

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW**

**#390**

**HAROLD RAY CLINE**

**FORD ISLAND NAVAL AIR STATION**

**INTERVIEWED ON  
DECEMBER 5, 2001  
BY JUDITH LAFLEUR**

TRANSCRIBED BY:

CARA KIMURA

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**USS *ARIZONA* MEMORIAL  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**Judith Lafleur (JL):** The following oral history interview was conducted by Commander Judith L. Lafleur, United States Naval Reserve, for the National Park Service, USS *Arizona* Memorial, at the Ala Moana Hotel in Waikiki, Hawaii, on December 5, 2001, at 3:15 p.m. The person being interviewed is Harold Ray Cline, who was a cook striker at the Naval Air Station, Ford Island, on December 7, 1941. Good afternoon.

**Harold Ray Cline (HC):** Good afternoon.

JL: For the record, would you please state your full name, place of birth and your birth date?

HC: I was born in 1923, Adrian, Missouri. My name is Harold Ray Cline, spelled with a "C."

JL: Thank you. What did you consider to be your hometown in 1941?

HC: I entered the navy when our family lived in Carmel, California and I was recruited at Salinas, California and I swore to be in the navy at San Francisco.

JL: And what year was that?

HC: Nineteen forty-one.

JL: And what are your parents' names?

HC: My father's name was Lewis Earl Cline. My mother, Zella Agnes Cline.

JL: And just a couple of other questions about your family history. How many brothers and sisters do you have?

HC: I'm a middle child. There were five older and five younger. So there was eleven of us.

JL: And where did you go to high school?

HC: I never finished high school. I last went to high school at Carmel, California.

JL: How old were you when you joined?

HC: I was seventeen years old. I went on a kiddie cruise, they called it.

JL: Thank you. Okay, so why did you decide to go into the military?

HC: I, well, I didn't fit in. I thought at my age, when I was young, I had some health problems and I was two years behind everyone else in my age group. And so I twisted my family's arm and my mother said if I studied when I was in the navy or get some kind of education, she'd sign for me. And of course, then I said, 'Oh, I'd do that!' so that went—by the way, there are a few things that happened, and that was on December 7 that we were interrupted in our lives for the whole United States when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

JL: What did you—what brought you—what did you do in the navy before you actually went to Hawaii?

HC: I went through training at San Diego, California. We were originally signed for a twelve-week, they cut it the first [I] day was there to eight weeks. I finished the eight weeks, they gave us a week to go home and visit the family and then they put me on a ship and shipped me off to Pearl Harbor.

JL: Do you remember what day you arrived in Honolulu?

HC: It was around March 20, in that [time] frame. And then they sent me through the—oh, I can't remember the name, where they assigned you to where they wanted us people that were fresh out of training. And they said my aptitude would be good for engineering, so they put me in the kitchen, which is called the galley in the navy.

JL: Do you remember what you did on December 6?

HC: December 6, we probably cooked the regular fare that was on the menu and seeing I was just learning how to cook, I don't remember what I was

assigned to do. I was probably given a lot of small things because I was just learning and I was probably good at stirring things and keeping an eye on things.

JL: You were on duty on December 6?

HC: Yes.

JL: And were you on duty on December 7?

HC: I got up at four a.m. like the rest of the cooks and got breakfast ready and we were just finishing serving the food to our personnel when we started hearing a big bunch of noise outside, the bombs and everything. And we knew that there had been some practicing and things like that during the summer, but we went out on the back porch to take a quick look at what was going on in the sky, and here come an airplane at us with her guns going, so we all dashed inside. It left their mark on the building and so we were all lucky that none of us received any injury from that, from flying debris or the bullets.

And then the, oh, the confusion and the bombing and everything cut off our power, so what we were fixing for noon meals sat there. And then they asked us to get clothing out of all the lockers that were in our building, 'cause they used all the clothing that was in the warehouse for supplies, 'cause the people that were coming off the ship come off with an inch maybe more [of] oil and things and they had to be cleaned off and cleared down to nothing. And then we had to give 'em everything from nothing outward, and that's what we did.

JL: Now, before we get to that point, do you remember incidents occurring during...

