot camp, and you're coming aboard this light cruiser. Describe for me what it was like.

Zanca: Well, to me it looked like it had...the hull was an expanded version of the cruise ships that I had seen at New Orleans in the river. It was painted all blue. I saw the port holes. Of course, at that time port holes were allowed on the second and third decks, and it was only after the war started that they found out the impracticality of them. When I went aboard, having already been aboard ship, it was not quite as strange to me as it was to my fellow members who had come aboard with me. But I was amazed at the immenseness of it. The ship was like a complete city within itself. It had its own medical facilities; it had a sickbay with an operating room; it had a complete galley and refrigeration; it had ship's service that took care of laundry, a tailor shop, barber shop, even a soda fountain which was called a "geedunk" stand; and it had the "gyp joint" where we could buy personal articles such as razor blades and soap and toothpaste and all this. It was the ship's store, but it was called a "gyp joint" because everybody said that they gyped you at that joint (chuckle). These names I'm using are part,

to me, of the Navy's history, and today I don't hear them used by people that I know in the Navy. I'm wondering where did the vernacular go to (chuckle).

Marcello: When you went aboard the Honolulu, to where were you assigned?

Zanca: I was put into what was known as the X Division. The X Division were those people who were not assigned to a particular division or becoming strikers or apprentices, and it was more or less the manpower pool. You were required to sleep in a hammock in the mess deck. You had no locker; you lived out of your sea bag. This went on for about ten days, which at the time X Division was really used to assist the mess cooks in the mess halls. We had to get our hammocks laced up and out of the way, get our sea bags closed up, and the mess cooks were assigned (the members of the X Division) to help them to clean up the mess halls and to help serve the meal.

During this time, you were interviewed by the head of the department that you had aspired to and also by the heads of the departments that needed personnel to see whether or not they would be able to get you if they wanted you.

Marcello: Let's talk just very briefly about the life in the X Division. I guess you're kind of a transient, are you not, while you're in there? And I guess most people

want to get out of there as quickly as they can.

Zanca: Yes. X Division is really like a bunch of orphans because they belong to nobody in particular and everybody in general, and they are also the first group that is assigned to all working parties. You have no personal property such as your own locker or your own bunk. You have your own hammock, but you can only have it up after a certain time, and it had to be laced up and stowed by a certain time because you're living in the mess deck. The meal started at 6:00 for breakfast, and they went until 7:00 at night before it's cleaned up, so this means you only have a bedroom from after 7:00 at night until 5:00 in the morning. The mess cooks roused you out so that they could start setting up the mess hall. You don't have anybody just to say, "Well, I belong to so it's really an awkward position. Of course, you're still kept busy, and you're interviewed to find out where you might go because a lot of men, when they go into the X Division, have no particular goal--they're just in the Navy--and the different heads of the departments, after they interview them, will decide whether or not they feel that they're suitable and will ask for them to be assigned to them if there is no other previous preference designated.

Marcello: What are your recollections relative to sleeping in a hammock? I'm asking you that because that's obviously a

part of the Navy that is no longer in existence.

Zanca: Well, it's a wonderful feeling once you get in and you settle down in it and you know you're right in the middle of it and you're not going to fall out. You don't feel the motion of the ship. This was the benefit of the hammock because the hammock stayed stationary while the ship moved. In a bunk <u>everything</u> moved. It was a little bit of a job getting into it and learning how to not fall out of it, and I would have hated to have to come back from liberty with a few beers in me and try to get in one. I think I would have slept on deck (chuckle)!

Marcello: How far off the deck were those hammocks slung?

Zanca: About five-and-a-half feet.

Marcello: And how did you get into them?

Zanca: You jumped up and caught the I beam above your hammock, and you pulled yourself up and swung your leg in; and then you got your butt in the middle of it, and then if you felt sure you were all right, you would lower yourself down and let go of the security of the I beam above you.

Marcello: You mentioned mess cooking a moment ago. I'm gathering, from what you said, that the meals aboard the <u>Honolulu</u> were served family-style?

Zanca: By the time I got on board, they had discontinued the family-style and had gone to cafeteria-style with mess

trays--down-the-steam-table system--because the family-style took too long. It also required too many dishes, and the scullery equipment was not really fast enough to handle all those dishes to feed the increased number of crew that they were planning on. Originally, they only had a 700-man crew of which almost a hundred were officers. So 600 enlisted men could be fed family-style without too much of a problem, but they had raised to 800 enlisted and a hundred officers just before I came on board. So they were starting to have a problem with family-style, so they had gone to the cafeteria-style. This also released a lot of people from their mess cooking duties because previously, where you had to have a mess cook for every twenty men, now you only needed one mess cook for every hundred men.

Marcello: So by the time you got aboard the Honolulu, then, it was almost up to its full complement.

Zanca: It was up to the revised peacetime complement. The wartime complement was 1,100 with a hundred officers. The strangest thing about it was that the officers' complement increased only by about ten officers; the enlisted complement went from 700, which was full peacetime, to 1,200 full wartime. Twelve hundred was the full wartime complement. The officers were approximately ninety in full peacetime but only a hundred in full wartime. So they did have more Indians

than they had chiefs.

Marcello: Since we're talking about food, give me your impressions of the food aboard the Honolulu in that pre-Pearl Harbor period.

Zanca: We ate very well. In fact, there was a problem to not overeat. As much as we complained, we were complaining to have something to do. But the food itself was very wholesome, very nutritious. It was well-served, and the officers were required to taste of every meal that was prepared. We were lucky that we had captains all through my term on the ship that took an interest in seeing that the men were well-fed. Of course, the key to it all was a good commissary chief. He was really the secret of it because he was the man that masterminded the menu to fit the budget. If he wanted to make an impression by turning the money back to the Navy Department, it had to be to the detriment of the quality and the quantity of the food. But very lucky for us in the crew, we did not have this kind of commissary chief. We had one that believed in spending all that he was allotted--not to over-spend, but to spend all of it so that he would not be turning any back to our detriment. The Navy figured out how much we should be allowed, and he was trained to live in this allotment. If he could get us more fresh food, fresh fruit, and more of--as we would call them--the

"goodies, the things that normally are not on the menu...well, the commissary chiefs that we had did this, and they got a lot of the local stuff from Hawaii because most of our time up until the war was in Pearl Harbor. We would go out to sea for two weeks and come in for one week. We stayed in the Hawaiian area for all but one trip to Long Beach in September, 1941. In September of 1941, we went back for a short visit to the States and made a few stateside liberties, and then we went back to Pearl.

Marcello: Generally speaking, was the Honolulu a happy ship during that period before December 7, 1941? In other words, talk a little bit about the morale aboard that ship before December 7

Zanca: I think the morale of the ship was very high because the number of people that were getting into trouble was low. This was your best indicator of how a ship's morale was. A ship that had low morale had a full brig. It had people in trouble on the beach all the time. They would go ashore with the intent of fighting somebody. They couldn't do it on the ship, so they would go do it on the beach. Our morale, I feel, was very high because we had ongoing programs that tended to raise the morale. We had good food; we had clean living conditions; and we had a fair and just system of promotions. The promotion system was all within the outlines set forth by the Navy

Department, but, like any other outline, the person that is using it can do a lot one way or another. In our case, most of our officers wanted the men to progress and to be promoted. And this was the goal of most of your career people. All the men that were on the ship when I went on were career people like myself. We were all going to be twenty-year sailors. Later on, during the war, when we got the draftees, they were there for the duration, and that was it. They didn't care whether they got promoted or not. But that's a whole other bag there (chuckle).

Marcello: What role did sports play in the life of that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy? Was there very much emphasis on athletics and athletic activities?

Zanca: Oh, yes, yes. We had a boxing team; we had ball teams; we had a few men that played golf when they were able to get over to the golf courses in Hawaii and play golf. The inter-ship competition was very fierce, and each ship was proud of its men whether they won or lost. As long as they put up a good fight and as long as they gave a good ball game, it didn't matter. It was fun to win. Let's face it, we all wanted to be winners. But we didn't down a team if they were out-manned and out-gunned by more experienced players. We still supported our teams. Sports was quite important. We kept a ring on the fantail that was easily mounted--a boxing ring.

