

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
NUMBER
418

Interview with
Jack Kelley
April 19, 1978

Place of Interview: Bedford, Texas
Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello
Terms of Use: Open
Approved: Jack W. Kelley
(Signature)
Date: 4-19-78

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ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

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Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Bedford, Texas

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Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Jack Kelley for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on April 19, 1978, in Bedford, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Kelley in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was aboard the battleship USS Tennessee during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Now Mr. Kelley, to begin this interview, just very briefly tell me a little bit about yourself. In other words, where were you born, when were you born, your education--things of that nature. Just be very brief and general.

Mr. Kelley: I was born in Jones County, out around Anson. I joined the service . . . well, I had a high school education at Hamlin. I joined the service in August, 1940.

Dr. Marcello: When were you born?

Mr. Kelley: October 7, 1921.

Dr. Marcello: So that meant you would have been about nineteen when you went in the service.

Kelley: Yes, I guess, roughly at least.

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

Kelley: Well, times weren't too good in that particular part of the country as far as jobs and such as that. And I was kind of interested in the Navy, so I thought that would be a good place to start out.

Marcello: You know, a lot of people of your particular generation give economics as a reason for entering the service. In other words, the service didn't pay very much, but there was a certain amount of security. By that, I mean, you had steady pay, a place to sleep, three square meals, and so on.

Kelley: Well, yes, that offered security, and you can go up reasonably fast, considering what you could make or what I could get with a high school education.

Marcello: I assume that you came from basically a farming background, perhaps.

Kelley: Yes, my father farmed all his life, I guess. I was raised on the farm.

Marcello: And, of course, at that particular time, I guess farm prices were pretty low, were they not?

Kelley: Well, reasonably low, but I guess for anybody that lived through the 1930's that made enough impression on you so that they wasn't looking to the farm too much.

Marcello: Why did you pick the Navy as opposed to one of the other

branches of the service?

Kelley: Oh, I guess probably the Navy offered a little more opportunity to travel--call it glamor or whatever you want to--and my dad was in the Navy in World War I, so I'd heard a lot of sea stories all my life, and I guess I just wanted to see if they were basically true. Not that I doubted him, but I imagine you like to see things for yourself.

Marcello: Also, I guess, the fact that you were raised so far inland might have meant that the sea had a certain fascination for a young man, perhaps.

Kelley: Well, yes, maybe it did. I had never even seen the Gulf of Mexico or anything before I went into the service.

Marcello: At the time that you enlisted, how closely were you keeping abreast of current events and world affairs and things of that sort?

Kelley: Well, I was not really abreast of them. I mean, there was certain uneasiness and such as that, because even my basic training in San Diego was cut two or three weeks short to bring some ships that were in the fleet up to, well, what they called fighting standards as far as manpower. They were operating a little shorthanded, and so that was one of the reasons they cut our basic training short.

Marcello: Did you detect a certain urgency or desire to get you out of

boot camp as quickly as possible at that time?

Kelley: Well, yes, I suppose everybody was looking more to the Atlantic, though, than they were the Pacific at that particular time. Even though we weren't in war, there was a war going on and we were very aware of it.

Marcello: That's an interesting and, I think, an important point that you've just made. When people at that time did think of the United States getting into war, most eyes were turned toward Europe rather than toward the Far East.

Kelley: Well, yes, I don't suppose . . . we knew the Japanese weren't any bosom buddies or anything like that, but we didn't think of them as a fighting enemy either. I mean, a common person like myself at least didn't.

Marcello: Was there anything eventful that happened in boot camp that you think we need to get as part of the record? Or was it mainly the routine Navy boot camp?

Kelley: Well, as far as I know, it was routine. Of course, you only go through it once, so you don't know what's routine and what's not. You've got a lot of work in a short time, and as far as being impressed with it, I wasn't. I was used to hard work all my life anyway, and it didn't bother me that way. But I don't suppose I was particularly impressed one way or the other with boot camp.

Marcello: Now I know that in some years before this, it was fairly hard

to get into the service, in that there were a lot of people that wanted to enter but there weren't very many openings.

Did you have a very hard time getting in the Navy in 1940?

Kelley: Well, they were only taking volunteers. There was no draft at that particular time, and they would take people in the Army that couldn't get in the Navy. There was a little waiting period. I mean, I didn't get in for three or four months after I signed up, but they were still doing a little picking and choosing. But there was no . . . well, I wouldn't call it a hard job of getting in. If you were physically fit and could read and write, why, you could probably get in.

Marcello: Where did you go from boot camp?

Kelley: Well, I went aboard the Saratoga, aircraft carrier, to go to Hawaii to go aboard the Tennessee. I was assigned to the Tennessee, but the Saratoga was in Long Beach, and we went to Long Beach and caught the Saratoga and crossed over in it to go aboard ship.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were assigned to the Tennessee. I am to assume, therefore, that you did not volunteer for battleships as such.

Kelley: No, you had very little choice. At that particular time they just needed so many men at one place, so where they were available they just took that many men.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of going aboard a battleship?

Kelley: Well, it was . . . oh, I guess it was somewhat of an experience to look forward to, because you hear so much about big guns in the Navy and the size of battleships and all that. So I guess at that particular time, if I'd have had a choice, that's probably what I would have taken, but I didn't have a choice.

Marcello: Were you looking forward to going to the Hawaiian Islands?

Kelley: Well, I was looking forward to anything we did at that particular time. I mean, you get a certain build-up of wanting to see something and go places and do things, so it was all kind of a refreshing experience--until we went aboard the Saratoga and went across and hit one of the worse storms that I was in all the time I was in the service. So I thought I had made myself one hell of a mistake. About three days and nights, they couldn't even set up mess tables; you had to get a sandwich and a cup of coffee and hang onto a stanchion somewhere to eat. We didn't have any place to swing our hammocks, and in trying to sleep on the hangar deck, we couldn't even stay on our mattresses. You'd roll off and out on the deck.

Marcello: I would assume it must have been a pretty rough sea, because an aircraft carrier is a pretty big vessel.

Kelley: It was pretty rough. But the Saratoga didn't have any planes aboard. It was basically empty, so they ride rougher whenever

they . . . but the third day, I guess it was, or third night, I was so sleepy that I fell on a big pile of sea bags and burrowed down and made me a hole to get in where I would roll around so I could get a little sleep. But that was as close as I ever came to getting seasick all the time I was in. I never was seasick, but I thought I was going to be.

Marcello: What sort of a reception did you get when you went aboard the Tennessee? Now, again, we must keep in mind that you were still a "boot," so to speak, at least in the eyes of some of the "old salts" aboard the Tennessee.

Kelley: Well, that's one thing about the Navy. If you're a "boot," they make sure that you feel like one, and they don't want you to forget it. Not that they mistreat you, but you just get the feeling that you are still kind of a peon, so to speak, and you have to be around for a while before you're worthy of much attention. So they make you feel like a "boot."

Marcello: I assume that when you went aboard the Tennessee they gave you the lowest and least desirable jobs aboard.

Kelley: Well, you're an apprentice seaman--the lowest rating there is--and they give you the clean-up jobs. I was in the deck force on topside, which I liked, and you scrape a hundred acres of paint, wire-brush it and paint it and then scrape

it off again and that kind of stuff; and you do all the mess cooking duties and clean-up chores and such as that until you had been around for a while. Of course, when you're a little older, why, when the next bunch of "boots" comes along, they get to catch the same chores.

Marcello: Let's talk a little bit more about the on-the-job training and duties that you had aboard the Tennessee. Now you mentioned that when you first went aboard, you were in the deck force. One of the duties of the deck force at that particular time, especially aboard the battleships, was holystoning the decks. Now do you remember ever having to holystone the decks, and if so, how did this process work?