(Conversation off-mike)

JL: So before we get to the point where you were getting clothing, do you remember any other specific information about the attack and what you observed?

HC: I can't remember any information given to us inside the galley.

JL: Could you see out from the galley?

HC: No. We could hear the bombs going off. We could feel the shudders of the ground, like a small earthquake and stuff. And that's about all I can remember as far as the noise that...then they were starting to bring personnel in, putting them in half of our eating area. They had 'em on the floor, on the bench, and on the table.

JL: These are all injured personnel?

HC: Injured or people that need[ed] cleaned off. Some of 'em had so much oil on them, they couldn't maneuver by themselves. So they had to be placed where they could be taken care of.

JL: How many other cooks were there there?

HC: I'd have to guess more or less and [use] the formula that they would use for that many people, there was probably about twenty to thirty people on duty that day and a few of us were apprentice cooks or food strikers they called us, and we had to help out all the main cooks and learn as much as we could.

JL: Do you now remember how many people they brought in, approximately?

HC: No. Well, that mess hall or dining area was not quite a block long and they took one-half of it to put the injured people and of course I went off up into the building to get the clothing out of lockers, and we stripped all the ones that didn't have locks on 'em first, brought that down and then [they] sent us back with lock cutters. And we opened up the lockers and took out all the clothing they had and some of the personnel complained that they had special uniforms made when they were back in the States. That didn't matter. We got every bit of clothing that we could find 'cause these people needed it. When I brought one load down, I saw a sailor...it still hurts!

JL: It's okay.

HC: He was burnt clear to the bone! That was wiped out for forty years before I could talk about it. At this late date, it still hurts. But...

JL: Take your time.

HC: Anyway, we kept going back, getting all the clothing we can, 'cause that was a three-story building above us. And they'd used all the clothing they had in their supply rooms already. And then they started getting calls for food for different areas. And from the control tower, for airplanes, they got a request for some sandwiches or something to eat. And then they wanted somebody to go out and take it over to 'em. It was still air raid time outside. They asked me to take it over. I says, "As soon as I find me a hat to put on," (clears throat) "I'll take it over."

So I scurried around and found me a hat. Some people ask me, "Well, why did you do that, ask for a hat?"

Well, we'd been hammered into us, they catch you outside without a hat on, you were out of uniform and the penalty was you'd lose a liberty. And of course, a young sailor like me, we didn't want to stay on base any longer than we needed to, so that was a lesson learned way ahead of time. And they joked around about it for I don't know how much time afterwards.

But that was delivered to the tower and I got back without any action against me or scars or hurt from the enemy. Then the next thing I knew, that I was requested to help work in a field kitchen, out in [a] warehouse that was not quite a block long, and we'd...

JL: Is this in the same, near the mess hall?

HC: About a, I would say about a block and a half away. close to the battleship *California*, set out there, at its mooring, with its damage.

JL: And this, just to be clear for the record, this is all on Ford Island?

HC: Yes. And of course most of the people came on Ford Island to get out of the water because we were the closest land. And the field kitchen, we had these, well, the pots were about half as big as round as this table and they were

fifty-gallon pots that sat in a Coleman stove run by gasoline. The principle for the Coleman stove was same as those little ones you take camping with you. And I had been trained as a Boy Scout how to operate one of those and no one else would admit knowing how to run one. So they had me do that most of the time. And we fed a continuous line of food to those that came off the ship or got in the line to eat, whether they were navy, military, civilian, if they wanted to eat, all they had to do is get in line. And we fed them two types of meals, from about four a.m. 'til ten a.m., it was a breakfast type meal. From then on, it was stew or something in that order that you would ordinarily get at a noon meal or evening meal. And...

JL: So this started at about four a.m. on the eighth?

HC: Well, that's what—no, no. That was Sunday afternoon.

JL: So you started in the afternoon and carried through?

HC: We carried it through 'til Wednesday afternoon because they shut it down at Wednesday afternoon about four p.m.

JL: And how much of that time were you on duty?

HC: The whole time.

JL: The whole time.

HC: Because, well, I think they took advantage of me 'cause they wouldn't even keep the air pumped into the stoves and they'd run out of air and I'd say, "This is all you have to do, is open the valve, pump it and shut it."

And I guess I wasn't forceful enough, being as young as I was. But anyway, I kept them going, filling them full of fuel and helped out a little bit. And I have to give the bakery a good pat on the back. They furnished us with those nice big loaves of fresh bread. They weren't sliced, but a person coming along, if they wanted a piece of bread, they could have a whole loaf if they'd eat it. But we usually sliced 'em a good hefty slice and if they wanted more, they could have all they wanted. And especially when we had a stew or soup type dish that they were going to eat, and this went on

continuously, line night and day, until Wednesday afternoon, and then they closed it down.

JL: And this is because they were using the mess hall still for the wounded?

HC: I don't know what they were doing over there, but they got that mess hall going again that evening. They fed 'em an evening meal out of the main mess hall. Now, if they used all of it or part of it, I don't know. I never remember inquiring about that. And I was happy that Wednesday afternoon to go to bed and get a little bit of shuteye after not having very much the whole time.

From where I was at, all we got to see, maybe, we got a breath of fresh air, it's the *California* out there. And 'cause they were coming in from the airfield side of, lining up to come and get food. And so there was a big task and it was amazing how they were able to bring the different things out of the warehouses to us, that we could open her up and feed these people. And we had to have these big barrels full of water to wash the trays that they out of and they had to be rinsed and taken down where they could start all over again.

JL: Can I ask you a question about the clothes that you had to go up and get? Was that out of personnel lockers...

HC: Anybody that had clothes in 'em, we took 'em. Then later on, they were reimbursed for clothing. For my blues, I didn't get reimbursed [*till*] three years later, when I went back to the States at San Francisco. They gave me a chit to take to the supply and they gave me all new blues and everything. And I had to have special stockings then and they were white. In San Francisco naval district, they weren't allowed. They said I'd have to go to the hospital, get a special chit to take care of that. You know, that didn't happen. I wore regular navy blue socks and went on liberty.

JL: So when you finally were able to rest on Wednesday, how long did you sleep?

HC: I couldn't tell you because I had to go to work four o'clock the next morning, 'cause that was my shift. And we had a special type of shift during

the, before the war started, where you work two days and you were off one and [*then well,*] in other words, every other weekend, it worked out where you got a whole weekend off. But then we went to every other day and we'd go to work at four a.m. and work 'til eight. Be off for, 'til twelve or—no, excuse me, twenty-four hours and then you would start the whole thing again. Every other day you would work, have the duty for twenty-four hours.

JL: So when or how, I guess, did your family find out about you, whether or not you were safe?

HC: They didn't find out 'til after Christmas. They got around to giving us little postcards to fill out, telling the family that we were well, we weren't injured or whatever our condition was. And it was mailed to 'em and it was flown by the big clipper to San Francisco, and then from there, it was delivered regularly. And so they found out.

Something that may be interesting, I don't know. My mother had never had a set of silverware and I had shipped her a box of Rogers silverware, a complete set. When it got into San Francisco, they peeled it apart and everything, to look, to see if there was any messages or anything in there, and I still have that set of silverware and the box still shows the results of them looking in behind the lining and everything. Some of the pieces need to be silvered, but that was what my mother used all the time when she was still alive. Then she gave it back to me. One of these days maybe I'll get 'em re-silvered, I don't know. Or maybe my grandchildren will.

JL: Yeah. Or you might want to leave 'em the way they are.

HC: (Inaudible)...

JL: What is it like—I'm sorry.

HC: I was thinking about some of the things that they told us to do on our first liberty after the attack on Pearl Harbor. We had to be back before the, the time, I think, was about six...

(Taping stops, then resumes)

?: Was it carrying over to where you were?

HC: No.

(Conversation off-mike)

JL: No, why don't we continue and then we'll come on to your story. That's all right.

You were telling us an anecdote about liberty.

HC: Oh. There were certain areas that you couldn't go in and the Hotel Street was known for, excuse me, the you-know-what. And that was all closed down for several weeks and Hotel Street was known for its smell and the other things that went on there. So that activity was closed down for a while.

JL: Getting back to the actual attack, were you able to see any of the ships that were hit?

HC: I didn't get to see any of 'em being hit, but when we were making our, oh, moves round down to the warehouse, I could see the *California* burning and the people there trying to put the fire out and whatever else that was going on. The rest of [it] down there, there was so much smoke and things going and there was just—well, we couldn't do—we had to concentrate on getting this chow line going. Yeah.

JL: Did you see any of the strafing going on?

HC: Just when we went out to see what was going on at the very beginning and we decided that it wasn't for us, we were without guns or anything. We couldn't throw our pots and pans at 'em. They couldn't go very far. That's just a joke.

Anyhow, we went back inside and our power got shut off and we couldn't do any cooking or anything, but they did keep it in condition where they were able to use it later on that day to get the evening meal out. They

finished feeding ‘em with going on for that day and they had to get into emergency supplies to keep feeding the ones that needed to be fed.

Now, what went on down there where all the injured people were, I don’t know. ‘Cause they would have to clean up all the oil and take care of the injured ones and the people that died. And of ‘cause, seeing that one person, I was blessed that it was put in a secret place.

JL: How long did you spend in the navy after that?

HC: Well, I was at the beginning of the war and action and at the end, I was at Pearl Harbor on December 7 at Ford Island, and I was the ship’s company there ‘til January of ’43, then they sent me down to Johnson Island, if you know what Johnson Island—he does. You can stand in the middle and spit in both sides, almost.

But anyhow, it was a station where they had PBYS. We went out towards the enemy as far as we could to search for them as a—I don’t know what you would call that particular search, but anyhow, they were looking for Japanese ships...

JL: Reconnaissance.

HC: ...or anything that they were in the air. I rode with ‘em one trip, that was enough for me. Fifteen hundred miles out and 1500 miles back, setting on...

JL: How long did it take?

HC: It took...

JL: Do you remember?

HC: Well, it probably took about ten hours either way and I know I was tired sitting on that cold metal, ‘cause there wasn’t anything except that aluminum bottom in that. [*See, was it*] a PBY-2, something like that. And they still have a lot of them still flying. That’s how good Lockheed made them. [*Note: The aircraft Harold Ray Cline is describing was a PBY-5 or PBY-5A most likely manufactured by Consolidated Aircraft Corp.*]

JL: When did you end up being discharged from the navy?

HC: Well, from Johnson Island I came back to Pearl Harbor and I was at the section base in Hilo for six weeks and they shut that down and they sent me back to Aiea Receiving Barracks. They had three big mess halls there. Each mess hall had the capability of feeding 15,000. The one that I was assigned to, our ordinary amount was 8,500 for each meal, three times a day.

I was acquainted how the navy wanted their food prepared, so they assigned me to one watch. They had what they call two watches. I had thirty-two cooks working for me, under my watch. And then we had about twenty-five people getting the vegetables ready. We had about the same amount getting the meat ready to be cooked. And then all our bakery goods came from the bakery. And we had eight different wings in this feeding area. We'd start out feeding them at 10:30 and we'd be finished by one o'clock for each wave. And for breakfast, the same time and evening meal was the same time that it would take to feed them.

Then I hadn't been back to the States since '41 and I was there 'til July of '44. So I had a friend in transportation, over where they sent immediately people that were traveling, plus we were holding, receiving barracks they called us. And I got on one of them, let's see, B-24s, Liberators. Those made into be a transport and I was flown back to the States, which took twelve hours then. And we landed right above San Francisco and it was cold, man. July, with fog there, and I hadn't had any of that type of weather for that length of time.

Anyhow, we stayed the rest of the evening there. The next day they took us down to Treasure Island for processing and giving us blues that were required in the—I think San Francisco is the Twelfth Naval District.

JL: So this was starting a new tour?

HC: A new assignment.

JL: And when were you discharged?

HC: Discharged April 22, 1946. And...

JL: And what was your rank and...

HC: Ship's cook, first class.

JL: Ship's...

HC: Yeah. They offered me to be a chief commissary steward but I said no.  
"No, I don't think so."

They kept me away from home too much. But I went aboard ship that last year and I was trained, our ship was trained for the invasion of Okinawa. And...

JL: Can you hold that thought for just a moment while we change the...?

END OF TAPE ONE

TAPE TWO

JL: Okay.

HC: There's...[*well*] beings I was at Pearl Harbor when it started. I was aboard [*an attack*] transport [*USS Magoffin*] APA-199 and we took troops into Okinawa and the first casualties weren't many so they sent me back to the States. In that battle though, there were more ships involved than there was invading of Normandy. There were over 5,000 ships involved, according to what they told us at that time. And you could look out over the ocean, out there, you could see the battleships and you couldn't see the aircraft carriers because they were further out. And I saw one battleship get hit by a kamikaze plane and it was just a big fireball that hit that ship, but it kept on fighting. I don't know what eventually happened 'cause they sent us back, 'cause we weren't needed any longer. And we came back to the States and we took troops to the Philippines because they were still fighting in the Philippines. And they asked me every once in a while, "Do you think that the atomic bomb was needful?"

Well, what happened at Okinawa, I would say yes. I lost a brother at Okinawa. There were three of us in the invasion.

JL: Three brothers in the invasion?

HC: Yes. I was on an APA []. My brother just younger than I was on a LST [*Landing Ship, Tank*] loaded with ammunition. And then my brother that was killed was on the [*USS*] *Bunker Hill* [*CV-17*]. It was hit by kamikaze plane and we had five aircraft carriers hit by kamikaze planes in that battle.

JL: I'm sorry.

HC: And there were 700 and some casualties on the *Bunker Hill*. And some of the other carriers had the same amount of casualties from being hit by the kamikazes.

JL: Did that happen while you were there?

HC: No, they sent us out being that we weren't needed any longer. We came back to States and hauled troops to the Philippines and then we went back to the States. We got our last load of troops and that troops I told you about getting the nurses aboard and they wired that off and no male gender was allowed in their area, period. And I still had my duties, being in charge of the galley on, aboard that ship.

JL: At the end of the war, were you aboard ship?

HC: I was aboard the ship. We learned of the, oh, surrender. We were halfway between Hawaii and Okinawa.

JL: What ship?

HC: APA-199, the name the [*USS*] *Magoffin*. It was named after a county in Kentucky. It's up in the hills. And we looked it up and, oh, a couple three years ago and they didn't know they had a ship named after 'em.

JL: And there was a reason why you didn't celebrate too much and what was that? At the end of the war.

HC: Oh, we were out at sea. We were halfway between Okinawa, I mean Honolulu and Okinawa. And of course you weren't allowed to have any beer or anything like that aboard ship.

JL: Were you caught in a storm?

HC: We got caught in a storm at Okinawa and we lost some ships. It blew us within a hundred miles of China and we had waves going over the bridge. The, well, they would break and finish up on the bridge and we didn't have any major damage but there was minor damage. Aboard ship that long, and our...

JL: Was it a typhoon?

HC: Typhoon. And those waves were, oh. I took one look but after that, I stayed down below, 'cause it was too fierce.

JL: Do you have any other memories of the attack on Pearl Harbor that you would like to share with us? Anything that we haven't talked about yet?

HC: I can't remember any more right at the moment, but things come back in spurts at different times, especially when you have conversation with different people. It brings out different thoughts and feelings and the main feeling that I had [*of*] seeing that fellow in the mess hall. I believe the good lord shut my mind down to such actions that I couldn't talk about it for forty years.

JL: Could you remember it?

HC: I could remember that but the rest was just a bunch of oily sailors or laying on the table and such, but I couldn't tell how they were injured or what care they needed. So I kept bringing clothes down as long as there were any clothes to bring down. And but how they cleaned those people up is a miracle.

JL: Do you have any more information that you'd like to share with us?

HC: Well, not really. The main thing is I don't have any hatred for the Japanese because we were hit by military people. We weren't like the thing that happened in New York [*September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center*], where it was strictly against civilians. And we were, well, the military is supposed to be ready to protect itself and if we didn't that was our fault.

JL: Well, thank you so much for sharing all your information with us today.

HC: Well, it's...

JL: It's our honor to share this time with you.

HC: Thank you. I went to see a movie about the movie *Pearl Harbor*. A young lady about fifteen, sixteen came up and hugged me and she was crying. And I told her to remember to tell your children, so I couldn't talk to her any more.

JL: Well, this is all a part of our remembering, so thank you.

HC: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW