

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

#381

EDWARD K.H. CHUN

PEARL HARBOR NAVY YARD WORKER

INTERVIEWED ON

DECEMBER 5, 2001

BY COMMANDER JUDITH LAFLEUR & KAREN BYRNE

TRANSCRIBED BY:

CARA KIMURA

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**USS *ARIZONA* MEMORIAL
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ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

(Conversation off-mike)

Judith Lafleur (JL): The following oral history interview is being conducted by Commander Judith L. Lafleur, United States Naval Reserve, for the National Park Service, USS *Arizona* Memorial, at the Ala Moana Hotel on December 5, 2001 at 11:05 a.m. The person being interviewed is Edward Chun who was a shipyard worker at the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard, Shop 56, pipefitter shop, on December 7, 1941. So Mr. Chun, for the record, would you please state your full name, place of birth, and your birth date?

Edward K.H. Chun (EC): Okay. Edward K. H. Chun. Born May 18, 1923 in Honolulu, Hawaii.

JL: Thank you. In 1941, what did you consider to be your hometown?

EC: Honolulu was my hometown in '41.

JL: And what were your parents' names?

EC: My parents, my father's name was Albert and my mother's name was Alice.

JL: How many brothers and sisters do you have or did you have?

EC: I have four brothers and two sisters.

JL: Okay. And where did you go to high school?

EC: I went to high school at St. Louis High School. At that time it was known as St. Louis College. It's a Catholic Marianist high school.

JL: And where was that located?

EC: It was located in Kaimuki, just outside of Honolulu.

JL: And where and why did you enlist? Or did you ever enlist in the military?

EC: Later on.

JL: Were you...

EC: After Pearl Harbor.

JL: After Pearl Harbor, okay. So where were you then during the period 1941, when you worked at [Pipe] Shop 56? What were you doing there?

EC: Actually I was scheduled to work that morning because the [USS] Oglala was scheduled to go on maneuvers Monday morning. So they usually put a crew on to finish up the job so all the ships can go out Monday morning. And we were...

JL: Let me back up and just ask you, what was your occupation at that time?

EC: At that time, I was apprentice pipefitter. I worked with a journeyman pipe fitter.

JL: You were civilian employee?

EC: I was a civilian employee, yes.

JL: And how long had you worked for, in that position?

EC: I started work at the navy yard 1 April 1941.

JL: Okay and would you once again then go to describing what you were doing on the event, the date of December 7?

EC: Okay. We were scheduled to work, so I came to work and on Sunday, usually start at eight, but the rest of the week we start at seven. So got to the shop a little early, so we sat around and drank coffee and shot the bull. And about quarter to eight, we got our tools and we got our [pipe] parts to finish the job on the *Oglala*. And we walked [down] the 1010 dock [to the ship] which [was] only about 900 feet down the dock. And we got there at the gangway to the ship. The gangway was on the USS *Helena* and you had to go across the *Helena* to the *Oglala*. So we got there about ten to eight.

Now there were two pipe fitters that were working on the job that we were supposed to complete. So while we're walking down there and they were, I guess they were chomping at the bits to get home, so they were watching. They saw us coming down so they came off of the ship and met us down at the end of the gangway. And we were exchanging information (clears throat) and while we were exchanging information—now this is about fifty, 7:52 or 7:53, we heard all this airplane coming in back of us, because we were facing Ford Island, the planes were coming, the noise was coming from the back of us. And I mentioned, I said, "Gee, what is that?" I says, "I don't recall they doing this kind big maneuvers on Sunday."

Usually they don't do maneuvers on Sunday. But anyway, we kept talking and about that time, the first bomb hit, which hit on Ford Island at the seaplane ramp.

JL: Did you see that?

EC: I didn't see the bomb, but I saw the smoke going up because the fantail of the *Helena* was blocking my view. So I moved out about thirty feet to get a clear view and of course I missed the first one, but I know where it hit because I saw the plume going up. And then I saw the rest of the bombs hit. And then while I was looking this way—now, here's the southeast loch and I'm standing on the end of the pier. The southeast loch is here [*to my right*]. And out of the corner of my eye, I caught a plane coming down real low! I mean it seemed ridiculously low. Now that was the first torpedo plane and he was about fifty feet off the deck. And...

JL: By off the deck, you mean off the water?

EC: The water, yeah.

JL: Yeah.

EC: Fifty feet off the water. And then as I looked, of course he dropped his torpedo. And the thing started going straight for the *Oklahoma*. And of course then the succeeding ones, they were dropping yet, but first, the first batch were all aimed at the *Oklahoma* and the *West Virginia*. And then I watched them and of course there was one guy that was going for the

California. Now the *California* was sitting the first in line and to get to the *California*, you had to come over the dock. And I was standing right there, so about fifty, sixty feet, he came right down on the side of me and I looked over there and I could see his features in his face. (Doorbell rings) And you could see the Oriental features. And I was thinking to myself, I said, “Gee, these maneuvers they’re making, they’re making realistic. They even get the guys looking like Orientals, you know,” not knowing that was the real thing!

Then of course, while I was watching that, of course watching the torpedoes, watching the bombers drop bombs on the *Maryland*, *Tennessee*, and the *Arizona*, this guy come over Ford Island and he dropped a torpedo and it went underneath the *Oglala*, because the *Oglala* was a flat-bottom boat. It’s only drew about two feet of water, ‘cause she was—all her mines were off of her and the *Oglala* was built as a [*freighter*] in 1907 in Philadelphia [*by William Cramp and Son,*] and was used in the New England coast as a freighter. [*In 1911 it was converted into a passenger ship, remaining in use in New England waters.*] And in the First World War, they took it over, the navy took it over and they got stuck with it.

So anyway, the torpedo went underneath the *Oglala* and hit the *Helena* just about in mid-ship. Put a big hole in it. And this morning, I was just, just before I came here, one of the guys that was on the *Helena*, he stopped me. He said, “Let me tell you something,” he says, “I was on the *Helena* that morning,” and he said, “they hit my station.” I guess he was working in the engine room or boiler room. He said, “They hit my station.” He said, “But I had just left there five minutes prior to that to go someplace and get something,” and then the torpedo hit. He said, “If I didn’t go get it at that time,” he said, “I would’ve been dead,” because...

JL: And you were on the pier?

EC: I was on the pier, right next to the *Helena*. And when the torpedo went [*off*], it was a terrific concussion, you know. I could feel the concussion and you could see the ship jump. And then of course the *Oglala*, being built as a wooden ship, but it was fixed up part metal. [Note: *USS Oglala as originally built had a steel hull, however most of the new superstructure that was added in 1911 was of wood. When taken over by the navy in 1917 the ship was extensively altered during the conversion to a minelayer.*] Well, the

wooden part, the seams all gave way and then the water came into the *Oglala*, and she started to [*sink*]. But since she was tied to the *Helena*, she only can go so far, because the lines were holding up there. But then she was leaning on the *Helena*, and I could hear the, 'til today I can hear the skipper of the *Helena* screaming. He said, "Get this bucket of bolts off of my ship!" (Laughs)

JL: How much time went by from when you first saw the first explosion and when the *Oglala* was...

EC: Well, it must have been about five minutes or so. You know, time is all compressed there for—about ten minutes there, everything is compressed. Things are happening, you don't know what's happening first. But I know it was about three to five minutes after the battleships got hit with the torpedoes and then the *Helena* got hit. And...

JL: And what did you do? What did you do at that point? Were you watching, still watching or...

EC: I was watching, but it scared me, then I ran back and they got [*behind*] this portable rigging shack. You know, that's the one with the chain foils. So I ran back over there and I was looking to see what's going on.

Now the Marine guard at the gangway, I looked out there and he was flat, you know. Just laying there flat. I don't know if he was killed or injured, but anyway, I looked around and I saw a break and I ran up to him. And I started talking to him, you know. He wasn't answering. Then I feeling for a pulse, he had no pulse.

JL: What happened to your other pipe fitter buddies?

EC: The other pipefitter, now then, he was a retired navy chief and if you know any retired navy chief prior to Second World War, most of them were five feet six and five feet two. You know? So he had a gut—he looked like he was about twelve months pregnant. (Laughs) He had a big gut. But so he ran back to the rigging shack and he stayed there, you know. So I ran out to the guard and I checked him. I came back, I said, "Dan, I think he's dead." I said, "I got no pulse and he won't answer me."

Then about that time the *Arizona* got hit. And you see that big plume going up, you know, and that concussion was awful. Whoom! I felt it right across the channel. I felt it. 'Cause I'm standing in the open, the concussion. But that was the loudest noise I ever heard and I was deaf, I was semi-deaf for about two, three hours. Could hardly hear anything. Of course then it slowly came back.

JL: So you felt the impact from the rush of the air, the rush in the atmosphere?

EC: Yes, the air. The air. It was terrific. I talked to some of the sailors on the *West Virginia* and *Tennessee* and it blew 'em right off the ship. And then, of course they put the fire out on the *West Virginia*. The *West Virginia* was having some fire there. That concussion put the fire out on the *West Virginia*. That's what the guy told me. He said, "Fire went out." He said, "So we lucked out on that," but he told me, he said, "I got blown completely off the ship into the water."

But he was blown towards Ford Island side, so he just swam to Ford Island. So he was one of the fortunate ones.

JL: Now, how did it get to the—I understand that you were involved in helping some people out of the water. How did it get to that point?