Kelley: Well, that's like a lot of other things on there. They got 1,200 - 1,500 men on there and they're confined, and they've got to have something for them to do. You can't sit around and gripe and bellyache; they have got to have something for you to do, and that paint scraping and holystoning and stuff like that is just fodder for you to have something to do. And everybody got good because they had those old oak decks on top of the steel decking. They were about four-by-four oak and had tar and oakum in the cracks between the boards. That tar would eventually come out, and it would get on the boards and there'd be black spots. So they'd wet it down and throw sand out on it, and everybody would get a half of a

fire brick with a little hole chipped in one side and a swab handle, and then you'd line up and stoke them boards crossways to rub all the tar and stuff off to make them white as a bed sheet. It was, like I say, just another something to keep you busy.

Marcello: Now was this salt water that they were using?

Kelley: Yes. Yes, you'd see where they'd run a lot of salt water . . . of course, in the harbor the harbor water's dirty, and you don't put it on deck. Of course, the main purpose for so many personnel on a battleship is to man the guns. There's so many guns . . . well, in my division there was about seventy-some-odd . . . seventy-three men in that one division, and we manned the number four turret. It took that many men to man that turret from top to bottom. That was from your gunner's mates running the actual operation of the gun, your range finder operators, your loaders, all your powder handlers, magazine operators. From the time that gun fired all the way to the bottom where that magazine powder was stored, it took that many men to man it. So that's how come you got to have so many men aboard ship.

Marcello: You mentioned that you were on the number four turret. I assume that that was one of the aft turrets, and it was a fourteen-inch turret.

Kelley: Yes, we were three guns to a turret, and it was the most . . .

well, the farthest toward the aft of the ship. We had four turrets. Starting from the bow, we had the number one, two, three, and four turrets. And, of course, getting a job like I was talking about awhile ago, they always give you the job that nobody else wants--you sort of graduate up--so I was in the magazine. In the bottom part of the ship was my battle station. Whenever general quarters sounded, well, I had to go down all the way to the bottom into the powder magazine.

Marcello: In other words, you were in the powder handling room.

Kelley: Yes, there was . . .

Marcello: And as you mentioned, you literally start at the bottom of the ship when you first go aboard and are assigned to one of these main batteries.

Kelley: Well, my division happened to be a main battery station. Of course, they have the antiaircraft guns on topside, on the boat deck, and then they had 6-inch broadsides. Each division had different gun stations, but I just happened to be in one with 14-inch guns. Of course, I don't know whether very many people know how much powder and all it takes, but it took four of those bags to load each gun.

Marcello: How much powder is in each bag?

Kelley: I don't remember exactly. It seemed like they were about seventy-pound bags as best I can remember, but they were

pretty good-sized. Of course, fourteen inches is actually bigger than fourteen inches; it's probably sixteen inches back in the breech where the powder was and about fourteen or sixteen inches long.

Marcello: Of course, I guess it would take that much powder to fire a projectile of the size that was used in those 14-inch guns.

Kelley: Well, that's right.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago something about mess cooking. How did mess cooking duty work aboard the Tennessee?

Kelley: Well, about the time the war started, well, they changed all that and put in steam tables and chow lines. When I was aboard there, they set up tables in every division and had their own tables and a mess cook to run chow for two tables. There were eight men to the table, and he would set up the tables, set out the plates, and go down to the scullery and get plates and bowls and cups and such as that--get everything set up before chow time. Then the mess cooks all lined up at the galley with whatever they was going to get the food in, and then they run it back to the tables and fed them right in their own compartments. And whenever they got through eating, why, he had to clean up all the mess, carry his dishes back to the scullery, and clean off the tables and hang them back up on the overhead and swab the floor.

Marcello: Were there any advantages to mess cooking?

Kelley: Well, if there was, I failed to see very many of them. That wasn't a very desirable chore.

Marcello: The mess cooks did have liberty every night, did they not, when the ship was in port?

Kelley: No, it was considered port and starboard watch, and you took your turn just like everybody else. If you were in the starboard watch, why, you got it whenever the starboard watch went. I don't just exactly remember now, but odd numbers are port and even . . . or vice versa. Even numbers are port, and odd numbers are starboard. They had the liberty cards and lists all divided in half, and you had the port and starboard watch. So you only got the same amount of liberty as everybody else did.

Marcello: I've also heard it said that if a person did a good job of mess cooking, that on many occasions the people that he served would reward him at payday with a little bit extra money. Were you aware of this?

Kelley: No, I don't believe that that practice was carried out. No, I'm sure there was different systems, different practices, everywhere you might be. But aboard the Tennessee, I never saw any tips or privileges or any such as that. The only thing you got out of was standing sea watches. I mean, at sea you didn't have to stand sea watches. That's gun watches or helmsman watches and all such as that. All the different

duties that they have, well, you didn't have to stand watch.

Marcello: That is, if you were on mess cooking.

Kelley: Yes, while you were mess cooking, you didn't do those.

Marcello: What were your living quarters like aboard the Tennessee?

Kelley: Well, it was just one, big, empty, vacant compartment when everything was put up. It was over against the outside bulkhead where there was what they called the hammock netting. It was a big old . . . well, you wouldn't call it a cabinet-type of thing, but the lids opened up, and it was quite a large storage area where everybody put their bedding. This old hammock netting went the full length of our compartment, and it was stored out of the way and out of sight during the day. All the tables and such as that were hung on the overhead, so it was just one, big, open compartment. But whenever you would bed down, well, everybody had cots and most of the petty officers and older seamen such as that slept on cots. All the younger guys had the hammocks, and you stretched them to billy hooks on the overhead and slept in hammocks. They really slept better than cots. I never did know why they changed. I always liked to sleep in a hammock.

Marcello: Why was that?

Kelley: Well, it didn't make any difference how rough it was because that hammock rides good. It just rolled and stayed level.

Of course, you might feel a little up and down forward motion. If you're on a cot, why, it rolled you around in rough weather.

Marcello: In general, as you look back, how would you describe the morale in that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy? I'm referring to the time before December 7, 1941, during the peacetime Navy.

Kelley: Oh, basically I'd say it was pretty good. Of course, there was quite a bit of bellyaching; I suppose any group of guys are going to bellyache about some things. But it was kind of a "spit-and-polish" outfit. We had a rear admiral aboard the Tennessee; and being flagship, every piece of brightwork and everything had to be shined and polished. All the white line ornaments on the railings and boats and everything else had to be scrubbed white and cleaned. They went a little overboard on keeping everything, well, kind of like a show-place or something. But I suppose that morale was generally what I'd call good. Even for the first several years I was in the Navy, I'd see a second class petty officer who had his time in and was going to get out. I couldn't understand it. I thought, "Boy, this is a pretty good place. I believe I'll just stay in here." I couldn't understand the guy getting out that had already had, oh, say, second class petty officer made. He had a pretty fair job.

Marcello: I gather that sports and athletics also played a very important

role in the pre-Pearl Harbor Navy.

Kelley: Well, there was quite a bit of it, but it was, well, like inter-fleet activities. Boxing, wrestling, and such as that was quite a thing. And they had rowing on whale boats and such as that. But I guess as far as just having fun at it, there were places like Pearl Harbor where they had softball teams and such as that. We had a lot of fun at it, but it was not anything that anybody thought much of. It was just something to do in the way of recreation if you couldn't go on liberty.

Marcello: I'm sure the fact that all of you were volunteers at that time also would have contributed to the high morale. In other words, everybody was there basically because they wanted to be there.

Kelley: Well, I think so, and I think that was one thing that caused quite a decline in the attitude and morale and . . . well, I'll call it proud to be a part of something. Whenever it got to where there was so many people drafted that didn't want in it, didn't want no part of it, all they was there for was because they had to be and spend their time and get out. I would imagine that was probably one of the bigger factors that . . . well, even though things got pretty rough, you chose it yourself; nobody shoved you into it.

Marcello: Let's talk about one of the routine training exercises that

the Tennessee might have participated in during that pre-Pearl Harbor period. Describe what a typical training exercise was like. In other words, when did the Tennessee go out?

Kelley: Well, most all the time we were out there, we would go out on Monday mornings, and quite often we'd be back in Pearl Harbor Friday evening. Sometimes we'd stay out two weeks, but it was usually just out a week and back in. We were in port the bigger part of the weekend.

Marcello: Now from what you said, then, I gather that this was more or less a standard routine.

Kelley: Well, fairly routine. It wasn't that you could count on it, but it would pretty much happen that way, you know.

Marcello: In other words, if some Japanese agent had been monitoring the movement of the Pacific Fleet there at Pearl, it wouldn't have taken too much effort to determine when those ships would be going out or when they would be coming in. I'm referring now to the Tennessee in particular.

Kelley: No, it would take no big thing at all, and I'm sure there was many of them because half of Pearl Harbor and Honolulu was Oriental, and you know there was a big number of them, and I'm sure the Japanese were kept well informed on the comings and goings all the time.

Marcello: Now I assume that the Tennessee was part of a battleship division

when it went out.

Kelley: Yes, they were . . . it varried. Sometimes there was, oh, three, four, five ships; sometimes there would be more. But we would go out for gunnery drills and different . . . well, just like anything you train for; you try to be ready for something. I mean, you had a lot of antiaircraft training just on dummy rounds. I mean, loading, where you wasn't firing. You had an old loading machine. You would stand up and load that old loading machine until . . . and you had a lot of dummy runs on the other guns, too. Of course, you fired quite often, and they had a . . . back then they had a big thing about getting an "E" for efficiency. Every gun that had an "E" on it with hash marks . . . that's how many years that they had won the efficiency for firing. And they were quite proud of it, and they trained and tried to always keep your "E" and add another hash mark to it.

Marcello: How did you get the "E?"

Kelley: Well, it was some kind of a system they had set up. We sort of used to take turns towing an old target. I guess one of the times I was . . . well, not apprehensive, but the Tennessee was towing targets for three other battleships to fire at this target behind us, and it was only . . . well, I'm sure it must have been 400 yards behind us, so whenever they went to firing, those splashes from those shells from

the other ships . . . those ships were about twelve miles away shooting at it, and you thought it was about fifty yards back there. But when each gun fired, they caused a different colored splash. I don't know how they . . . some sort of a dye. Whenever one ship would fire, why, their splash might be orange, and the other one would be blue so the spotters could tell who was coming the closest to the target or hitting it. We did them the same way; I mean, we'd fire at targets towed by some other ship.

Marcello: I gather from what you've said that this training was a constant thing week in and week out.

Kelley: Yes, it was fairly constant. You didn't go out and do nothing. They had something in the way of training to do, and I'd say probably for I guess six months--it may not have been that long--before Pearl Harbor was attacked, we'd go out at night. They started having to darkened ship, and there was no smoking, no lights, or anything allowed topside, and we had security people roaming the decks to make sure that there was no lights for six months before Pearl Harbor was attacked.

Marcello: Did this cause any speculation or scuttlebutt aboard the ship when this change occurred?

Kelley: Oh, yes. I guess when it first started, everybody probably thought that something was going to happen right away, but then after you'd been doing it for two or three months and

all that, why, it just gets to be another routine thing.
You do it and forget about it.

Marcello: That's an important point that you just made there. In other words, even though your routine did change, you began to practice that new routine so much that after awhile it in turn became rather routine.

Kelley: Yes, I guess that's maybe kind of a thing about all services you get in. You work on a training program or a routine or something, and your say doesn't mean anything. It's the guy above you--the officer or the petty officer or whoever is in charge--until you get the word that what he said was law in that particular case. Now I don't mean that you're not an individual, but there's . . . they gear it so that you're supposed to do that under any kind of conditions--battle conditions or anything else. I suppose that's the reason for this repetition or routine they get into so much.

Marcello: Am I to assume that you also had more general quarters drills when your routine changed? In other words, were you going to general quarters more often?

Kelley: Well, not a great lot, especially there when we first started having darkened ships, because stumbling around in the dark getting to general quarters wasn't a real safe practice under the best of conditions, so most of our general quarters drills were in the daytime. I don't say that they didn't have

some at night--I'm sure they did later on--but I don't . . . but it wasn't a common practice to do it at night even though it might have been a good thing to have done. I don't know about that. Everybody knew how to get to their general quarters stations, so I don't think it would have served a very big purpose to have had them at night.

Marcello: Now by the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor, was your battle station still down in the powder room, or had you progressed to some other position by that time?

Kelley: Well, it was still pretty much the same. I was still in the . . . I wasn't in the magazine; I was in the lower handling room by then. There's a certain amount of guys that goes in the magazines, and you pull this powder off of a rack, and you put it in a tray that goes through the bulkhead, and they crank it so that it's fireproof. I mean, it's never opened up. But I was on the outside taking it out of this tray and carrying it around, putting it in the shoot, but it was still basically the lower handling room--no big changes--because I think the group that I went on with . . . there was only about one other pretty good-sized crew came on it to bring the ship up to full complement. So we didn't have any big changeovers . . . pretty much stationary from then on on what you did.

Marcello: How fast or slow was promotion in that pre-Pearl Harbor Navy?

Kelley: Well, up to seaman first class was fairly fast. But I knew a lot of guys that had been in there a long time that still were seaman first class, and when you got to be a third class, well, most of them guys that was . . . not all of them, but most of them were on their second hitch. They was reasonably slow, I mean, as far as getting to be a petty officer. You got to be a seaman first class in less than a year.

Marcello: To become a petty officer, I gather that one had to take written examinations, and then there also had to be openings for whatever slot the individual was striking.

Kelley: Well, the openings were the big thing, because most anybody that studied for it could pass the examination. You even had to take an examination for seaman first class, but there were plenty of openings for that. I mean, anytime you got up and qualified and passed, you could become a seaman first class. But then after that, there was only room for a certain number of each rate above that. So you had to wait until somebody was transferred or something happened to make a hole. If somebody who was a first class made chief, why, then the whole cycle went plumb back down to the seaman. And that was, well, a pretty slow process.

Marcello: You mentioned awhile ago that when you were on these training exercises there was a certain amount of antiaircraft practice.

Kelley: Well, the reason for that is that they stood day watches all the time on the antiaircraft guns. Now the other guns weren't manned all the time. But the antiaircraft guns which were 5-inch .25-caliber--there was about ten of them aboard ship--they were manned all the time. And so in order to do that, all the other gun crew had to learn how to operate and fire the antiaircraft guns because the likelihood of an air attack was much, much greater than any other kind of attack. You had plenty of time to get to your battle stations if there were other ships, but the crews that operate the antiaircraft guns couldn't stay on them all the time. So they trained everybody on the deck force how to operate the antiaircraft guns so they could rotate the gun watches all the way around through the ship.

Marcello: Did you get on some of the 5-inch gun crews?

Kelley: Well, I stood so many of them that I thought . . . I had to stand up there at midnight looking out across a black ocean that you couldn't see thirty feet on, but you had to stay up and keep looking. I don't know what we was looking for, but we'd look.

Marcello: But these guns were manned all the time.

Kelley: Yes. They were manned day and night as far as that goes. They might slack off a little bit on daytime and only man half of them, but they had the crews that could get there in a

matter of a couple of minutes anytime they wanted them completely manned.

Marcello: I assume, though, that the Tennessee had many, many more antiaircraft weapons aboard it after Pearl Harbor than it did before Pearl Harbor. After the war started, I gather they just crammed antiaircraft guns on those ships wherever there was an open space.

Kelley: Well, they modified it quite a bit, too. They changed up the kind of guns. They put a lot of 40-millimeters--quad 40's--in the place where they used to have old .50-caliber machine guns. They had a lot of old 3-inch guns. I don't really know what they were good for, but they had some 3-inch antiaircraft guns on. They took all those off. But I don't know much about what happened to the Tennessee after Pearl Harbor, because when we came back to the States after Pearl Harbor, I was transferred off of it.

Marcello: Now by the time your routine changed and you began to sail with the darkened ship at night and so on, was Japan being considered as a potential enemy?

Kelley: I would think it was a primary concern because if there were any other type of submarines or anything in the Pacific, you didn't hear much about it; but everybody knew the Japanese Navy had built up, and by then I think they pretty well realized that if it came to war in the Pacific that it

probably was going to be the Japanese.

Marcello: When you thought of a typical Japanese during the pre-Pearl Harbor period, what sort of a person did you usually conjure up in your own mind?

Kelley: That's kind of a hard one to answer. I guess about the same kind I conjure up now. I don't think much more of them now than I did then. I think if they had the opportunity and thought they had half a chance, they'd do it all over again. But I don't think I had any pre-cut idea. Of course, most things you ever saw in the way of shows and such as that, they dramatized some particular thing--the buckteeth or the glasses or something--but I never really thought of that as being a typical Japanese because I'd seen enough Orientals around the Hawaiian Islands to get a good idea of what Japanese looked like. There was a lot of Japanese there, and Koreans and Chinese. So I suppose what I thought of them concerned mainly their looks.

Marcello: How confident did you feel in the event that there would be a showdown between the United States Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy? Did you and the rest of the crew members feel pretty confident about your training and your ships and so on and so forth?

Kelley: Well, I don't know what we thought about our training and ships, but we just all kind of assumed that with the size

of the United States and the amount of resources and all we had that it would really be no contest if it got to a shooting war. So I guess I was probably as surprised as most people or maybe more so than most with the turn of events that did happen.

Marcello: I assume that Battleship Row was a rather impressive sight there in Pearl Harbor when all the battleships were in.

Kelley: Oh, it was. It represented lots of firepower and lots of men and a big part of the Navy, and it was pretty impressive to see about eight or ten of those lined up in a row alongside of Ford Island. I guess we let our confidence swell a little too high.

Marcello: Did you have any people aboard that had formally served in the Asiatic Fleet?

Kelley: Well, there was a few. I didn't know any of them personally. You know, when you're more or less a "boot" aboard ship, you hear about old chief so-and-so up in some other division who was in the Asiatic Fleet or some first class that . . . well, it's kind of like me going over and looking up the mayor of Fort Worth to talk to or something. You just didn't have contact with them. You might hear about him, but as far as knowing him, you didn't.

Marcello: I gather that most of those Asiatic sailors were characters.

Kelley: I don't know whether they were or not. It was kind of a word

for nutty. If anybody was Asiatic, well, it means you was about half-nuts, so I guess (chuckle) they must have got that name from someplace.

Marcello: Okay, you mentioned that normally the Tennessee would come in on a Friday. How did the liberty routine work when you came in? Now you also previously mentioned that there was port and starboard liberty aboard the Tennessee. What did you normally do when you went on liberty?

Kelley: Well, there wasn't a whole lot to do unless you were just a . . . there wasn't a whole lot to do. I don't know who is going to read or hear this (chuckle), but, of course, there is the regular beer joints such as that. Of course, back in those times there was a cathouse on every other corner. And so most sailors who were out for prowling, they got all the prowling they wanted. Of course, you couldn't stay all night. Nobody below chief petty officer could spend the night in Honolulu. I don't know, but I guess there were too many sailors. I mean, you get that many ships concentrated in a small area, and if they gave them overnight liberty, they would just flood the place. So I imagine that was probably the biggest thing. But the chiefs could stay overnight if they wanted to. Petty officers below chief and seamen, they had to be back at least by one o'clock.

Marcello: I gather that downtown Honolulu was wall-to-wall bodies on weekends.

Kelley: Well, it got pretty crowded. It was scattered out. It was kind of a little bit like the area around here. There was a little old suburb here and there and different beaches and some scattered around. But it was like most sailor towns. San Francisco was about the same way then. They have one section where most of the military personnel hang out; they cater to it, and so they hang out pretty much in generally that direction.

Marcello: Do you recall where the hangouts were in Honolulu at that time?

Kelley: No, I couldn't recall any streets or . . .

Marcello: How about Hotel Street or Canal Street or Beretania Street?

Kelley: Well, I'm sure they are there and I'm sure I made them, but as far as the name of them, I couldn't say.

Marcello: I've heard it said that there was no overnight liberty mainly because there was no place in Honolulu for personnel to stay. There were not very many hotels in Honolulu at that time. I mean, today we think of Waikiki Beach with all the high-rise hotels and so on. Back in that pre-Pearl Harbor period, I guess that all there was was the Royal Hawaiian and the Ala Moana, and that was about it.

Kelley: Well, there wasn't very many, and I guess that although they

had a tourist trade and service people, there was no great need for them. And like I said, whenever you can get 100,000 military personnel in one little town, if they stay overnight there would be few places for them to stay.

Marcello: And I guess they didn't want those sailors or other military personnel sleeping on the beach or in parks or places like that. That was just asking for trouble, I'm sure.

Kelley: Well, whatever you needed, you get in a hurry over there; there was no real need to stay overnight. I mean, I didn't remember hearing any kicks about it, because who really wanted to stay all night?

Marcello: You didn't have that much money anyway.

Kelley: No, you didn't have enough money to blow for rooms and all the goodies that go along with it. If you go over on liberty, you didn't even have to buy a meal if you didn't want to; you might eat a little something one time when you went over. But drinks and cathouses was about all you spent your money on.

Marcello: A lot of people like to assume that if the Japanese or any other enemy for that matter were going to attack Pearl Harbor, that the best time to have done so would have been on a Sunday morning. In other words, what many people assume is that Saturday nights were times of heavy drinking and partying, and consequently the personnel would be in no shape to fight

on a Sunday morning. How would you reply to an observation of that sort based on your own experience?

Kelley: Well, I would suppose that that's probably the most logical time, unless . . . well, I don't know how much difference it would be on Monday morning. Sunday or Monday is pretty much the same. Of course, Sunday night wasn't the same kind of night over on the beach as Saturday, so I suppose as far as being a little overloaded with booze such as that, and a lot of hangovers, if that was any factor, probably Sunday morning would be the logical time on it.

Marcello: At the same time, I think we also need to point out that Sundays were a time of leisure if one didn't have the duty, isn't that correct?

Kelley: Yes, we didn't have to do anything on Sunday if you didn't have watch of some kind.

Marcello: And I assume many people would lie around on Sundays and write letters or read the Sunday papers and do what other typical Americans would do on a Sunday morning.

Kelley: Well, you mentioned a little while ago about the athletics or recreation part of it, and that is what a lot of people aboard ship did on Sunday. They went over on the beach and played softball and such as that; in fact, that's where I was fixing to go whenever this all started. I was fixing to go over on the beach with the softball team.

Marcello: We must keep in mind, however, that even on a weekend, as you pointed out earlier, that the ship would be at least 50 per cent manned; there would be 50 per cent of the crew aboard at all times.

Kelley: Yes.

Marcello: Would there probably have been the same number of officers, or perhaps were there less than half the officers aboard on a weekend?

Kelley: I don't think they were quite as restricted in terms of port and starboard watches as enlisted men; I couldn't say that for a fact, but it seemed to me like if they didn't have the duty, they could go ashore pretty much as they wanted to.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us into that weekend of December 7, 1941, and what I want you to do at this point, Mr. Kelley, is to describe the routine of the Tennessee from the time it came in until all hell broke loose on Sunday morning. Let's talk about that Friday. Now I assume, once again, that the Tennessee did come in on a Friday.

Kelley: Well, I believe it was Friday. Like I said, it was a few years ago, and I don't remember exactly. But one other thing I was going to say is that there was quite a change in coming into port from the way we usually did it, and that at least had stopped. Those old battleships used to have awnings that . . . they would come into port and had a extension to

each stanchion around the lifeline or the outside rail of the ship that was put on the thing with pins, and they covered that thing until it looked almost like a circus tent all over where it was shaded. All under that was this big awning, heavy tarp, with a cable sewed in the edge of it so to stretch it tight. A month or so before they bombed Pearl Harbor . . . I guess they had at least got suspicious enough until they quit putting all that paraphernalia up, because that did restrict the guns and such as that. We couldn't operate any of them. Well, maybe not antiaircraft guns, but the rest of them were pretty well tied up below with awnings. But they had quit doing that. What was your original question on that? I forgot.

Marcello: Well, I'm interested in the fact that they were no longer putting up this awning. Did they ever tell you why they stopped putting it up?

Kelley: No. As far as explaining stuff, they weren't great ones to explain very much stuff. They just said, "We'll no longer do this," or "From here on, we will do that," and you just accepted it. You might grouse about being out in the sun and not having a shady place to lay around, but that was the order and so you did it.

Marcello: So during that weekend of December 7, 1941, then, the awnings were not up.

Kelley: No.

Marcello: Where did the Tennessee tie up when it came in that weekend?

Kelley: Oh, the battleships always--most of them--tied up alongside Ford Island on some old concrete quays that was built there especially for them on that side of the channel. And quite often there wasn't enough berths alongside Ford Island, so they would tie up double and sometimes even triple. I mean, one would tie up, and another would pull up alongside, and they'd throw down some fenders between them, and they would tie up alongside the other one. And so they were all full, and I guess there was about three . . . I guess only two ships were tied side-by-side, and I happened to be on the one on the inside. I guess that was the reason I was still around (chuckle).

Marcello: Do you remember what ship was tied outboard of the Tennessee on that weekend?

Kelley: Well, the West Virginia, I believe.

Marcello: That's correct. It was the West Virginia.

Kelley: I'm kind of getting my ships mixed up sometimes. I know the one behind us, of course, was the Arizona, and the Oklahoma was just ahead of us on the outside of the Maryland, I believe it was.

Marcello: In other words, when you did come in and tie up near Ford Island, you didn't necessarily always tie up at the same quay.

Kelley: No, not always. It seemed like you pretty basically stayed within one or two.

Marcello: But here again, anybody that was monitoring the movements of the fleet would know at least where the battleships would probably be tied up on that weekend.

Kelley: Well, yes. If there were any in, they'd be over against Ford Island, but they strung out from one end of it to the other. I guess the Arizona was on the last one going in, as far as I can remember.

Marcello: Do you recall what you did on that Friday night or that Saturday night for that matter?

Kelley: No, not really. I mean, that's kind of like asking me what I did on any other Saturday night, because the night was nothing unusual, and it was just another night, and I don't recall whether I even went ashore or had duty.

Marcello: Well, you may have had the duty because you mentioned that you were going ashore the next day, that is, on Sunday morning.

Kelley: Well, those baseball trips weren't considered liberty; you went over in a group, and you came back in a group. You couldn't leave the group; you just went over and played ball and came back.

Marcello: What did you usually do if you were aboard on Saturday night? Now obviously you would stand your watches and so on. What

else would you do when you came off your watches, assuming that it was before lights out or something of that sort? Would you watch movies and so on?

Kelley: Well, they normally had movies early, and, of course, there was not much of anything to do after that. Oh, there might be a few acey-deucey games or a poker game in the gear locker or something like that that you might get in on, but there wasn't a whole lot of activity. Some guys would write letters or whatever you wanted to do, but there was no real cut and dried routine that you did do.

Marcello: I assume, then, that so far as you're concerned, Saturday night of December 6, 1941, was a relatively routine and uneventful night.

Kelley: I don't recall anything, so it must have been. There wasn't anything that stuck in my mind.

Marcello: In general this was a routine weekend, I gather.

Kelley: Well . . .

Marcello: At least until Sunday morning.

Kelley: Yes, it was.

Marcello: Okay, this brings us into Sunday morning, and once more I want you to describe the activities from the time you got up until the actual attack occurred.

Kelley: Oh, I'd say it was basically routine and nothing of any consequence that I can recall that happened until . . . I

just remember that we were getting ready to go over . . . the Fourth Division softball team was playing some other division on the ship. At the time that this all started, I happened to be in the head. It was a great place to be (facetious remark) but that's where I was at. I didn't know what had happened. I thought it had been rammed or something. But we got two bomb hits, and evidently what had caused the big commotion was the bomb that had hit on the top of the number two turret. Anyway, whatever it was, it caused the ship to really give a bounce, and water flew all over the place. Everybody was saying, "What in the hell is going on?" We went tearing outside to see what was going on, because most of us thought that some other ship had rammed us or something.

And about the time that we got out on topside, why, they sounded general quarters. Like I said, my battle station was below deck, the aft end of the ship, but I did go out on topside to the turret to do down. And whenever I came out on topside, why, the hangars over on Ford Island was already burning, and there was planes buzzing around. Like I said, about the time I got out on topside, why, they sounded general quarters, and I just got a glimpse of several planes before I went into my general quarters station.

So I didn't know what had happened, oh, for an hour or

more, I guess. You just sat down there and wondered what was going on, because you didn't see nothing and nobody passes much word around because that's strictly business that goes over the phone, and they wasn't worried about informing all of us about what was going on.

Marcello: And, of course, being on a 14-inch gun, there wasn't too much you could do down there in the handling room or powder room, because those 14-inch guns were not going to be used against those airplanes.

Kelley: No, I guess the only reason that they kept us down there that long was that they may have thought there would be some landing or ships or something coming in range. Of course, that was some goofy thinking, but about a hour or hour and a half later, why, they took most of us from the lower magazines to up topside because oil, spilled out from the Arizona, was blowing towards us and it was all on fire, and the ship was burning from the aft end to about, oh, a third of the way up the decking on top. All the paint was burning. Oil about a foot deep around the ship makes quite a fire, so they sent us up to man the fire hoses, to put out the fire and to keep it sort of beat off.

Marcello: Okay, let's back up a minute at this point. Going back to the time when you first sensed that an attack was taking place, you mentioned that you had gone to the head. Now where

was this head located?

Kelley: Well, it was up . . . well, not in the bow of the ship but more toward the bow than where we lived. Our living quarters were, I'd say, two-thirds of the way aft. Facing from the bow to the stern, we were about two-thirds of the way back to the aft, and the head was on farther forward of us--the crew's head. That was a little past midship.

Marcello: So you were somewhere up in the neighborhood of where that bomb hit the number two turret. How far away from that number two turret might have you been?

Kelley: Oh, roughly, I'd say, fifty feet maybe.

Marcello: And the first you knew of an attack was when that bomb hit the turret.

Kelley: I didn't know it was an attack. That was just the first commotion that cut loose. I didn't know what it was.

Marcello: Well, evidently, this must have occurred, then, very early in the attack.

Kelley: Well, it was bound to have been one of the first things hit, because that was the only thing I could think of that would cause that much jar to this ship I was on, as big as it was. Because even if it would have been a torpedo in the West Virginia, it wouldn't have shook us like that did, I wouldn't believe. Now that was all speculation. I couldn't say for sure.

Marcello: Now was the explosion and so on great enough that it knocked you down or against the bulkhead or anything of that nature?

Kelley: No, it didn't knock me down; it was more like a big bouncing motion. I mean, it was just like the ship just dropped about two feet or something and then back up. But it wasn't anything that would really knock you down or shake you around particularly; it was just a big . . .

Marcello: At that point, then, general quarters sounds.

Kelley: No, it didn't sound for another . . . well it seemed like a full minute or more or something, because I was already out of there and had gone about, oh, two or three hundred feet down the starboard side in going back to get outside, and it seems to me like I was already outside before general quarters sounded.

Marcello: What did you see when you went outside before general quarters sounded? What sort of activity did you observe?

Kelley: Well, when I went out, I was on the Ford Island side, so that's all I saw. I didn't see any other ships, and, like I said, the hangars were back towards the bow of the ship. We were facing . . . the ship was headed towards the hangars, the way we were tied up. I came out and was going aft, so I could see smoke billowing out and several planes and such as that on fire on the ground.

But along about then is when general quarters sounded--

a few seconds one way or the other. It was very evident that we were being attacked as soon as we got out and looked around.

Marcello: I assume that when general quarters sounded, everybody started acting in a rather professional manner.

Kelley: Well, if you call running as hard as you can to get where your supposed to go as professional, that's the way you're supposed to get there. I didn't see anything I would really call panic, but they were moving out. Nobody was goofing off or loafing along.

Marcello: Now, you go down to your battle station which is in the bowels of the ship, so to speak. You're really doing nothing more than standing by. What thoughts were going through your mind, or what were you and the other people talking about while you were down there?

Kelley: Well, I guess it was . . . as best I can remember, everybody was just . . . there was quite a bit of jabbering to start with. Some of them didn't know what was happening--some did--and after you get that settled, why, you kind of settle down to a silence of wondering and waiting. Everybody has their own thoughts; I mean, there wasn't no whole lot of talking going on.

Marcello: I guess the thing that I would be thinking about would be, "How in the hell am I going to get out of here if this ship

sinks?" Because you're virtually on the bottom of the ship, so to speak.

Kelley: Well, if we would have been at sea, I'm sure that would have crossed everybody's mind, but everybody knew that . . . I suppose that everybody knew--even I knew--that the water there wasn't very deep. And if the ship sunk, it wouldn't matter one way or the other unless water came in from the bottom and trapped you somehow where you couldn't get out. But it wasn't deep enough to cause much worry. I guess that the concern of most people in my predicament was if any of that stuff was heavy enough that it was going to get into the magazine. Well, I guess you'd have a few thoughts that it might happen to you like it happened to the Arizona. We didn't know it could happen to the Arizona, but it goes through your mind--it's possible.

Marcello: Could you hear any noise outside?

Kelley: Very little. I mean, you could feel little shudders occasionally, but you didn't really hear anything.

Marcello: Could you feel any sensations when the West Virginia was hit?

Kelley: Well, like I said, you could feel the ship occasionally sort of tremble or shudder or however you want to say it, but nothing of any . . . I mean, maybe you're sitting down, and you just sort of feel it, and you knew that something was going on but you didn't know what. That was about as big a

commotion as we felt.

Marcello: When everybody got to their battle stations, were they fully clothed and so on, or did you see all the degrees of dress and so on down there?

Kelley: Well, everybody dresses when you get up, whether it be Sunday or not. Now you may go up on deck and pull your shirt off and lay around and sunbathe or something, but everybody is dressed. Of course, you wore white shorts and T-shirts as the uniform of the day, and that's what most of them were wearing. It was late breakfast, after everything was put up, so I guess everybody was as ready as they were going to get.

Marcello: I gather that under circumstances like that, the first impulse of the captain would be to get that ship out of there, but there was no way the Tennessee could move since it was bottled up by the West Virginia.

Kelley: No, I don't suppose that even crossed their minds because, like I said, anybody that knew we were tied up would know that at least two other ships, maybe three other ships, would have to get underway before we could commence to move. There was two in front of us, one by the side of us, and all three of those would have to move. Well, if you had tugs to pull you out and the West Virginia moved, then they could pull you out. But, of course, with that going on, there was not going to be many tugs running around.

Marcello: How long did you say you were down in the powder room before you were reassigned?

Kelley: Oh, probably an hour.

Marcello: And where did you go from there?

Kelley: I went up topside on the quarter-deck. That was our duty station--quarter-deck. We manned fire hoses to keep from burning up, because the officers' quarters were already burning inside, and all the decking was burned off. I don't suppose they called very many people until they decided it was going to burn up; I don't know why they kept us down there as long as they did.

Marcello: Now were the fires on the Tennessee the result of the second hit that you said it took?

Kelley: No, it didn't cause it to burn, but it went . . . a bomb went through the number three turret, also. And I never did know why it didn't cause more damage on the inside than it did. It penetrated the top of the turret which is pretty thick metal, and there was only three casualties. But like I said, freaky things happen. You would think that if the bomb that went in was big enough to penetrate that turret and explode, it would kill everybody inside. But there was only three casualties in there.

Marcello: Well, where was the fire coming from then?

Kelley: Well, the oil from the Arizona was blowing in our direction,

and there was just a sea of fire all around us.

Marcello: In other words, when the Arizona blew up, I assume this burning oil and so on actually landed on the Tennessee, so to speak?

Kelley: Well, I don't know about that because, like I say, whenever I come up on topside--they sent me up there--that was one of the times I would say I was most impressed in my life.

Marcello: Why was that?

Kelley: Well, we go general quarters, and here was all this array of battleships setting out here looking fine and trim; and when we come up--run out on topside--why, the West Virginia is setting on the bottom beside of you, and you look behind you and the Arizona is just one big ball of fire, and up ahead to the left the Oklahoma is turned upside-down with the screws sticking up in the air. And it made me wonder where we ever got this idea that we was so secure.

Marcello: I'm sure it was a rather sickening feeling when you saw that.

Kelley: Well, sickening and wondering in your mind just how far this damage went. Was it just here or had it went somewhere else, too.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that the water and so on all around the Tennessee was afire from the explosions aboard the Arizona. This oil was a rather thick, gelatenous type oil, is it not, that we are talking about?

Kelley: Yes, it's sort of thick. Well, you know what crude oil looks like. It's almost like crude oil once its pumped out of the ground. Of course, I'm sure it's not that, but it's kind of a thick oil.

Marcello: So were you fighting to keep the oil from drifting over against the Tennessee?

Kelley: Well, the oil was coming, and it wasn't all that hard to keep the fire knocked down once you got it down. The old paint on the ship, of course--fifty coats of paint on it--was burning, and the deck was burning. Once you got the deck put out and the paint on the side put out, you could hang on the rail and keep the fire knocked down. Of course, every few minutes a plane would come over strafing and chipping splinters out of the deck, and we would throw our hose down and run under the overhang of the turret until that one passed. We stayed at that, I guess . . . well, until the entire attack was over. I mean, we stayed on keeping the fire put out, put down, contained, or however you want to put it. We didn't . . . because we still had fires nearly all day.

Marcello: This was rather steady work then, that is, when you were out there fighting the fire?

Kelley: Yes, you didn't squirt a little and wait awhile; you had to stay out and keep it beat off.

Marcello: You mentioned just a minute ago that from time to time the

ship would be strafed. Did you ever come directly under any of this strafing?

Kelley: There was several strafings that hit on the deck that we were on. I mean, we would have to throw down the fire hose and get out of the way. You could see them coming in, and you could tell if they were coming your way. When splinters go chipping out of the deck, nobody would have to tell you to get out of the way. You'd hunt someplace.

Marcello: On about how many occasions did this occur?

Kelley: Oh, probably not over a half-dozen on this particular section I was on. Now they may have been strafing other parts of the ship that I didn't even see, but probably where I was at, a half-dozen times.

Marcello: Were there any casualties in your immediate area as a result of this strafing?

Kelley: No, I don't know of anybody that got . . . I don't suppose there was anybody that got hit. At least not in my division, there wasn't.

Marcello: I assume that by this time the air was full of black smoke and so on, also.

Kelley: Well, it was very full of smoke, bursting shells, and all that whenever I came up on topside. Of course, I guess the heavy part of the attack was probably already over by the time I got up there, but there was still quite a few planes bombing

and such as that.

Marcello: Now during this period when you were up on deck fighting those fires, were the antiaircraft weapons firing away aboard the Tennessee?

Kelley: Yes, like I said, the action had thinned out a good bit, but there was still quite a bit of firing going on. The regular crews manned them, so I didn't have anything to do with any firing. I didn't fire a shot; I mean, I didn't even help in firing a gun. All I did is sit and wait and squirt a little water.

Marcello: Again, was the fire fighting conducted in a rather professional manner as you look back on it? Did everybody seem to know what they were doing?

Kelley: Well, there was nobody in charge, I'll put it that way; they said, "You guys keep that fire off the ship," so we did your dammedest to keep it off. And there was, oh, probably eight or ten guys on my particular part of the ship, and we had maybe four or five fire hoses, and it was no big problem to keep it down once you got the burning part of the ship put out. I mean, we just had to keep it beat back.

Marcello: Were you using the standard Navy hose in this fire fighting procedure? What is it--about a three-inch hose or something like that?

Kelley: Well, most of ours were about a two-inch hose.

Marcello: Was the so-called "suicide" nozzle on them or something like that?

Kelley: Well, some of them had just the regular old funnel nozzle, and some of them had that that you could make a spray out of, but, of course, you kept with a stream, not a spray, because it couldn't reach far enough. That's pretty hot work out there with that blazing all around you. It gets pretty warm if you try to get up to spray it.

Marcello: When did you finally knock off from fighting that fire?

Kelley: Oh, I couldn't really say. I mean, somebody had to stay with it all day. I mean, it got to where it was less trouble. But it was probably around noon before we could sort of take it easy on the fire fighting.

Marcello: Did you have much of an appetite that day?

Kelley: Well, not really, but you did funny things. There was three guys in the Third Division . . . the ship is divided . . . I mean, in the middle . . . the Third Division was on the right side, and we were on the left. I knew a lot of the guys over there, and one guy that I knew real well was one of them that was killed in the number three turret. After it sort of settled down, they went up there and took mattress covers and picked all the pieces that was in the part that blew up, and they brought those down and just sat them over in the corner over in the Third Division part of it. And they didn't set

up a regular mess table that day. They made up a chow line over there, and everybody went by to get eats and did eat with those three or four mattress covers sitting over in the corner. It didn't bother you as much as you would think it would. I mean, you would think that all of us couldn't eat. But I don't know, you sort of gear yourself to the circumstances or something.

Marcello: I would think that all you got to eat that day were sandwiches and cold cuts and coffee and things such as that.

Kelley: Nobody was too choosy or had any complaints. There was always funny stories--I say funny--odd stories that come along. There was a Japanese plane that was shot down and fell on Ford Island just a little ways from where we were at, where we were tied up. And there was an old boy that had come back from over there . . . he went over--two or three of them--to this plane, and he come back and they had a picture--an aerial photograph of Pearl Harbor--and we were all looking at that thing. And the Oglala, which was an old supply ship, came in . . . I don't know whether it was Friday evening late or Saturday morning or what it was, but it had come in after we . . . we were already tied up. But I remember watching that old supply ship come in and tie up across the channel just down . . . well, almost even with the stern of the Arizona on the other side of the channel. It tied up there.

And that old supply ship was in that aerial photograph. And they said that there was no planes that came over, but how in the hell they got that, I don't know. And he had noplacement to get an aerial photograph. He said he got it out of that plane, and if he didn't, I don't know where he would have got it. But I saw that with my own eyes, and I've often wondered why there was never any mention made of any reconnaissance planes or nothing. Even in all these so-called war pictures there is never any mention of that.

Marcello: Did you happen to observe anybody firing at these planes with small arms such as pistols, rifles, and things of that nature?

Kelley: No, not on our ship because there were none available. I mean, the officer of the day and the security guards might have some sort of sidearm. There was no . . . well, the Marine division had rifles, but I didn't see anybody. Like I said, they might have thrown potatoes at them for all I know while it was actually going on because I wasn't up to see it.

Marcello: Did the Tennessee give any sort of aid to the West Virginia in the aftermath of the attack?

Kelley: Well, of course, anybody that was picked out of the water or came off a ship that was sunk or anything else had a place to stay. I mean, they was more than welcome and such as that,

and there was a lot of them that came aboard off the
West Virginia.

Marcello: I guess those guys were in terrible shape that were fished
out of the water, were they not, with all that oil and so on?

Kelley: Yes, I didn't see but a couple that came out of the water,
and I didn't see them get out of the water; I just saw them
after they came out. But I was in a boat crew at that
particular time--a small boat crew in a motor launch--and
after the thing was over, part of our job was to go around
every morning, and when bodies came to the top, why, we would
pick them up and carry them over to the Aiea landing to be
identified and such as that. I guess that was one of the most
gory things I did. Of course, that was after it was all over
with. But we would start out going around picking them up
and get a half-dozen or so, and they got to where, if they
pulled them into the boat, they would all bust open and run
all over the bottom of the boat. So we would just tie a
little piece of rope around their leg or their arm or what-
ever you could get hold of and get you a string of them and
tow them over rather than trying to pull them into the boat.

Marcello: And this was occurring on Monday, when you were doing this?

Kelley: No, it was . . . well, it may have started Monday, but not
very many of them came to the surface for several days.

Marcello: I see.

Kelley: They were already getting a little bit ripe whenever they were coming to the top. It was mostly people blown off the Arizona that were in the water and sunk. They would come up and be around the side of the ship or the quays or over against Ford Island. Someone would just gather them up as they came up.

Marcello: What did you do that evening, that is, the evening of December 7th?

Kelley: Well, I guess everybody had quite an apprehensive feeling and was wondering if that was all of it and such as that, and we stayed on watch about two-thirds of the time. I mean, they had full antiaircraft gun watches, and there was a lot of things . . . like I said, somebody had to keep the fire down . . . and it was no real routine of anything.

Marcello: When you say somebody had to keep the fire down, do you mean that it would be kind of temporarily put out, and then it would flare up again and something of that nature?

Kelley: Well, the Arizona burned for several days. Everytime the wind would blow a little bit, why, it would lick back across toward where they were tied up.

Marcello: I see.

Kelley: It wasn't so flammable that you couldn't put it out or anything like that. I mean, you could knock it down, but then whenever the wind would blow and whip it, why, it would start

up again.

I don't recall too much of the evening, like I said, but I remember right after dark that night, the 7th, they had set up all over the place machine guns and . . . I don't know where they all came from. But these old stanchions or railings that I told you about awhile ago--where they put those extensions for the awnings--those things were made to mount a machine gun on top of them, too, a little old .30-caliber mostly, some .50-calibers. But they had them things all over the place, and I'm sure you've heard the story about the planes coming in, and all of the sudden they'd cut loose, and it looked like just one giant fireworks with so many tracers firing all over that harbor up in that direction. I don't know whether they shot all the planes down. Of course, they were are own planes.

Marcello: Your referring to those that were coming in from the Enterprise.

Kelley: Yes. I didn't remember what ship they were coming in off of, but they sure got themselves quite a welcome. Like I say, I don't know whether any of them survived or not, but I know that I happened to be on topside, and whenever they cut loose, there was many a ton of ammunition in the air at one time.

Marcello: Did you simply stand there and watch it?

Kelley: That's about all I could do. I wasn't manning a gun or nothing.

I was just happened to be out on topside whenever that happened.

Marcello: I've heard people say that if the situation hadn't been so serious, all that firing was actually a rather pretty sight.

Kelley: Well, it was. I mean, it was spectacular whether you call it pretty or not, but it was a spectacular sight because with so many tracers and it being night, and with firing from all over the harbor, all the ships, even gun mounts along the beach and everywhere else, it made quite a sight.

Marcello: What sort of rumors did you hear in the aftermath of the attack? I'm sure the ship must of been one big rumor mill.

Kelley: Oh, I don't know. There was so much that we could never figure out what was scuttlebutt, what was rumor, and what had some truth to it. There was actually supposed to have been some activity--those two-man subs in that deal there. I'm still not one to speculate too much on scuttlebutt or what rumors is going around. If it's fact or if someone knows it for fact, well, I'm interested; but otherwise, I guess I'm not too interested.

Marcello: Were you fully expecting the Japanese to follow up a landing force or invasion as such?

Kelley: I think they probably were. I don't know what we based it on, or maybe we based it on the fact that they so completely destroyed what we had that we would have been helpless if

they would have had a reasonable-sized task force. They could have walked all over the whole island apparently from what we could see. So I suppose that everybody had some apprehension along that line.

Marcello: How did you sleep that night?

Kelley: Oh, most of us took our own hammock after a fashion and got somewhere for a little sleep. Of course, most of us were so keyed up that you didn't want much sleep for awhile. I mean, you think we'd be tired and give out, but I guess a certain amount of that kind of excitement so stimulates the body that you're not really wanting to sleep. I don't think anybody slept, at least not until midnight.

Marcello: What did the harbor look like the next day when you finally got a chance to get a view of it with a little bit more objectivity?

Kelley: Well, it looked like damn near total destruction, Like I said, I was in a boat crew, so I got a little better view than the average person did because we had certain things to do. Running up and down the harbor and different places, you could see all the sunken ships and damage and such as that.

Well, in fact, the chaplain off the Tennessee . . . I don't recall if it was the next day or the following day, but, anyway, it was after they got the fire put out on the

. . . it must of been the . . . like I said, my memory doesn't tell me exactly what day they put the fire out, but, anyway, it was the day that they got the fire put out on the Arizona that he wanted to go over aboard. And so the crew I was in carried him over to the Arizona, and we just tied the boat up to a broadside barrel that was up above the waterline. We pulled up and crawled over onto the boat deck. I sort of wished I hadn't went aboard after I'd went aboard because there was pieces of burnt bodies and little dabs of clothing, helmets, and . . . well, just half-charred bodies all over the place. It gives off, to me, quite an offensive odor. But he wanted to go aboard, so we carried him over. I prowled around and picked up two or three things laying around the boat deck--junk to anybody else. There was an old Marine belt buckle and a spoon. I guess they probably had been serving coffee or something. Two or three little old items that was just laying around the deck . . . I guess they're still around here somewhere, but you can just call them mementos or whatever you want to call it. But I sort of wished I would have stayed in the boat after I got up there.

Marcello: Did this chaplain go over there to conduct some sort of service or something of that nature?

Kelley: Yes, he was Protestant, the best I remember, and he said prayers

or something, but he didn't have service of any kind. He just walked around and looked things over and said a prayer, and we went back to ship. I guess he just wanted to see what was over there.

Marcello: Given what conditions were like over there, I'm sure that nobody wanted to stay around there very long, just like you mentioned a moment ago.

Kelley: No, I don't suppose anybody would stay very long, unless their job was to clean it up and identify the dead. There was a similar thing on the West Virginia. They came over wanting volunteers to swim back in the living quarters on the West Virginia. There was about so much space above the overhead and the water, and they were going to swim back there and pull those bodies out of there. They got a good bunch of volunteers, but I didn't feel like that I wanted to volunteer. I didn't want no part of it. It's not that I was so squeamish about death, but fooling around back there in that oily water to get somebody that was already dead just didn't seem like a practical thing to do to me.

Marcello: Did you get over on the West Virginia at all?

Kelley: Yes, we could go over there. I didn't prowl around, but, I mean, you could go over there. It was tied up and sunk down . . . oh, I don't know, it probably didn't sink but eight feet.

Marcello: And you mentioned that in the days following the attack, for the most part you were on this boat crew gathering bodies and so on.

Kelley: Well, that was just one of the things. We did that usually on the mornings. You'd get up and look out, and you'd see maybe a dozen scattered around. We wasn't the only ones doing it; there was other people, too. But you'd make the rounds in the mornings, gather them all up, and then there might not be a half-dozen more to come up all day. We did other things in the day, but that was usually one of the first things you do--go around and gather the ones up you could find.

Marcello: Do you ever get used to that?

Kelley: Well, I guess you get used to it, but you never did learn to . . . well, I wouldn't say nobody would like it, but, I mean, you get to where it doesn't bother you particularly.

Marcello: But you never forget about it, I gather?

Kelley: No, you never forget about it. It was kind of an unpleasant experience and . . . well, I don't know whether that's what made me remember it or whether it was part of the total thing or being that close to that many dead people which you'd never been around or what it was, but at least it stuck with you.

Marcello: When did the Tennessee finally get out of Pearl Harbor?

Kelley: Oh, that's kind of a . . . they finally blasted and jack-hammered part of those quays that they were tied up to and then took the fenders and all that out and got the Maryland out straight ahead. That took--oh, I don't know--at least a week maybe. And then they pulled the Tennessee out. They had winches all over Ford Island and other ships and tugboats and everything else. They pulled the Tennessee straight forward from behind the West Virginia up past the Oklahoma and out through the same hole, and then we went over to the Navy yard. And we stayed in the Navy yard over there for . . . we didn't go in the dry dock, but, oh, it must have been close to two weeks, I'd say. I don't know. But anyway, they had to do quite a bit of patching to make those things seaworthy. That fire had warped the plates on the rear end, and at places you could see daylight where the rivets had popped out. They had cut out a lot of plates on the fantail and replaced them. And then we cut straight across from Pearl to the Bremerton Navy Yard. Oh, that was probably in January even before we got to Bremerton Navy Yard.

Marcello: Were you kind of glad to get out of Pearl Harbor?

Kelley: Well, yes, I guess so. We felt pretty helpless. You couldn't go to sea. I mean, in the shape we were in, we were going to have to go . . . I mean, if there was a battle going on, I'm sure we could of managed it, but, I mean, we wanted to

go to the Navy yard and get repairs. It was . . . oh, I don't know whether you call the word depressing or what, but after you had sit there for weeks after it was over and you can't do nothing, you can't fight back, you can't do anything but sit and wait, I guess we were all glad to get out of there.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Kelley, I have no further questions. I want to thank you very much for taking time to talk with me this evening. You said a lot of very interesting and important things. I was kind of amazed at the amount of detail that you could remember. I'm sure the scholars will find your comments very valuable when they write about Pearl Harbor.

Kelley: Well, I guess there are things that you can remember pretty clear, but with so many things that were not of great importance, you really haven't thought about them for thirty-five years. I'm sure I've got a lot of blanks. When I first got your letter, I didn't think I'd remember enough or be interesting enough that anybody would want it, but I thought, well, if you want it and want to come over here, well, it don't cost me nothing and so fine and dandy. Not that I'm trying to get paid for it--I don't mean that--but, I mean, what I had to say seemed like it would be so insignificant that it would be sort of a waste of time.

Marcello: Well, again, we'll let scholars be the judge of that, and

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I want to thank you very much for having participated.