You could use it for a grudge fight, or we used it for the boxing team or for anybody that wanted to go up there and spar a little bit. That was usually what I got into. I would not go into competitive boxing, but I did go up as a sparring partner because I had had a little bit of boxing. When I was at a younger age in the Ninth Ward of New Orleans, we had a local boxing club. I used to go there, and I got a few rounds in there every once in a while. I told the coach of the boxing team that I would not become a competitive fighter, but if he wanted someone to spar with the men, I would be glad to volunteer every once in a while. They didn't like to have me do this because it gave them a difference in style to contend with. Every boxer has to contend with so many different styles, and our boxing team did not get the opportunity to scout the opponents that much. Usually, the first time you saw them was when you went into the ring with them. The boxing team was really one of our biggest sports, and then so was the baseball team. I don't remember basketball, but we even had a little bit of bowling. The officer's club had a bowling alley on base, and enlisted men could go there and set pins; and when the officers weren't using the lanes, we could use them. So some of us developed into pastime bowlers, and we'd go downtown in Honolulu and wait in line to get into the bowling alley there.

But there was no real concerted team effort. It was just a few guys from the ship that got together, and we'd go and try to bowl a little bit.

Marcello: I understand that the so-called boxing "smokers" were very well-attended when they were held on shore maybe over at Bloch Center or someplace like that.

Zanca: Oh, yes, yes. You went early to be sure you got close to ringside. In fact, there were some people who even passed up the supper meal to get over there to be sure to be in early, especially when it was between divisions. Between ships within a division, you had competition, but when you went from one division to another from, like, from Cruiser Division Nine to Cruiser Division Seven, you had a lot of attendance there and a lot of support to the boxers. The boxers were favored people. Of course, they earned it. If they wanted to train and get their head knocked off a few times, they earned the privileges they got. But they were given privileges.

Marcello: What kind of privileges?

Zanca: Well, they were left off of certain routine watches; they were left off of certain working parties that were supposed to be all hands working parties. They were given these privileges, but I did not find that they were really given any opportunities for promotions like was alleged in the Army. If you wanted to become a

sergeant in the Army, all you had to do was get on the company boxing team. But that didn't work in the Navy probably because you had to have so much technical knowledge to get a promotion in the Navy. You couldn't fake it. An engineer could not be on the boxing team and fake that he knew how to line up the main engines for getting underway unless he actually knew how. Boxing skills didn't come into effect there (chuckle).

Marcello: You were talking about the Army awhile ago and the special privileges that it afforded its boxers in particular. I'm sure you were making reference to what went on up at Schofield Barracks, for instance.

Zanca: Well, the story From Here to Eternity is not all fiction. It has quite a basis of truth in it.

Marcello: I understand that the whaleboat races were also a big thing in the pre-Pearl Harbor Navy.

Zanca: I don't remember of ever having any of that on our ship. We only had two whaleboats that could be fitted with oars; all the rest of them were motor-driven. It's possible that earlier in the history of the ship they might have had a rowing crew with the whaleboats, but I don't remember of anything like that at the time. Of course, that required a lot of in-port time, and we did not have a lot of in-port time. We were under wartime conditions--two weeks out, one week in--and when we were out, we were under wartime conditions even then.

Marcello: You mentioned something a moment ago that I want to pick up on. You were talking about promotions. How slow or fast were promotions in that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy?

Zanca: In the pre-Pearl Harbor Navy, for instance, to go from fireman first class to machinist's mate second, you had a minimum one-year wait. After Pearl Harbor, it was reduced to nine months, and then in about the middle of the war, it was reduced to four months, if you could pass the test and get the recommendations.

Marcello: I was going to mention the fact that you did have to take fleet-wide examinations, isn't that correct?

Zanca: At pre-Pearl Harbor, everything was fleet-wide. There was a certain quota of ratings available, and the highest score and the highest recommendations were given these promotions. And it might require you to change ships because if a ship had a quota of ten petty officers of a certain class and you became that class, you might have to go fill that vacancy. So this was one of the things that deterred some of the men that didn't want to leave the ship. They wanted to make sure that there was an opening on the ship that they were on before they would go ahead for the promotion. Myself, I liked the Honolulu, and I wanted to stay with it, but I felt that if it meant I had to go because I was getting promoted, I would take the promotion and maybe later on try and get back to the ship.

Marcello: Okay, you're in the X Division, and, like you mentioned a moment ago, they interviewed you during this period to see what kind of desires you had and what qualifications you had and also to determine their own needs. Describe what happens to you once you leave the X Division. What happens?

Zanca: I was lucky enough that with my desire to be an engineer, there were openings in the engineering division; and the engine room was to me a better choice than the fire room because there was more machinery; and the engine room was a much better place because it was not quite as hot and as dirty as the fire rooms. By then I was eligible to become a third class fireman; or the other version of it would be a second class seaman. A third class fireman was low man on the totem pole, and I was assigned to a cleaning station down in the bilges, which is the area under all of the engines down in the bottom where all the drain water and the leak-off oil goes to. But this was the low man on the totem pole's place, and I knew I had to do this first.

I was also assigned to a period of mess cooking, which I went for one week, and then I was called back to the engine room for reasons of their own, not mine, and I got out of mess cooking, which I was glad of because I wanted to get more experience in the engine room. Normally, you would serve a three-month period as low

man on the totem pole in mess cooking duties or the equivalent to Army KP. You did it for three months. Now it did carry a little extra financial benefit, but I preferred to get the experience to try to improve my position by getting ratings.

Marcello: What kind of on-the-job training did you get down there in the engine room?

Zanca: You did everything that even the chief would do if you were in the right place at the right time. There was no hard and fast rule that you couldn't turn the valve or you couldn't touch that piece of machinery. If you wanted to study a piece of machinery, you made yourself available to the man that knew that piece of machinery, and he would teach you. I only had one guy out of about fifty that ever refused to let me train on his machinery. He was the kind of guy that...well, he was just an oddball. Nobody got along with him, and I was no exception. I didn't get along with him either. But most of the men cooperated because if you were doing the operating of the machinery, you were also responsible for cleaning it afterwards. So they would teach you how to operate it, and then they would also oversee your cleaning it, which was on your time (laughter). Some of them used it as a gimmick to get out of the menial tasks, but they also served the purpose of being good instructors because they taught you that you operated

the machinery in the proper manner and you also had to clean it afterwards.

Marcello: I'm sure that there were a lot of years experience down in that engine room. Those petty officers probably had quite a few years in the Navy.

Zanca: Yes, all the petty officers were all men that had come up the long, hard way with the long waits. The chiefs had a three-year wait before they could become chiefs, which later, toward the end of the war, was reduced to eight months. But at that time, anybody you saw with the chief's hat, you knew he had waited three years to get that hat. That was after waiting all those other long periods to get up to first class to be able to be promoted to chief. I would say with the twenty-two people in the engine room, at the time I went down there--not including the officers--they had to have at least four years of experience because no petty officer had under four years of experience.

Marcello: You know, we were talking about the competition between or among the ships during that pre-Pearl Harbor period. Was there not also competition when you would go out on exercises relative to fuel consumption and gunnery and things of that nature?

Zanca: Definitely. That's right. The Navy "E" was the big deal. If you could fly the "E" flag or you could paint the "E" on your stack or put the "E" on your gun, you

had achieved the ultimate in the Navy at that time. To get the Navy "E" for efficiency and expertise, you had to compete with everybody in your division, and your division was in competition with everybody in the fleet. Some of the standards were very, very high. Fuel consumption and water consumption...a lot of people think only of fuel consumption, but water consumption in the Navy is a very definite indication of your efficiency because it take a pound of fuel for every pound of water. The Navy makes its own water at sea. By distilling the seawater, they make it into potable water, and if you waste potable water, you are wasting your fuel. You learn to take a bath with a minimum of freshwater, and you learn never to have a leak because with a leak in any freshwater system or any of the steam systems--because that was all made from freshwater--you are wasting fuel. You just don't want to run out of gas. At that time it was the common thing to run out of gas with your date if you had a car and a date, but you did not want to run out of gas with that big ship! And if you wasted fuel, you could very well run out of gas or be forced into a position where you had to admit to your waste of fuel and your lack of proper economy and discipline. The fuel consumption was posted daily, and when it went above a certain figure, you found that the washrooms were locked. At one time, even the water

bubblers were shut down, and you had to get water from only certain locations in gallon jugs, and you were very limited.

We were taught fuel conservation and water conservation as a part of everyday life, and the competition was very, very intense in some areas, such as the gunnery. You went out there, you fired so many rounds, and you had to score a certain amount to be passing. Then after you got passing, then you started going for the "E" of getting the most hits with the least amount of shells and also the saving of all of your brass, because the copper-brass shell cases were an expense. If you could save all your brass and didn't let any of it go overboard, you were saving the Navy money.

Marcello: And the Navy was very cost-conscious in those days before Pearl Harbor.

Zanca: On, definitely! They had to be because their budget was so little. Of course, there was a lot of people like Admiral Kimmel, who insisted that we be on a wartime basis, which is more expensive than being on a peacetime basis. But he wanted all the ships on a wartime basis, and unfortunately he was the man that was crucified for Pearl Harbor. He was the man that most probably could have saved a lot of ships if he had been able to operate the way he wanted to.

Marcello: Talk a little bit about the liberty routine aboard the Honolulu while you were at Pearl Harbor during that prewar period period. How did the liberty routine work, and what did you do?

Zanca: We were divided into four sections--port and starboard--and then each one had two sections. You had port one and port two, starboard one and starboard two. You'd have liberty one out of four days. Only 25 percent of the crew was required to be on board, and you could go wherever your finances allowed you. Now at this time, I'm making $36 a month and sending $10 home, so I have the tremendous sum of $26 to just blow. You're chuckling, but $26 at that time was a lot of money! The rate for going downtown--which was, I think, about eleven miles--was twenty-five cents in the cab with other passengers. They'd take up to seven passengers in one cab. When you got downtown, beer sold for ten cents, high balls were fifteen to twenty cents, and ladies' favors started at a dollar and went as high as. .in the more expensive places, it was up to three dollars. Any higher than that, I couldn't afford, and I didn't ever go there. But a man could get a tattoo for a dollar, some of them even less depending on how little he wanted. If he just wanted the bare minimum like an initial or something like this, he could get it for maybe a quarter to fifty cents. If he wanted to get a

lot of fancy tattooing, he might go spend $40 or $50 on it--the same tattooing that today would cost you $400 or $500. My son is a tattoo buff, and I know what it cost him. On the base you had a ship's service there that had quite a few pool tables where you could go shoot pool. They had a very good library available, which I used quite a bit because I was always a reader. They had the ship's service where you could get the same thing that you got in the old-time soda fountains, plus you could go buy all kinds of gifts at a very reduced rate. Incidentally, the genuine Hawaiian grass skirts--which every sailor bought one at least, for somebody in his family--were made in Red Neck, New Jersey (chuckle). I went behind the building one time, and I found all the boxes! Genuine Hawaiian skirts made in Red Neck, New Jersey!

We spent a lot of time at the facilities on base. We also spent a lot of time, even though we were on liberty, aboard ship or going to another ship and playing acey-deucey, which is similar to backgammon or playing cribbage, which is a game of cards that you play with a counting board where with certain combination of cards you could move so many pegs ahead. Cribbage and acey-deucey were the two most popular games played because they could be played with or without stakes. Poker was no fun without money; blackjack was no fun

without money.

Now that was also another big sport, was gambling. It usually started off on payday. The fellows that didn't go ashore and that wanted to spend their time gambling would have maybe...on our ship, I would say, as an estimate, about fifty games on the first day of payday. On the second day, it was down maybe to thirty games. By the fifth day, it was down to one game. That game, you went in with no less than a thousand dollars to get into it. If you didn't have a thousand dollars, you didn't belong in that game. This was either craps or poker. They did not play blackjack big like that, probably because the dealer controls blackjack. But in the crap games and the poker games, I've seen many of them where a thousand to five thousand dollars were thrown on the deck, and the roll of the dice determined who got it. In fact, they used to tie their money up in bundles so they wouldn't have to recount it.

Men did not usually look for gambling ashore because so much of it had a bad reputation. Mostly what they looked for was a place to eat, drink, and get a little female companionship. That was all available in the city of Honolulu, and the most popular eating place, really, was the Chinese places, Wo Fat's and Yee Hop's. They also had the Japanese...it was sort of like a barbeque that they made where they would twist these

thin strips of beef on these skewers, and they were served in a sauce. These were ten cents a stick. They also served a tea that you would put in a little bit of the cheapest whiskey--which was Mr. Pepper--and you'd make you some tea royals. These were very popular. There were outdoors benches and tables, and they usually had a canvas as a shield from the sidewalk. Anybody with an open lot could build themselves one of these places, and they did not have any roof on them. The weather in Honolulu was always pretty even. It rained every day but only for about thirty minutes, and then it stopped. A half-hour later it was dry. This is what we used to do on liberties.

We did have some men that went over to Waikiki to the more expensive beaches because there was a certain element over there of females that were looking for young men, and they wanted them as lovers for one-night stands, mostly. A lot of them were opportunists--a lot of the men were opportunists--and they were going to use their sexual manpower for their own purposes, so they would go over to Waikiki. Some of them got into problems over there because they misunderstood some of the women or the women claimed that they were misunderstood. Of course, that was never my bag. I didn't want to go over there because I would rather know who I was dealing with.

Marcello: What significance does the Black Cat Cafe have? Do you remember any Black Cat Cafe?

Zanca: I don't remember any Black Cat Cafe.

Marcello: It was a barroom right across from the YMCA, and evidently it was the first place that most of the sailors hit.

Zanca: Oh, oh, that was the one right where all the cabs unloaded, and the busses used to come there. It was the first...that's probably why I don't remember it because I never stopped at the first place. I believed that the first thing you do is get away from the crowd. I saw the number of people...like in San Diego, when these "boots" would all go downtown, there was Bradley's, right at the bus stop. There would be in there four or five deep trying to get waited on, trying to make the barmaids...and all these barmaids already either had bar friends or husbands, and they weren't about to go out with these recruits. So I learned then to get away from the first stop. So I used to more or less go a little bit farther out.

I never went to town on payday. We had two big paydays for each type of ship. Battleship payday was on the first and sixteenth; the cruiser paydays were the fifth and twentieth. On the first to the third, it was too crowded with the battleship sailors to be able to move around good. From the fifth, sixth, and the

seventh, the cruiser and destroyer sailors crowded the downtown, so they were not good days. But on the fourth and after the eighth until the next payday, there was plenty of open area, and you could get around a lot better. If you went to where the women were, they were not being rushed, so you could talk to them, which I did a lot of.

I used to go to these houses, and I would sit and talk. Most of the time, I didn't do any business. I just went there and...I used to sneak booze in for them. Nearly all of them liked to drink, and they were not allowed to buy their booze and put it in the house. So I became pretty good at smuggling booze into the houses. At that time, if you were not successful in your physical endeavor, you got a rain check because it was on a time-limited basis. They weren't going to lose a lot of time with you. They were going to take your money, give you a rain check, and you could come back. Well, these girls that wanted me to go get them booze, they would slip me a rain check so that I could get into the room with them to give them their booze, and then they would pay me for the booze. Sometimes I took advantage of being in the room with them for the sexual favors, but most of the time I didn't because I was looking for somebody female to talk to.

There were a lot of them that had pretty good

educations. They were a cross-section of people. Most of them were not from the islands; they were from the States. They were out there to make a fast buck, and they made many bucks because on battleship payday and cruiser and destroyer payday, the men were lined up waiting to get in. They also had "pro" stations in there, and as soon as you got finished, you had to get that Navy "pro, which was a good deterrent from disease but it was not perfect. A lot of men caught something (chuckle).

Marcello: For the record, what are you referring to when you refer to a "pro" station? What does the "pro" station mean?

Zanca: A "pro" station is a prophylactic station. The Navy did not recognize a house of prostitution as a place where the men would go. However, they did station a medical corpsman and a shore patrolman at the exit so that when you started to leave, you had to have an injection into your penis of this kalinol solution; and you were forced to coat your organ with this cream they gave you, and then you could wipe it off or wrap it up (they didn't care). Once you did it. .and you had to do it before you could leave unless the madam said you did not do business. Later on, the Navy started furnishing penicillin pills in lieu of the "pro" station. But at that time, all of the larger houses had Navy corpsmen on duty, and they had a shore patrolman on duty to make

sure that you hit the "pro" station before you went out.

Marcello: And most of these places are located either on Hotel or Canal Streets, is that correct?

Zanca: Right, right. The majority of the enlisted men's locations were there. Now the officers went to the other location, which they did not divulge, and I really didn't care where they went.

Marcello: Let's talk about a typical training exercise that the Honolulu would undergo during that period before Pearl Harbor. You've mentioned on several occasions that, even then, the Honolulu was on a wartime footing. Take me on one of these exercises. First of all, when would you go out? Was there a particular day of the week?

Zanca: Well, normally, we'd sail on a Monday morning, and we returned two or three Fridays later. We'll take a typical Monday morning underway. All hands muster at 8:00, and immediately after muster--make sure that all crewmen were aboard--we would get underway and clear the harbor. We would get out to sea, and we would rig for sea and rig for wartime conditions. This meant that we brought up ready ammunition to the guns, and we took out all of the fancy things that were on deck and put those away. We stripped down the decks for wartime conditions. We put the engineering system into a full alert, which meant that all boilers were ready to light off. At least four boilers would be on line out of the

eight. The Engineering Department had one-third of the crew on watch, which was the normal steaming conditions. Then, if we were going a night exercise the first night out, just before sundown we would go to general quarters. We would have an early supper, and then we would go to general quarters.

Marcello: Where was your general quarters station?

Zanca: My general quarters station was in the forward engine room on the lower level at the main lubrication oil pumps. I operated the two main lubrication oil pumps, and this was necessary for the lubrication of the main engines and the shafts. We would go into blackout conditions. We would be at general quarters, and we would be in blackout conditions--full wartime blackout, no lights visible at all--and we were steaming in formation. We would then go into whatever phase of battle that we were supposed to be, whether we were in an air attack or whether we were in a surface battle or if we were going for a bombardment run on the rock that they had out there. I forget the name of the little island, but it's just a bare rock that probably has thousands of tons of steel on it because everybody shot at it. We would make our runs on it. The Engineering Department, when we went to general quarters, would go to full 100 percent ready to hit maximum speed. We'd light up all boilers, get all engines tested at full

steam.

All the ship was closed up. Every space became an individual bubble. That's when you had Condition Affirm, which means everything is tightened up and closed up. If water got down to your one space, it should not flood the next space. This is what saved us in Pearl, and it also saved us with the three torpedoes we got later on in the war. But you remained on your battle station until they either went to Condition Two, which was half-and-half, or they went to Condition Three, which was normal steaming.

We had all kinds of drills such as man overboard; we had fire drills; we had damage control drills. Part of my later duties was in damage control, and I was taught to go through the ship blindfolded in my area.

Marcello: I guess you would really understand the importance of those damage control drills later on in the war.

Zanca: Right. As an example of it, another ship had been in the Navy yard, and like most of the cruisers, it had a complement similar to ours. They had sent all but about 400 men to other ships because they were going to be in the Navy yard for a while. They had suffered major damage, and they were being remodeled and refitted. When they came out, they had all the best equipment of that time for firefighting and damage control. They had the 400 of the old crew, and they got 800 new people

(draftees, trainees, boots, and a few that had been reassigned from other ships that were lost). But they only had about 400 as a nucleus of experienced people. Because they had had their leave periods during this time, these people had not received a lot of training on their new equipment. They went south around Guadalcanal, they got hit, they got a fire, and they didn't even know how to start the engines to give them the maximum water that they could have saved the ship from extensive damage. Well, they wound up. .they went back to the Navy yard because they were not trained.

From the time that I went on the ship, every captain, as soon as we got out of the harbor--and that was usually San Francisco; we went to Mare Island for most of out work--we went to general quarters. While we were at general quarters, we had firefighting drills and damage control drills; and the gunnery crews were practicing loading and unloading, and they were doing some firing when it was possible. One time the chaplain went up and saw the captain and said, "Captain, these men are falling out. We've been at drills for twenty hours a day. What are you trying to do? Kill them?" He says, "No, I'm trying to save them. If I don't train them now, when we go into battle, we won't hit the enemy because the enemy will hit us, and then I will lose my men. I don't want that on my conscience. I stay awake;

they got to stay awake. I keep going; they've got to keep going. We never know, when we go into a battle, how long it's going to be. So, Chaplain, if you can't cut it, get yourself a transfer. My ship, when it goes into action, will be ready. And we were. We trained for seven, eight, nine days going out of port. We didn't hardly sleep. Then it would slack off. He had definite goals that we would reach from Condition Three to Battle Condition in so many seconds, not minutes. This meant that no matter where you were on our ship, which was 600 feet long and sixty-six feet wide and altogether with about nine different levels, when they sounded General Quarters, you had to get from where you were to where you were supposed to be, report in, and be ready.

Marcello: And this was the sort of thing that was being done during that pre-Pearl Harbor period.

Zanca: This was done during the pre-Pearl Harbor period. We'd go out of port, and we trained and we trained. Sometimes we were in battle conditions all night.

Marcello: How much emphasis was given to antiaircraft practice?

Zanca: Quite a bit, but not as much as we later realized should have been.

Marcello: I don't think anybody actually realized yet just how important or destructive airplanes were going to be in future Naval battles.

Zanca: Well, the one man that tried to convince them of this suffered a very degrading and demoralizing effect on his ambition--Billy Mitchell. Billy Mitchell told them that the Army had better be prepared to have an air force because the air force was going to be the thing. And they wouldn't listen to him. They thought mostly planes would be used...of course, we had our own warplanes besides the spotter planes, and our pilots on aircraft carriers were trained to do the same thing that the Japs did. The only thing is that they were not trained to do it in a Japanese port like the Japanese did to us in an American port.

Marcello: Is it safe to say that after Pearl Harbor the Honolulu had a lot more antiaircraft weapons than it had before Pearl Harbor?

Zanca: I would say that the first thing they brought aboard was twenty 20-millimeter rapid-fire rifles.

Marcello: This is after Pearl Harbor?

Zanca: After Pearl. Before Pearl, we had eight 5-inch antiaircraft guns and four 3-inch antiaircraft guns; and we had a few machine guns, .50-caliber and .30-caliber, which are very good when the plane is on your deck because you can shoot the hell out of it, but it's not too good when the plane is coming in at 150 to 200 miles an hour, which was the approximate speed of those planes then. The 3-inch guns did serve us well, but the only

trouble was that there was not enough of them. They served us well at Pearl. The 5-inch served us, but they were not fast enough; and this is one of the reasons we got the 20-millimeters which they brought aboard. They were actually portable, but we had fixed deck mounts for them. Then they brought the 1.1s, what they call the Bofors. They were made by Bofors, and there were four guns to each mount. They were very rapid fire, and they could reach out a mile or so with accuracy, which was enough to keep a plane off of you. Then later on, they changed to 40-millimeters when the ack-acks didn't prove to be too worthy. They had a problem in their projectiles. They were so sensitive that if you were firing in the rain, they would explode right out the barrel. That don't do you very much good, really (chuckle).

Marcello: So the point is that the Honolulu was much better prepared and capable of defending itself against air attacks a year later than it was before.

Zanca: Oh, yes, yes.

Marcello: From what you said, I gather that your routine changed very little even as one gets closer and closer to December 7, because you were always on this wartime footing.

Zanca: Yes, yes. From the time I went on it, it was already in this wartime status. Now one thing that used to get

everybody, because of the necessity of the physical work involved, was the fact that anytime that we got ready to go in port, we had to take down all our ready ammunition and put it in the magazines. This meant that when we were in port, we were like the sentry out there with the rifle and no bullets. And we knew this! We knew we were leaving ourselves wide open.

Every enlisted man that was out there from, I would say, July on or previous to that knew that Pearl Harbor was a bottleneck. They knew that it was a prime target for anybody that wanted to attack. That knew that it was going to be attacked, but they just didn't know when. The fact that we could not keep ready ammunition, which was one of the things that Kimmel wanted to have and he would order it...and then because the politicians thought that it was a wartime act to have ready ammunition at your guns in port, they wanted it put below, put back in the magazines. You could have it on the ship but not by the guns, which to me was asinine and also very detrimental because a lot of ships did not get to fire at the enemy because all their ready ammunition was in the magazines. We had violated the politicians, and we had ready ammunition at our 3-inch and 5-inch guns. We didn't have ready ammunition at the 6-inch guns, but we did have it at the 3- and the 5-inch guns. And as soon as they got those locks off and got

those firing pins out and put them in the guns, they were ready to start shooting.

Marcello: When the Honolulu came back into Pearl after one of these exercises, where did it normally tie up?

Zanca: Normally, we went to one of the buoys, and we would tie up to the buoy. First, we would go in and refuel and take on water from the dock, and we would also unload any personnel that had to be offloaded. Then we would move out to one of the mooring buoys.

Marcello: And where were they located relative to Battleship Row?

Zanca: They were, I'd say, about a third of the way from the Navy Yard section toward Battleship Row. They had quite a few of them out there--these mooring buoys--because sometimes you'd have a whole cruiser division or a destroyer division moored out there.

Marcello: Let me ask you a two-part question here, and both questions are aimed at more or less the same objective. Would you normally go out at the same time on the same day of the week and come in the same day of the week, and would you normally tie up at the same place?

Zanca: Normally, yes. We were more or less routine in that respect.

Marcello: So it didn't take any bright Japanese agent to figure out when you were going to leave and where you were going to be when you got back.

Zanca: That is exactly what all the enlisted men used to say,

that "them S.O.B.'s want us to be sitting out there; they know when we're going out; and they know when we're coming back. If they want to put mines in the harbor, they know when they put them there, and we are bound to run into them because we never have a minesweeper ahead of us when we come in. Somebody thought that once we passed the entrance, this was sanctity, that no harm could come to you. This was an erroneous way of thinking because anybody, even without wartime experience, could figure this out. Here is a bottleneck, and here's a place where, if the enemy could catch you, you have no maneuverability. This is where, if you sink anything big here, you've blocked the harbor up, and there was no way they could get out.

Marcello: Normally, would just half the fleet then be in on a particular weekend, or on some occasions would the whole fleet be in on a weekend?

Zanca: On some occasions the whole fleet would be in, especially on the holiday weekends like Thanksgiving. There were very little outside. This was really in the peacetime condition. There was no threat to anybody, so everybody would come in, and they would have ships everywhere. You might have just a few ships outside the harbor patrolling, but mainly everybody was in. If they had waited for Christmas morning, they probably would have done a lot more damage because they would have

caught a lot more ships in.

Marcello: But theoretically, all the ships could be in there on a weekend. For instance, you mentioned awhile ago that you would normally come in maybe on a Friday.

Zanca: Yes.

Marcello: And if the other part of the fleet was going out, they wouldn't be going out until a Monday probably, so everybody would be in there on a weekend.

Zanca: Right, yes.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us into that weekend of December 7, 1941, and, of course, we want to go into this in detail. When did the Honolulu come in that weekend?

Zanca: We had been in. It seems to me we had come in, and we weren't due to go out until either Monday or Tuesday. I think this was our week in.

Marcello: And where were you tied up this weekend?

Zanca: Pier twenty-one.

Marcello: What ship was next to you?

Zanca: The Saint Louis was next to us.

Marcello: Just checking (chuckle).

Zanca: Yes, the Saint Louis was next to us. Now the Saint Louis was moving from being tied up outboard of us to a mooring buoy, so they had steam up. Now this is the situation at the time. We are at Pier Twenty-one, and we are in the last slip--last docking area--and the Saint Louis is outboard of us. We have the flag. The

Bagley, a destroyer, is tied up at the end of the dock, but it's tied up at a right angle to us because it's not in the slip with us. The Bagley was a destroyer.

Marcello: This is the way things were on that Sunday?

Zanca: Yes, that Sunday morning.

Marcello: Let me back up to that Saturday evening. What did you do that Saturday evening?

Zanca: That Saturday evening, I think all I did was loaf around because I wasn't going to town. It was cruiser and destroyer payday. The fifth and the sixth were not days to go to town on my routine thing.

Marcello: Would a lot of people off the ship have gone into town?

Zanca: Oh, yes, I would say that 80 percent of the liberty party--80 percent of those eligible--left the ship on Saturday night. They went to town for whatever reason.

Marcello: What time did you turn in that night? Do you recall?

Zanca: Oh, probably about 10:30 or 11:30, somewhere around that time.

Marcello: Were people drifting back on the ship, that is, those who had been on liberty during that period?

Zanca: Yes, there was always a few that came in early.

Marcello: But did most of them wait for the last liberty boat?

Zanca: Well, because we were tied up at the dock, they didn't have to wait for boats.

Marcello: That's correct.

Zanca: They followed whatever was their usual routine. Some of

them didn't like to get caught in that last minute rush for cabs because there was no place for them to stay overnight in town. They couldn't afford the going rate in the hotels. So what they did was just stay until 11:00 or 11:30, and then they'd start trying to catch the cabs. By 12:30 or 1:00, most of them that were coming back were on board. The ones that were fortunate enough to have a place to stay wouldn't come back until the next morning; or if they were in a condition that they couldn't get back, well, then wherever they were, they were trying to sleep it off.

Marcello: But if one wanted, one could stay overnight.

Zanca: Oh, yes, yes. There was no problem with overnight liberty.

Marcello: I know that a lot of the battleships had what was called a "Cinderella" liberty. Those sailors had to be back aboard by midnight.

Zanca: Yes, yes. Depending on the conditions, your normal liberty below the rating of first class was midnight. But to stay overnight, all you had to do was give an address. You'd go to the exec's office and say, "I want an overnight pass. I had plans for a seven-day leave during Christmas, and they told me that if I wanted to come back to the ship everyday, I'd have to give them the address everyday; and then I could go back over. I told them that if I went, I would stay. But the Japs

messed that up.

Marcello: Okay, we were talking about this Sunday morning. You had a rather uneventful Saturday night. Continue with your discussion of what took place on Sunday.

Zanca: My job at the time was compartment cleaner, which is, in the civilian life, a janitor. I was responsible for this living space with forty-two men in it for the cleanliness and upkeep of it. On Sunday mornings, we did not have an inspection, but we were required to be sure that all trash was emptied out of the trash cans and emptied on the dock, in this case because we were tied up.

So about ten minutes to eight, I did a little picking up--a few newspapers laying around. I was getting ready to go take my trash out on the dock, and then I realized that on Sunday morning they had had an extended salute to colors with bands playing the National Anthem. I didn't want to get caught on deck and have to stand at attention for maybe ten or fifteen minutes, so I was going to go first to the head and do my morning duties--absolution and bowel movement--and then I was going to go on the docks.

Well, while I'm mulling this over in my mind, it becomes five minutes until eight, and I hear this tremendous noise that sounded like a herd of cattle. Then I heard this long blast on the bugle that sounded

like "Johnny One-Note. I thought to myself, "Now that sounds like General quarters. What in the hell are they doing having a drill on Sunday morning? What's all that noise?" Well, about that time the noise became apparent because the men were coming down from topside, and they were all saying the same thing: "The Japs are attacking! This is no drill!" About that time the boatswain's mate on watch got on a speaker and said, "General Quarters! General Quarters! Man your battle stations! This is no drill!" In the background you could hear the booming of the bombs.

So I made a run that never before had I been able to do it and never again could I duplicate it. From where I was, up three ladders and forward about 250 feet, I went down two ladders and was on my battle station in less than a minute; and I do not recall touching the ladders going down into the engine room. I think I slid down the handrail that you hold above your head for safety purposes. When I hit that first level, I just let go and flew to the next one like a trapeze artist. I slid on down, and when I got to the lower level, I caught the one over the door and swung into the engine room. This was inside of an air trunk. When I got down there, it wasn't just a few minutes after that that the Saint Louis pulled us away from the dock.

Marcello: You say the Saint Louis pulled you away from the dock.

Do you want to explain this?

Zanca: Well, we were moored to the dock, and the Saint Louis was moored to us. The Saint Louis was supposed to get underway right after colors and move out to the mooring buoy. Well, when the attack started, they didn't wait to untie from us. They started moving out, and when they started moving out, they stretched all of our mooring lines to the dock. Unfortunately, our electricity wires, our water line, our steam line and our air lines were not that long, so we broke all dock-side connections. We lost the gangway into the water--the gangway that the dock furnished--and it left us away from the dock with no way of getting either on or off the ship. Then the Saint Louis realized what they had done, and they just started untying or cutting the mooring lines that were moored to us. About that time, the admiral decided that he would transfer to the Saint Louis because the Saint Louis was getting underway, and he knew that we were in what they call "cold plant. We could not get underway because we had no steam, no air, no water pressure. We were in a real "cold plant" situation, so we started lighting off our main engines.

Marcello: Your purpose is to get underway, is that correct?

Zanca: Our purpose is to get that ship alive.

Marcello: Nobody had to give you this order. You knew that's what you were supposed to do.

Zanca: We knew that this was the first thing. The boilertender, Maxwell, was really the brain of the engineering force insofar as the man on the boiler control. He's the one who regulates how many burners are in the boiler, how many boilers are lit; and he is supposed to be told what the engineering plant can expect. He is supposed to make sure that this is ready when the time comes for it. Well, Maxwell was an old-time...I guess at that time he had sixteen to eighteen years in the Navy. He was a boilermaker and a watertender. At one time he was watertender, and he became a boilermaker, the difference being that a watertender operates the boilers, and the boilertender can manufacture the parts for the boiler and can also revert the boiler. Maxwell was the control man. Well, he started ordering the fire rooms to lightoff different burners and different boilers as the men were getting down there and reporting to him. He was telling us to put in the jacking gears to start rotating the engines so that when we did get steam we would be able to start running them on steam.

Well, fortunately, our emergency generator kicked in and gave us some power because our regular generators were steam, and without steam we couldn't run them. But they had enough to run a few of the fuel pumps and enough for lighting. The guns were operating on manual.

The guns that were topside and operating on manual. The boilers, being lit off with coal fuel, were making so much smoke that it looked like we were burning. This fooled the Japs.

As Maxwell managed to get enough steam up, he was ordering the different lines opened up to start draining all the condensate out of the steam lines, because one thing you do not do is allow a steam surge when there is water in the lines because that becomes like a bullet going through the pipe. When it hits your machinery, it's going to knock the machinery apart. This is what you hear when you're in a building when they turn on the heat and the steam, and it goes "Clang! Clang! Clang!" That's that water hitting those turns in the pipe. Maxwell, without even the chief engineer telling him anything, was doing everything. The chief engineer had gotten down there to his station.

There was twenty-two of us in that engine room, including the three officers, and there was an officer in the after engine room and twenty people back there. We are trying to get steam up, and we're watching the gauges. The ship is vibrating from the shelling that was being done by us--the shooting being done by us--and we had dust flying everywhere and no blowers going, no air circulating, because the blowers had to have too much electricity that we did not cut them in at this

time. Then the steam started coming, and we started...we were draining our main engines and trying to get them...they had to have a vacuum in them to be able to operate properly, and we were trying to get this going.

As soon as I got enough steam, which I only needed 100 pounds, I had my oil pumps going, because without the oil pumps we couldn't operate the main engines, because it would wipe the bearings out. I got my pumps on the line, and they told me to hold a test on them, which the normal procedure would be to run them up overspeed and see if the overspeed governor would cut them down. But they told me to hold the test because they wanted to conserve steam, so I just had them rolling over and pumping oil. The fire room crews were all doing like we were--listening to the man on smoke watch.

Marcello: At this stage, let me break in and ask a question or two, and this will show my ignorance. When the Saint Louis started to move away and, in essence, broke your power connections, did you have any kind of power sources at all on board the Honolulu?

Zanca: Only the emergency generators that kicked in. Fortunately, they had an air bank of 3,000 pounds which kicks them in by just an impulse, and it starts rolling, and it allows the diesel generator to ignite. It was

the diesel-powered generator, and it had to be kicked over enough so that the diesel pressure builds up. The diesels work on compression firing, not on electrical firing. The one diesel kicked in, and the other one didn't because the airbank was down on that. We had two of them. Had both of them kicked in, we would have had a lot more electricity available. We would have had some available for the guns and some more for our purposes.

But in the meantime, we were draining the steamlines to the generators, and as soon as we got up to 200 pounds, we started rolling them over slow. According to the book--and I read it in the book and went through the stages--from the condition our engineering plant was in at ten minutes until eight, following peacetime procedures, to get that ship ready to get underway, it would take until no earlier than 8:30 Monday. At ten minutes until eight, we were in "cold plant, and we were looking twenty-four hours or better to get to our underway condition, and in thirty-nine minutes we had written a new page to the book. Thirty-nine minutes after eight, we notified the bridge that we were ready to get underway.

Marcello: You mentioned Maxwell awhile ago. Was he the guy who was perhaps responsible for this?

Zanca: Yes, Maxwell was the brain, and he was the most

responsible person for us being able to do this.

Marcello: And once you're getting up steam, you're also getting up power, more generation, more electricity.

Zanca: As we built up steam...when we got up to 400 pounds, we started running our generators full-speed, and we were able to put them on the line so that we had full electric power, which gave us water power, which gave us the air power necessary for the guns, the main battery, because each time they would fire, you'd have to rebuild the air bank in them. They carried a 3,000-pound air bank, but you'd have to keep rebuilding it. Everytime they fired, your air compressors had to give them another shot of air, see. I'd say that Maxwell was the main person to save the Honolulu that day from being dead.

Marcello: Okay, you're picking up steam, and in the meantime a Japanese dive-bomber comes in and drops a bomb...

Zanca: Just about the time we're ready to cast off is when the bomb goes through the dock.

Marcello: This is a concrete pier we're talking about, right?

Zanca: This is a concrete pier. I think it was twenty-inches thick of reinforced concrete. The bomb goes all the way through, and it goes down to the floor of the harbor and explodes. Whether it was time-delayed or whether it was contact and didn't work when it hit the concrete, we did not know. I think it was time-delayed, that it was supposed to pierce the deck and then explode below decks.

I don't think it was supposed to explode on contact. Well, when it exploded, the ship went up, and I estimate the bow must have rose about ten feet. It came back down, and it shook like a dog.

Marcello: Were you able to maintain your balance?

Zanca: I was at a good point of the pivot where I was. The guys up forward...some of them were almost thrown off balance. Some of them probably fell, but that never was mentioned. They did not claim any Purple Hearts or anything. The people aft had a little bit of up-and-down motion. Where I was was probably the most stable part. The people in my area, straight up and down, were probably in the most stable part, see.

Marcello: There is no perceptive damage done to your section of the ship?

Zanca: No, there's no damage done. The first thing Maxwell checked...even before somebody told us what it was, that a bomb had landed in the water, Maxwell was asking the Engineering Department to report any damage. By that time the bridge notified the engine room officially that a bomb had hit the dock and went down below and exploded and that there was damage forward. They didn't say there was minor flooding. When they said that there was damage forward, the chief engineer reported that there was no damage to any of the main engineering plant, which meant the four fire rooms and two engine rooms. The steering

engines were all intact. This was something that Maxwell did on his own. The man was really a seasoned veteran at that time. They said he had had some experience in China with some of the ships in the Yangtze River that had been in combat. We were getting blow-by-blow descriptions from the smoke watch as to what ships were hit, what ships were burning, as well as he could tell. Like I say, there was so much smoke that we feel that the high-flying bomber that was supposed to get us thought that we were already hit and burning, that there was no use wasting a bomb on us.

Marcello: This person who was on smoke watch and relaying this information, was he relaying it in a calm, matter-of-fact-way, or was he excited?

Zanca: He was very excited; he was very excited. After a while he settled down, but I would say that for the first twenty minutes, you really almost didn't need the phones. You could have almost heard him without the phones.

Marcello: All of you guys have on the talker sets.

Zanca: No, no, only the boiler control, who is connected to all engineering spaces, and the number one throttleman, who is connected to the after engine room, have talker sets; and in the after engine room, the number three throttleman has a set on, and that is just to coordinate the two main engine rooms to make sure that the bells that we're getting are reading the same at both places.

The engine order telegraph could go out of order, and one could be reading "full ahead" and the other one "full astern" on the same side of the ship, and this would only cause problems.

Marcello: So how are you hearing what this guy is saying?

Zanca: Maxwell is telling it to somebody, and they are shouting it down the hatch to us. In the meantime, we were making coffee like crazy. We used three pounds of coffee grounds between 8:00 and 4:00. I estimate we smoked three cartons of cigarettes between 8:00 and 4:00; and I don't know how many packs of gum we chewed, but I'm sure that those chewing gum chewed at least three packs.

Marcello: What kind of thoughts are going through your mind while all of this is going on topside and you're hearing bits and pieces of it?

Zanca: "When are we going to get underway so that we can have maneuverability?" I knew that as long as we were alongside the dock, we were a sitting target, and I wanted to be able to move around. If we could have gotten out and gotten mobility, I think it would have eased a lot of our feelings. But the fact that we were not only <u>not</u> able to get out in the beginning and then not <u>allowed</u> to get out...because once we got that damage, they canceled our going out. They said, "Remain at the dock and maintain air defense for the other ships. All the ships around us didn't have any guns; they were all

off. They had taken their guns off to go get them rebored or relined or whatever, so we were the only actual fighting ship that was able to do any fighting, except the Bagley.

The Bagley saved our stern from a torpedo. It fired and exploded the torpedo that was coming in. It had to be the one for us because it was on a course that all he [the Japanese pilot] would have needed was maybe another few seconds and he would have dropped that torpedo, and we'd have gotten it in the stern. But somebody on the Bagley uncovered a .50-caliber machine gun and started firing; and the torpedo exploded, and a piece of it landed on our stern.

Marcello: So actually, the person on the Bagley used the machine gun to fire at that torpedo after it had already been launched and was in the water?

Zanca: No, no, before he dropped it, because it blew the plane apart, too. In other words, he scored one plane and torpedo in the same hit, see, and that's what saved us from being a casualty like some of the others.

Marcello: I asked you a moment ago these thoughts that were going through your mind, and you more or less answered them. I assume that this is perhaps the general tenor of the conversation down there, too, that is, "When are we getting out?"

Zanca: Yes, most of the men wanted to know, "How soon can we get

underway?" They figured a moving target would be a lot harder to hit, and we did not know what was coming in. We didn't know if we were going to have warships coming inside the harbor. We know now that their whole plan was to sink something in the channel and block it up, and then until it could be moved, the whole fleet would be blocked in. But the captains of the ships were fortunate enough to be able to move the ships to the side, like, the Nevada, the Utah. They moved their ships away from the channel so that the channel was kept open, and the next day ships could go in and out. In fact, that day some ships got out. The Saint Louis got out. She was the only big ship to get out.

Marcello: Also, from what you said from your description of activities down in that engine room, everybody was acting more or less in a professional manner. There didn't seem to be any chaos down there.

Zanca: No. Everything was being done at a stepped-up pace. Everybody had been trained to do exactly what we were doing, but do it more leisurely, see. When they tell me, "We're getting underway in the morning, and you're going to go on watch at 4:00, I'd go on watch at 4:00. We already had steam up, and I would have my pumps going. I think that morning it took me about twelve minutes, and I started them with steam pressure that I would not normally have used. I would have waited for it to build

up higher, because I normally operated these pumps with 400-440 pounds. When it dropped below 350, if we were not underway, I would shut my pumps down so that we wouldn't lose steam. If your generators slow down much, then they would kick off the board, and we would lose electric power. But you always tried to keep your generators going for your electric power because that was the key to the success of your engineering plant.

Marcello: So...

Zanca: That morning, I think everybody just fell right into what they were supposed to be doing, and once you got to where you had done everything you could do, then you tried to get information. You didn't leave your station, but you kept putting your ear over where the information was coming from. In fact, eventually, we rigged up a sound power phone down to our level and hooked into the smoke watch, but by that time all the shooting was over.

Marcello: I guess the best way to describe what was going on down in the engine room is to say that you were in a state of anxious expectation maybe?

Zanca: Yes. I was as nervous as a virgin on the verge (chuckle)!

Marcello: (Chuckle) Are you simply standing by down there in the engine room, then, most of the day since the Honolulu wasn't moving?

Zanca: Yes, until 4:00 we were standing by. We were notified

that we were not going to get underway unless it became absolutely necessary to go out and engage the enemy, that we were going to be the harbor defense. So we knew we were stuck there.

Marcello: In the meantime, are you getting any food or anything?

Zanca: No. Like I say, we were drinking coffee. Nobody was worried about eating. There was some candy bars down there that some of the men had, but nobody really felt like eating. It was coffee and cigarettes, cigarettes and coffee. We had to coffee pots, and as fast as it would make it, they were being drained. People normally would take a cup, drink a cup of coffee, then wash the cup out and leave it to sit there awhile. Then it was, "Give me another cup, you know. This is where we got our "something to do. We got our energy and our stimulation, and we created our own smoke cloud within the engine room with cigarettes until the blowers got to going. I think there was people smoking that day that never smoked before.

Marcello: When did you finally get up on topside?

Zanca: It was right around 4:00 that evening that there had not been anymore attacks, so they decided that we would go to Condition Two, which meant that half the crew would go off duty and be able to get topside. In the engine room, it was determined that we would take one section that was going to be down there and let them go up first. They

went up topside, and they got a look, and then they came back down about a half-hour. Then they had to stay down there as part of the regular watch. Then we went up, and that's when I got to go up. Like everybody else, the first thing I did was I headed for topside to see. When I got up there and saw, it was unreal to me.

Marcello: Describe what you saw and what your reactions and feelings were.

Zanca: I saw a cloud of black and gray smoke laying over the whole harbor as far as I could see. Over on Battleship Row was smoke, flame, ships turned over. Boats were moving about and just going back and forth like ants running back and forth. What they were doing was looking for people in the water. I didn't know this at the time, but that's what they were doing. There was an oil sheen all over the water. The water was not on fire because that had already burnt off, but the ships that were still burning were...you could see flames from them. You could see flames over by the dry dock where the Cassin and Downes were in the dry dock burning. The Pennsylvania was in there, but she did not burn. They flooded the dry dock and saved her from burning. We were wondering how much damage had been done to the city and how much to the Navy Yard. There was no way for us to find out because we did not have communication by telephone with the base. We were getting all of our information through either

radio or semaphores.

We were wondering how many ships that we could not see were damaged. We started getting a few trickles of...we found out that the Helena had been hit, which was a sister ship to us; that the Oglala had been turned over from the explosion that hit the Helena. The explosion sunk the Oglala. It busted her rivets out. She was an old, old ship that had been riveted, and it caused all of her rivets to break loose on that side, and she just sprung too many leaks and capsized.

Then about 6:00 that evening, we started getting survivors. We reestablished the gangway with the dock, and we started getting the survivors, and we started hearing from them the different things that happened. We also got sandwiches and coffee going on the mess line. We never did get a meal that night; we just got sandwiches. We were lucky they had enough bread to make sandwiches, and they always had plenty of cold cuts.

Then we were assigned to...engineers were assigned to the magazines or to the gun mounts for two hours at a time--when they were not going to be in the engine room. Now just a few days before that, we had loaded 5-inch ammunition, and this was fixed ammunition. The shell and the powder case were together inside a can, and this weighs about 105 pounds. I was on a working party, and I was struggling to pick these cans up, put them on my

shoulder, and carry them. That night, when they put me in the 5-inch magazine, my job was to pass these cans out through a little scuttle--that's a hole in the door that has a flap around it--and then the man on the other side would then transfer it up to the hoist to send it up to the deck.

When they had this scare of our own planes coming in--we didn't shoot them down; somebody else shot one of them down--they called for ammunition. Well, I was putting them through the scuttle so fast--they had become so light under this stress--that the guy had to jam the scuttle with his foot to keep me from passing any more, because they couldn't catch them as fast as I was passing them (chuckle).

But we spent the night two hours in the magazine, two hours at the gun, and the rest of the time in the engine room. We kept getting more and more information because people were going over and coming back with more information all the time. Of course, we had thousands and thousands of Japs landing on the island.

Marcello: You're referring to the rumors?

Zanca: The rumors, yes--the rumors. We supposedly had Japanese submarines lined up in the harbor. The worst you could think of, somebody had started a rumor for it. They said that the town of Honolulu had been taken over by the Japanese that were living there. There was quite a big

Japanese population in Pearl Harbor, but they had that population there years and years. Some of them probably were spies; some probably were faithful to the old country but were not spies. But there were a lot of them that were loyal Americans, and I wasn't going to go out and kill the first Jap I saw for being a spy. But I think I would have been tempted to put him into custody had I been able to.

The night seemed like it would never end. Then the next morning we were allowed to go up into the superstructure of the ship to points that we hadn't been able to go to the day before to see more, and some of the smoke had cleared so we could see more.

Marcello: What did you see?

Zanca: Well, that's when I got a closer view of the battleships that were turned over, and I could see over to the airfield in the middle of the harbor there. I could see the planes that had been burnt, because I was using the ship's large binoculars. They were 200-millimeter binoculars used for spotting planes. You didn't get to use them very often, but that was one time I got to use them, and they allowed me to see a lot of things.

Incidentally, it was Thursday before I finally got to take that trash out on the dock, and one of the things...I think everybody has different feelings. Some people have involuntary bowel movements; other people

have involuntary urination when things like this happen. In my case, it was Thursday before I could finally do what I was planning to do Sunday morning at 8:00, because my bowels locked on me; and even though on Tuesday and Wednesday I was given laxatives by the doctor, my bowels were still locked. I've found since then that when I come under a severe fright, this is what happens to me, so now I know what to expect. A lot of people say, "Yeah, I did that on myself, and a lot of them won't admit to anything. With me, I locked up.

Marcello: You were talking about those rumors on that Sunday night. Did you believe those rumors?

Zanca: I had heard rumors earlier in the day that were proved false, so I was kind of skeptical. I don't say I didn't believe everything I heard, but when they said that 50,000 Japs had landed on this area, I knew that if there were 50,000 Japs, they had to be standing on each other's shoulders because basically the area was not big enough to hold 50,000 people. They also said that paratroopers had landed. Now paratroopers were practically a new thing then, and I just couldn't see how they could all come down and not some of them be visible to a better extent. We were notified that everything we would hear--other than what we could actually see--would probably be just a rumor: "Don't' take stock into it until you get confirmation.

But you know that certain things are possible. When somebody started a rumor that certain roads leading into town being held by Japanese that came out of the hills, well, we knew that the Japanese worked up in the hills in the farmlands, and this was possible, so we tended to believe that. I did--that they might be holding this--but I knew that they couldn't hold it forever. I just tried to take all of the rumors with a big grain of salt, and I felt like until I saw the Japanese face-to-face, they had not landed yet.

Marcello: Also, during that Sunday evening, a couple of planes off the carrier Enterprise tried to come in, and they were fired upon. Do you remember that incident?

Zanca: No. They probably were not in our area. They probably were fired at by ground troops from the other side of the island because everything that I knew about was confined right into the harbor itself. We noticed they had troops all around, and if any planes would approach...which at night those B-17's coming in were fired on, and I'm sure one of them was hit and downed. But this was part of the confusion and part of the inexperience. A lot of those ground troops did not know plane identification. A plane was a plane was a plane.

Marcello: Did you hear sporadic gunfire most of the night?

Zanca: Oh, yes, yes. We'd get the information every once in a while that they were shooting again, and then we'd wait

and they'd say, "It was only shadows.

Marcello: I guess it was much safer to stay on that ship than it was to walk around on the dock.

Zanca: Definitely, definitely, because if you went walking around, there was no telling what trigger-happy guy would take a shot at you, figuring you was the enemy. I had no ambitions to leave the ship. I wanted to stay with the ship and, if possible, get out to sea.

Marcello: What did the Honolulu do on the days immediately following the attack?

Zanca: We stayed in the harbor. First, we had to determine the total extent of our damage, which turned out to be a buckled plate, and we had to get the ammunition out of the small magazine that was flooded. We went into dry dock and had repairs made for that. I think all they did was weld the seams that cracked and then painted over it and told us we were ready to get out. To my knowledge, we were not in the dry dock more than one day. We didn't want to be caught in the dry dock to begin with, see, because that's a "no-no" position to be in because you had no resiliency there.

But they did keep us in port to determine our damage and also to act as a defense if there was another attack because we were operable and we were bristling with firepower. By this time they had brought all these 20-millimeters and mounted them on deck, and we had like a

picket fence of .50-calibers because they brought .50-calibers...I don't know where from, but they had more .50- calibers hooked on. I think if they had all started firing at one time, it would've shook the handrails apart because that's what they were mounted on, the handrails of the superstructure.

We were told about the two-man sub that was found, and we took this also as, "Is this the truth, or is it a figment?" Finally, we saw pictures of it, and then we knew that it was the truth.

Marcello: When did the Honolulu finally get out of Pearl?

Zanca: I think it was somewhere around the 15th before we finally got out. I don't remember exactly, but we had to make a speed run to San Diego bringing an admiral and his staff, and then we had to go to San Francisco to pick up a convoy going down to Australia, which was the first American troops to go to Australia. We picked up this convoy, we headed south, and we stopped on the way down to refuel at Bora Bora, which up to that point was a very super-secret base. All it was was a fueling station. They had a concrete fuel barge in there that had been brought in before Pearl Harbor, but we didn't know this. In fact, we were told not to mention the name Bora Bora to anybody at any time because it was then a very secret fueling base. Of course, today it's a tourist attraction. But when we went in there, we weren't

supposed to name the name of our ship, not even to the people who were fueling us--the American sailors. Of course, they could look on our boats and see the name of the ship, but there was a lot of funny things in the censorship and so forth.

After we discharged the troops in Australia, we started back up, and we operated around Samoa. Then we were told to go to Pearl to have our heaters put back in because they had removed all of our heaters out of our air system because we did not need it in the Hawaiian area. When we got to Pearl, we were supposed to be there for two weeks while they got all this installed, and we wound up being there four days, and then we went to the Aleutians.

Marcello: I'm going to turn over the tape at this stage.

Zanca: Okay.

Marcello: Okay, when I turned over the tape, you had mentioned that the Honolulu had gone to the Aleutians.

Zanca: We went to the Aleutians, and we were instrumental in the recapture of the islands up there that the Japs actually abandoned. Our troops had no contact with them.

Marcello: This would have been when? In 1942?

Zanca: Well, it was prior to September of 1942 because in September of 1942 we had to go back to Mare Island. We had already burned the lining out of our guns with the bombardment of the islands--which, incidentally, is

another time that we wrote a new page for the book. They said that the guns could not fire more than six rounds per minute--the main guns--and when we went into the first bombardment, we started out at ten a minute. So they had to rewrite the book on that; and also they had to recalculate because you had to conserve your ammunition, and if you fire them faster than you think, then you're going to run out of ammunition.

Marcello: What were the other campaigns in the Pacific that the Honolulu participated in?

Zanca: Well, from there we went down to Guadalcanal, and we got there in time for the battle of Tassafaronga, where we lost three other cruisers which were sunk. We dodged torpedoes quite a bit that night, but we came out without damage.

Next thing was...well, we operated around the Solomons, and then our next real big thing was Bougainville and Kula Gulf. Then we went in and had battles with ships there, and on the 13th, I believe, of July, we got a torpedo that almost knocked our bow off. The morning of the fifth was when we lost the Helena, and then a week later we went in, and that's when we lost our bow.

Marcello: Now where were you when this took place?

Zanca: Well, at that time I was in the engine room.

Marcello: I mean, where was this battle taking place?

Zanca: Oh, that was in Kula Gulf. It was in Kula Gulf that we lost our bow--ninety feet of it. There was an old saying on the ship, that we had one crew member that we didn't ever muster him, but he was always up there on the yardarm. Now we lost ninety feet of the bow, and we had six people that were slightly injured, no loss of life. This ninety feet of bow could have very easily have cost us twenty or thirty people's lives, but they had just moved out of it, and then the torpedo hit up forward.

Then from there we went back to...well, we went to Pearl, and they put the new bow on. This was an engineering feat that we thought would take three to six months to do. We got into dry dock...they trimmed us off before we went into drydock, and when we got into drydock, they finished trimming off that day, and the next morning they brought the next section of the new bow. Two days later, they brought the second section, and the day after that they brought the last section. By the time they got finished, they had the new bow on, and we wasn't in there a week. Then they told us to go to Mare Island to get refitted because they only put the new bow on and the decks. They didn't put on all the piping and electrical parts and all that. We had to go to Mare Island for that, and we also had a lot of other work that had to be done. So this gave us a break.

When we left Mare Island, we went back to the South

Pacific and Central Pacific. We were in the Saipan-Guam-Palau campaigns. We went from there...well, we were then operating out of the Caledonia Islands. Espiritu Santo had become our home port, and we left there and went to the Philippines. When we got to the Philippines, we arrived there on the 17th, and we shelled for three days--the 17th, the 18th, and the 19th--and then we supported the landing at Leyte Gulf at the town of Dulag. While we were sitting in the harbor there furnishing support fire, a torpedo plane coming at ground level went up the hill, down on our side of the hill, and before we could even swing our guns on him, he had dropped his torpedo. That's when we suffered our third torpedo hit, because we had hit twice on the same night in Kula Gulf.

Marcello: Was that a submarine that had hit you in Kula Gulf?

Zanca: No, surface vessel. The one that hit us in the stern didn't explode. It punched a twenty-inch hole and bent the I-beam. It did not explode, but when they realized that it was a dud, they said, "Try to capture it. Throw a line on it and capture it. This would have been very valuable for Navy Intelligence. But before they could do this, it fell out, and then we got the torpedo up in the bow, and we had to retire from the action.

Then when we got torpedoed in the Leyte Gulf, we had 135 feet forward that flooded from the keel to the third deck. Our damage control saved us then. We took that

torpedo, and that torpedo cost us lives. We had another incident that night where one of our own ships firing at low-flying aircraft fired into one of our gun batteries, and this made nine more casualties. I think it was five dead and four wounded. But we wound up with a total of a hundred casualties. Sixty-six of them were deaths, and the other thirty-four were wounded.

We limped back to Manus Island in the Admiralty Island group. We went into a floating dry dock and got a patch on our hull and drained it out. Then we were sent back to the States, and we wound up in Norfolk, Virginia, for extensive remodeling and modernization. I stayed with the ship until VJ Day, and then I was transferred. That was the end of my war (chuckle).

Marcello: That's probably a good place to end this interview. I'm sure that by the time you left the Honolulu, you were one of the very senior members aboard, were you not?

Zanca: Oh, yes. One of the ways you could tell in the beginning was that when you went aboard ship, you were given a number. This was your pay number, and for all practical purposes this was your I.D. When I went on board, I was #902, and so I knew that there were 900 people ahead of me. Then toward the end, I had gotten up to where I was in the first thirty. I was in the top thirty enlisted men, and guess what? They changed to alphabetic, and I became almost last man because my last name starts with a

"Z. So to avoid all the waiting, I got on the master-at-arms force, and I ran the pay line and the chow line (chuckle).

Marcello: What was your rank at the time that you got out of the service?

Zanca: When I got out of the service, I was a chief machinist's mate.

Marcello: And when did you leave the service?

Zanca: I left the service...I was discharged December 2, 1946, and I went back in September of 1951 and was discharged four years later. I did twenty-one months of active duty during the Korean conflict, but I was fortunate that all of that time was in the peacetime part of the world--the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. So that was what you might call a "pleasure cruise" (chuckle).

Marcello: (Chuckle) Okay, well, I think that's a pretty good place to end this interview, Mr. Zanca. I want to thank you very much for having participated. You've really given me an excellent account of the activities of the Honolulu during that period, and I'm sure that historians and students and scholars are going to find your comments most valuable.

Zanca: Well, I like to tell it like it was, and I was glad of the opportunity to do this.