EC: Okay. Prior to the *Arizona* going up, the liberty launches, you know they were ready before eight o'clock because eight o'clock, they were supposed to pick those people up and take 'em on the mainland for liberty. So as soon as this thing started, the liberty launches, they could see all the sailors in the water so they went out there and they start picking the sailors up. Now they had egress to Ford Island because they could run up to Ford Island. But when the *Arizona* blew up, the whole water caught on fire. The oil on the water caught on fire, so they couldn't take nobody to Ford Island. So they start coming over to the 1010 dock. Now the 1010 dock where they off-loaded the sailors who were on the regular liberty, it was a little platform and you had steps going up there. Now with all these ships coming here, it would've been a traffic jam and of course some of them were injured. Some of them had leg injuries. They couldn't climb it. Now, if they start climbing it, they would've just blocked all traffic. So the ships, they came around, see

these—this place was in front of the *Helena*, so they came in back of the *Helena*, where we were. And I saw guys trying to climb up the...

JL: Pier.

EC: ...pier, because the liberty [*launches*] are low, you know. And they were standing up on (clears throat) the front. They were trying to climb up. So I'm standing there. I said, "Hey, those guys need help."

So I ran over there and tried to help 'em, because you can't do this. So I laid on my stomach and I pulled 'em up and of course some of those guys were heavy. I only weighed 125 pounds. And some of the guys were heavy. So when I pull 'em up and I call back. I said, "Dan, come give me a hand." I said, "Sit on my leg or something!" You know. He weighed about two...

JL: Is this the big guy?

EC: Yeah. But [*Dan Dunn*] he weighed about 250. So I said, "Come sit on my leg!" I said, "I don't want to fall in the water!"

So then, we were pulling them up, because I was the only one pulling them up, because some of the sailors got off of the *Oglala* and they had come ashore. And the ones we pulled up, some of them were okay, so they were helping. There were about, oh, half a dozen of us pulling guys up. So I pulled up about thirty. I think roughly about thirty. But the first ones I pulled up, they were okay. They just wet or just had oil on them. Most of them were scared.

And then of course, when the fire, the oil caught on fire, what happened was the people in the water, they were getting burned. So you had all different degrees of burns coming in. So the first burnt ones were not too bad, but the last batch, they were burnt all over here, their face and everything. And how I going to pick 'em up? They put their hand up and you could see—you see the scenario? I grab their hands, and skin come off like a Playtex glove. And they scream! So I just dropped 'em back. Oh, I can still hear a couple of them screaming. It's pain—you know, a burn is painful anyway. You know, so you grab a guy like this and you pull 'em. I try to pull 'em up and all the skin come off. So anyway...

JL: Were you able, were they able to get lifted up, do you remember?

EC: Yeah, because then the sailors in the ship, they turn 'em upside down, put his feet up.

JL: So you would grab their feet?

EC: Yeah. And then right after that is when [*Rear*] Admiral [*William R.*] Furlong came back to the ship and he commandeered the tugs. [*Note: One of the tugs that assisted was the Balboa of Standard Dredging Company, under the command of George Nakamoto.*] They hooked up and then they cut the line, and then they—of course, when they were doing that, we had to quit because they were moving the *Oglala* in back of the *Helena*. When they pull it up there now, [*Rear*] Admiral Furlong was still on the ship and the thing was rolling over. He rolled—he just jumped off the main deck and he kind of got on the side of the keel here. And as it rolled over, rolled over, and then he jumped off into the, one of the tugs or one of the launches and he never got wet! His uniform, white uniform was just like the day he put it on!

JL: He had on his whites?

EC: He had on his whites 'cause he was going to go to church, see. That's why his staff car was there with the driver. He was going to go to church. Now the church is only two blocks away, but admirals don't walk to church, you know. They ride cars! (Laughs)

JL: So do you remember what happened after that? Do you remember how the day went from that point on?

EC: Yeah, what happened with that, we got strafed from the Japanese fighter planes, 'cause the fighter planes had no opposition. You know, we had, we sent a few airplanes up, but their action was at Haleiwa Field and the one, Bellows, they went to the Koolaus. They were fighting there. But there was no American planes over Pearl Harbor. There was only Japanese planes. So the fighter pilots, they didn't have nothing to do. So they [*flew*] around and they just start strafing anything they see, you know. They happened to see

all the sailors laying there and then of course, activity where you're trying to move the *Oglala*. So they came down, they were strafing the *Helena*. And of course some of them were strafing the docks and I imagine they killed probably fifty percent of the sailors. They shot 'em up, you know.

And we stayed there and helped get the *Oglala* moved and then trying to help the injured sailors, because see, the worst thing about it was this is Sunday and most of the sailors, they wanted a smoke. They wanted a cigarette. There was no cigarettes. I didn't smoke. Dan was a chain smoker. He came down there with half a pack and he smoked that—he's like a chimney, one after the other. And there was no place you can get cigarettes. There's no vending machine then. The only place that sold cigarettes was the cafeteria, was two blocks away, next to the admin[istration] building, and they don't open Sunday! And the poor guys, they were screaming, "Give me a butt! Give me a butt!"

Nobody had any. And then of course, then the sun was coming up and on that concrete 1010 dock, which is six feet deep, thick, and the sun was just heating that up like a frying pan. And here's these guys with burns, laying there, it's getting hot, the sun is hitting on them, there's no water, there's no cigarette. I mean, they were in a pile of hurt. Nothing we could do so finally I told Dan, I says, "Dan, I'm going to run into one of the shops and get some water for these guys, you know."

Couldn't find any but a couple of dirty buckets, so I kind of rinsed it out and filled the two buckets up, you know, them small little buckets, the regular buckets. I came up there and I give it to the first guy. You know, he dumped the whole thing all over him. He was hurting so bad. He dumped the whole of the thing. He got probably a mouthful of water, you know.

And I was shocked. I said, "Hey buddy." I said, "Don't take it all!"
(Laughs)

And then the second one, I held on to it, you know. I give him the drink, but you know, they were grabbing it. They wanted the water on them because they were burning up! The sun was hot and they were burning from both sides. So you know, 'cause they were telling, "Hey buddy, give me a cigarette."

You know, I said, “I don’t smoke. I don’t have any cigarettes.”

So that was the main thing that really hurt me because I couldn’t help them in that aspect, you know. So anyway, after things got settled, right after lunch, Dan said, “Come on, let’s go back to the shop, see what’s happening.”

So we walked toward the shop and I don’t know if you heard of this Tai Sing Loo, he was the official navy photographer. He gets written up in all these books. He was trying to get fire hoses there so he can hose down the *Pennsylvania*, where the ammunition locker was between the one and two turret, you know, the elevator would bring it. So he was trying to hose it down because the *Arizona*, I mean the *Pennsylvania* couldn’t get no water, she was in Drydock [*Number 1*].

And then of course the *Cassin* was on the *Downes* and the *Downes* had the—‘cause the *Cassin*, the ammunition, her powder blew up. That’s what split her. But the *Downes* now, they had ammunition there and they were trying to hose that down to keep it wet. So this photographer, he got the old hoses rolled, he unrolled it, and he start putting the hose on the ammunition area. But then these ambulances and trucks would come run over the hose and the hose would split because it was so old. So he’d call—I don’t know, he called some—he knew a lot of high-ranking naval officers, so he’d call an officer and he said, “I need some hoses, fire hoses, right now!”

So they said, “Okay, we’ll see what we can do.”

So they rounded up some and then he says, “We also need a carpenter down here to build a bridge,” so that the hose, when they go over, it doesn’t, you know, smash the hose.

So of course the carpenter shop was just up the street, so the carpenter, he happened to come down and he put his, the lumber there, he put his nail and hammer down. And they were waiting for the hose. And the Japanese coming down, they were strafing and that carpenter took off. They never seen him again ‘til today! (Laughs) _____. But he took off.

And so we were walking back to the shop and this Tai Sing Loo, he grabbed...

JL: Did you say that this was after lunch?

EC: Yeah, just after lunch. No, we were down there for almost four hours, you know, down at the 1010 dock because having to move the *Oglala* and then...

JL: And then you saw a Japanese plane? Did I hear you say...

EC: Oh yeah. Japanese planes all over the place. Because the torpedo planes took off, but you had the bombers flying around then you had the fighters flying around [*till about 1000.*]

JL: Still that late in the day? Okay.

EC: So there were quite a few planes there, but about noontime everything was settled already, you know. The Japanese had gone but there were still fires to put out, shrapnel to move away so that the ambulance and the transportation, you know—because you know, you get big pieces of shrapnel and all kind of metal there that they can't move. So _____ they had to move that out of the way. So we did. So it took us 'til about twelve o'clock, to little after twelve, it got settled and we walked down there and that's where I got caught for—he told me, he said, "Take the hose and hook it up," you know.

I run the hose to the fire hydrant and hook it up. And then we turned it on. And he told me, he said, "Well, you build a bridge here so they don't run over it."

So I—there was lumber here and nails and hammer so we built a bridge and then after we got that done, he said, "Grab a hose," you know, and then I'm shooting on the *Pennsylvania*, you know, at the, between the number one and two turret. That's where your powder was, down below there.

So I'm shooting. He said, "Just keep it on there," he said. "We don't want that to blow up because,"—now I don't know how he knew so much because if that powder in the *Pennsylvania* blew up, that dry dock would have been demolished, and that's the only dry dock we had. The big dry-dock. The

number two drydock was not finished yet. It was about three-quarters way completed. And the only other dry dock we had was a floating drydock [YFD-2], where the *Shaw* [and yard tug *Sotoyomo*] was, and it got hit the same place as the *Arizona* and the *Cassin*, right in the ammunition area. So the *Shaw* blew up. Of course, that's the famous picture you see in all the books.

JL: Now...

(Conversation off-mike)

JL: I understand at some point during the day, you had the opportunity to see the captain of one of the mini-sub's that was captured?

EC: Yes, yes, yes, yes. So that was the next day actually.

JL: The next day.

EC: The next day. The next day. I worked there 'til Tuesday afternoon before I went home. So I stayed there all day Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. You know, I left at five o'clock. And when I walked in the house, you know, my family thought I was dead, because we couldn't use the phone. Martial law was declared you couldn't use the phone. You couldn't do nothing. So I couldn't get word to my family that I was okay, so when I walked in the house, you know, they almost dropped dead. Yeah. My mother almost had a heart attack. She thought I was a ghost.

But anyway, so the next day, we happened to be working down on the *Helena*. I was in that same area there. And then of course, they brought [Ensign *Kazuo*] Sakamaki down there and had taken him to Bellows [Field] headquarters, MP headquarters, and they couldn't get head or tails out of him 'cause nobody spoke Japanese. So they took him to Fort Shafter, same thing happened. And when they got to Fort Shafter, one of the army guys says, "Well, this is not our problem. He's a sailor. Send him to the navy yard, send him to Pearl Harbor."

So they sent him to Pearl Harbor, district headquarters and of course, nobody spoke Japanese there because they had fired every Japanese person

from Pearl Harbor on December 7. They told them not to come back. So they had—nobody could speak Japanese. So when they came to there, they didn't know what to do, so they put him in the truck and they said, "Take him around and see if you can get somebody to interview him or debrief him," whatever.

And as they came to the 1010 dock, they gave up, so they dumped him off and he had on a Marine fatigue, you know, fatigue. Now this guy is five feet two and this fatigue fit a guy about six feet two, you know. He was inside about drowned in it. But anyway, then they had the big, in white letters they had P-W painted on his back. Now, it's supposed to be POW, but at that time it was P-W, public worker. (Laughs) But it was prisoner of war.

JL: Prisoner of war.

EC: And then they had this Marine had his rifle with his bayonet, he had 'em in Sakamaki's back and told him to run. And the poor guy ran and the long cuffs unroll and he tripped over himself, he fell flat on his face. He got up and he pulled his pants up. He ran, fell. He fell down three times before he got [off the] 1010 dock. And then they finally run to the Marine brig at Marine [Barracks] there at Pearl Harbor. So that's the last I saw of him.

JL: Do you have any other memories of that time that you'd like to share with us? That stand out in your mind?

EC: Well, now we stayed at the *Pennsylvania*, we were hosing it down. Of course, there was a conflict there. The dockmaster was a civilian and they had a navy officer as a counterpart. Now the dock master wanted to flood the drydock because the *Cassin* caught on fire and it was burning there, because it was burning up his dry dock. Now the naval officer said, "No, you flood it," he said, "we'll sink the *Pennsylvania*," because it had it's screws off in her main shaft. They were going to change the main bearing so she had a couple of big holes back there and if they flood the drydock, you know, you flood the whole ship. It would be sunk there.

So anyway, they argued for a long time and then finally they came to a compromise. And what they did was they flooded the drydock 'til the *Pennsylvania* just lifted off the blocks. And that saved the *Cassin* and the

Downes because they would've come up, they would've just buried the, submerged the *Cassin* and the *Downes*. So anyway, but they were kind of glad they got the *Pennsylvania* off 'cause she was firing her five-inch guns and she was sitting on the blocks, and not good for your keel, you know. So that part, and then of course we worked around there 'til the sun set. And then they of course, the blackout had been imposed, so the whole island was blacked out except for the burning ships and they had set up floodlights alongside the number one drydock. That's the only light was on all of Oahu. 'Cause they wanted to put the shaft back and get the *Pennsylvania* where they can float it, so do something with the *Pennsylvania*.

So we stayed there 'til sunset and of course, about this time, the five scout planes from the *Enterprise* were coming in. And of course every military person there had a rifle and some had a sidearm piece. And of course, when they came in, and then they heard it and they doused the lights. So the island was completely blacked out except for the burning ships. So they homed in on the burning ships. And when they came over the drydock, hell broke loose. There must have been a million rounds went off the same time. I could tell you the story of the planes, but out of the six planes, five were shot down. Three were killed.

JL: This was at night?

EC: I beg your pardon?

JL: At night?

EC: Yes. We shot 'em down because they thought it was the Japanese because it was dark. They couldn't identify it. And they came down, what they did was they came over the number one dry dock and they turned on their landing lights. So it was a big target and you know everybody just—it must have been 50,000 people shooting at that plane. And the first one got through, because our aim was real bad. Yeah, the first one got through. And he got through and he turned and he went to Wheeler [*Field*]. And he went to Wheeler and he got shot down by the Wheeler people.

Now the second one, he come in and he was badly shot up and he went over the backside of Ford Island and he landed at Pearl City. And he demolished the hotel there. It was called the Palm Inn.

And then the third one—now the aim of these people down on the ground were improving. So the third one came in and he got clobbered. And he crashed where the golf course is on Ford Island, as you come on Ford Island. By the bridge, there's a golf course there and he crash-landed there.

Now the fourth guy, he somehow snuck through. He was badly damaged and he turned around and he landed at Barbers Point. He landed Barbers Point. He crash-landed at Barbers Point and he...

JL: And this was the evening of the seventh?

EC: Yes. Yes.

JL: And these were flights from?

EC: *Enterprise*, the *Enterprise*.

JL: The *Enterprise*.

EC: The carrier *Enterprise*.

(Conversation off-mike)

END OF TAPE #1

TAPE #2

EC: He was pretty well shot up and he turned around and headed for Barbers Point. And he crash-landed just before he got to Barbers Point, so he got his parachute and he started walking to the airstrip there. And of course, they were firing at him like mad! And he said, "Hey, don't shoot at me! I'm American!" (Laughs)

I mean, it was so dangerous that with everything blacked out, if the people heard any noise, they would fire. They don't care. They were told to fire at will. Of course, my name was Will, William Chun. I changed it to Ed Chun because they said, "Fire at will," you know, I didn't want to get killed.
(Laughs)

JL: So you were still on duty at that time?

EC: Yes.

JL: And you didn't go home for three days?

EC: Three days, yeah.

JL: And your family didn't know what had happened to you?

EC: No. We couldn't use the phone. Martial law, they took everything away from us.

JL: What did they go through during that period?

EC: Well, they were just worried what happened to me because they couldn't get word, I couldn't get word to them and they just sat there and waited, I guess.

JL: Did they observe any of the events?

EC: No. They saw like the rest of them. They saw the planes up there and they could see the smoke, but you know everybody saw that, you know.

JL: I know you had mentioned observing the construction of a tug.

EC: Yes.

JL: And during what period was that?

EC: Well, this was—see, I started the apprenticeship program 1 April. And we all went to school the same time, the different trades. We went to school at the same time and we'd be talking, see. And these shipwrights and boat

wrights, they'd say, "Oh, you know, we got a project. We're building a tug."

And their shop and their place where they built the boat was just up from our shop. And I passed that every day because the train used to stop in front of that administration building. It came from town, stopped at administration building. Then we'd walk the one block and a half down to our shop. But when we walked there, we had to pass the boat builders' shop and then right there along the road they'd have the big hangar, the tug was in it. They were building it.

JL: Do you know what class it was?

EC: Yeah, he told me it was [*Hoga*] class. And I don't know what the name of it, but (clears throat) they were building it. I observed it every day. (Coughs) And a fellow asked me if I knew what the name of it. I said, "No, I don't know what the name of it." [*Note: This tug was the Yonaguska (YT-195),*]

He asked me if I was part of the building. I said, "No." 'Cause I said, "I seen it every day!" (Laughs)

You know, every day, but I never—we had no part in it because it was a project of the boat builders and the shipwrights.

JL: So how long were you in Hawaii, working for the navy as a pipefitter?

EC: Well, I worked there 'til 1943, the middle of '43, and then that's when the army wanted to draft us. There was about 2000 of us that were eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty-one. But the navy didn't want to release us because they were short on manpower and here comes the army, they want to take 2000 and mostly were apprentice. Of course, we were trained. You know, they had a lot of what they call laborer help, was that kind OJT [*on the job training*]. That's gofers, you know, go get this, go get that. But as an apprentice, you get more training and you had more on the hands-on work.

So here comes the army, want to take all of us. You know, we had anywhere from eighteen months to two years of experience. Most highly

trained young people, you know, the army wanted to take us in the army. So the navy, they argued back and forth. Finally the navy told them, they says, one Friday they told them, he says, “Monday, we’ll hash this out.” He said, “We’ll get this all squared away.”

So what happened was Saturday they put us in navy reserve. (Laughs) And we had the same job, but we were navy reserve. They assigned us to a barracks and they assigned us to—I was assigned to a [tug], the [USS] *Robin* [ATO-140]. And but we had to go on the ship, take a trip once a month, you know, but it was just to—minimum requirements, you know. But we did our job there.

So after eleven months, the army, they figured they got snookered, you know, and they were. I mean they were mad with the navy, you know. I thought they were going to have a third world war right there! (Laughs)

So anyway, finally they convinced somebody in Washington, D.C., the Pentagon, that the navy had us long enough, it’s time for the army and that’s what happened. So they had to give us up. So one Saturday, at noon, they discharged us from the naval reserve and at 12:01, we was inducted into the army. (Laughs) And we went up to Schofield [Barracks] and took seventeen weeks of basic. And then they tried to get us someplace, you know. And every place we went, nobody wanted us. We stopped at Fort Kam[ehameha]. We stayed there two—Fort Kamehameha—for two months. Nobody wanted us. They shipped us to Camp Knight, Oakland. We stayed through a month, month and a half. Nobody wanted us. They shipped us to Chicago and we stayed in the stockyard for three [days]—three days and three nights, and we didn’t want it!

So then they shipped us to Greensboro, North Carolina. We got there and the base commander didn’t want us. He sent us to Goldsboro, North Carolina. But good thing Goldsboro was a base that they had almost evacuated. Just had a housekeeping crew. And we got there, the lieutenant said, “Sure,” he said, “we got all empty barracks here.” He said, “Go help yourself. Sleep any barracks you want.” You know, he said go draw some linen.

So we stayed there a while and then finally they got tired of us because they had to cook for us, 2000 of us and they had housekeeping crew. The cook was really up in arms, you know. He said, "Gee, I'm supposed to cook for only about forty people. I'm cooking for 2040 people!"

So they sent us back to Greensboro and then they kept us for a week and then they didn't want us so they sent us to Camp [Kilmer], [New] Brunswick, New Jersey. And we got there and that was the port of embarkation or—not embarkation, but it was where they got people in and out, processing center.

JL: Oh, induction.

EC: Induction.

JL: Induction center?

EC: Induction, yeah. So we were kind of lost there, you know. So every day we go up there, answer roll call at eight o'clock in the morning. They said, "Get lost. Come back tomorrow, eight o'clock."

You know, so we'd catch the Greyhound bus. We'd go to New York City and we'd wind up in Coney Island, spend the whole day in Coney Island. You know, and then when it got dark, we'd go to Times Square and live it up and then catch the last bus back to Camp [Kilmer], New Jersey. We did that for two months. (Laughs)

JL: Now you eventually went onto retire from the [Air Force] as a...

EC: Yeah...

JL: ...master sergeant?

EC: ...well finally we got to Brooklyn Navy Yard and then they shipped us over to Europe, 'cause took us twenty-one days to get there because we had to zigzag because of the submarines. And then we got to Le Havre, France; the army air force had bombed the hell out of that place. It was just one pier left. Only one side could be used because the other side had sunken ships

and the whole harbor had all sunken ships. So we came in there, we parked and there was about twenty ships ahead of us. And they told us, “You going be here for thirty days on that ship before you can offload.”

So we stayed there and then I think we were about three before we—it was two ships ahead before we offload and the war ended.

JL: Oh.

EC: And then of course I went to Munich. I went to Munich for my first station and the first thing I did, the first day I had off, I went up to Dachau, the concentration camp. And they were trying to clean it up. It was still kind of bad yet because well, I went in there and then you open the crematorium, you can see all the bones in there where they were burnt. And then you went into the place where they slept and it was just wooden racks. Wooden racks like you store canned goods, you know, and these guys were laying there, you know. And then they had—some of them had carved their name in the post. Some of them had carved their—they all had a number. They carved the name or the number.

JL: Did you see any people there?

EC: No, no.

JL: Had they...

EC: They had released them all, but they didn't have it cleaned up yet. We saw, like we saw bones and we saw some of the other equipment. Well, they closed it and left it, you know. But I went through there and I looked at the sleeping conditions. You can see the names and the numbers that they had tattooed on them. And then of course, I stayed in Munich there but then we opened Wheelus Air Force Base in Tripoli, Libya, because they had closed it after the war. And then they made a mistake so they reopened it. After they took everything out of it, we had to ship, fly everything back.

And then late '46, that's when the Jews start fighting the Arabs. So our whole squadron of eighteen planes, we went down to the island of Cyprus. We stood by there because we were supposed to evacuate the American

civilians in case they got endangered. They never got in danger. Anyway, we stayed there for sixty days. And we toured the little island of Cyprus. I know it better than I know Oahu. (Laughs)

But anyway, then when that was finished, the ambassador to Jerusalem, his airplane broke down so they used my airplane, 'cause mine was a VIP airplane, so we went to Tel Aviv and parked our airplane at the disposal of the ambassador, American ambassador there.

JL: How did you get to be on a VIP airplane?

EC: Well, I had a VIP airplane for our squadron commander and the colonels on our base. I had the only passenger planes, the rest were cargo type and all beat up. So they sent me down there because I had the best airplane.

JL: Well, it looks like we only have a few minutes left, so I'm just going to ask you a couple more questions.

EC: Okay.

JL: Okay. And when you come back and visit here and have you been back here a number of times since Pearl Harbor?

EC: Yes, yes, yes.

JL: How often do you come back?

EC: Well, I used to run the elder hostel program, so every week I used to take the group down to Pearl Harbor and then lately, just before I quit, I took 'em to the [USS] *Missouri*. I made about a dozen tours to the *Missouri* and I gave 'em the whole tour for the [USS] *Arizona* Memorial and the *Missouri* tour.

JL: So you were pretty much involved with the events that go on here every year?

EC: Yes. I was hired by Hawaii Pacific University because they had the elder hostel program and I was doing the survivor section of Pearl Harbor. I was

the only one actually. And I did it for nine years. It started as a four-hour lecture and then three hours, two hours.

JL: So after you—so you were in the army [*and air force*] and then you ended up retiring after, in what year?

EC: Twenty-five years. Nineteen seventy. One February 1970, I retired.

JL: And what was your grade and rank?

EC: E-8.

JL: E-8. And so you were in the Vietnam War also?

EC: Yeah. I stayed there because, see, everybody had a thirteen-month tour there. And the PACAF [*Pacific Air Force*] commander, he wanted continuity and guess who the continuity was. (Laughs) So he kept me there and of course, you know, I told the general, I said, “General,” I says, “you know, you scratch my back and I’ll scratch your back.” I said, “I want you to bring my family out here,” because it was, nobody had family in Vietnam.

So he said, “We can’t take your family to Vietnam.”

I said, “No, not Vietnam. Get ‘em here in Philippines, Taiwan, or Okinawa or Japan.”

So he said, “Oh, well, that’s easy!” He said, “Where your family want to go?”

It was not only my family. It was the colonel and the major’s family too. But they were afraid to tell the general all this. I’m an enlisted man. I don’t give a damn. I tell the general anything. (Laughs) I’m kind of an outspoken guy, you know.

JL: Do you have any other particular memories of the date of Pearl Harbor, December 7 that you would like to let us know about in these last couple minutes?

EC: Yeah. There's one thing, see. At 2:30 in the morning after we were at the number one dry dock, you know I hadn't eaten anything since five o'clock that morning. I started getting hungry. Up to that time, I wasn't getting hungry because you were so busy, you know. So I started getting hungry, so I told Dan, I said, "See, we gotta get something to eat, you know."

And he said, "Yeah," he said, "now that you mention it, I'm hungry," you know. So he said, "Well, let's walk back to the shop."

So we walked back to the shop and alongside the shop there was a couple of skiffs there with all the brass. And this brass came off the *Pennsylvania*. It was a thirty-seven millimeter brass. It was an interim anti-aircraft system that was supposed to replace the fifty-caliber. But it didn't work out. Eventually they scrapped the whole thing and they came up with the forty-millimeter. And guess who they sold the—they must have had millions of shells. Guess who they sold the shells to? They sold 'em to the U.S. Army. (Chuckles)

JL: Oh.

EC: And they used 'em on their tanks. See, they put 'em on their tanks that fought in North Africa with Rommel and Patton. So anyway, I picked up two and I took 'em in the shop and I put it in my locker. And I forgot it for about a year and a half. When I went into the Navy they told me to clear my locker up, then I found it, but that's besides the—but anyway, we went to the shop, you know, and we walked in the shop and then here's a couple of long tables. They got these navy, you know these coffee jugs, the stainless steel one. You know, hold about, what, forty gallons or something? And they had two jugs there. In the middle was a pile of sandwiches, see. So old Dan says, "Hey Ed, get me four sandwiches and get me two cups of black coffee. I'm going to wash my hand," you know.

I said, "Okay."

He said, "Pick some good sandwiches."

I said, "Okay."

So I went there. He went to wash his hand. I went there, you know. I got two cups of black coffee. I got myself one cup of coffee. And I was looking through the sandwiches, you know. I'll be damned, every one was ham and cheese. So I picked up four ham and cheese, I put it for him and I got two for himself. He come back, he said, "Oh boy. I'm telling you, I'm hungry," you know.

He picked the sandwich up, you know. He says, "You don't hear very good, do you?"

I said, "Pick you up four good sandwiches." I said, "Dan you got four of the best sandwiches they got."

He said, "Hell, these are ham and cheese!"

I said, "They're all ham and cheese!"

And you know we ate ham and cheese for three days, with coffee! I didn't have a bowel movement because I was so constipated! (Laughs) It was awful!

JL: Okay, well on that note...

(Laughter)

JL: Do you have any other questions you would like to ask? Okay. If you've anything else to offer will that...

EC: Well, that's the whole part of it. There's a lot more, but I'm getting off the...

JL: Yeah. Well, thank you for coming to talk with us.

EC: Okay. Unless you got any more questions, because I could answer.

JL: No, I think we're okay. Thank you.

EC: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW