

JOSEPH MEDURE  
FORT KAMEHAMEHA, SURVIVOR

#265

INTERVIEWED ON  
DECEMBER 6, 1998  
BY JEFF PAPPAS

TRANSCRIBED BY:

CARA KIMURA

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**Jeff Pappas (JP):** The following oral history interview was conducted by Jeff Pappas for the National Park Service, USS *Arizona* Memorial at the Imperial Palace Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada, on December 6, sorry, 1998 at six p.m. The person being interviewed is Joseph Medure, who was at Fort Kamehameha on December 7, 1941. Joseph, for the record, would you please state your full name, place of birth and the date of your birth?

**Joseph Medure (JM):** Joseph Medure. The date of birth was May 31, 1917.

JP: And you were born?

JM: I was born in the Bronx, New York.

JP: Nineteen, 1917?

JM: Nineteen seventeen.

(Taping stops, then resumes)

JP: So, did you grow up in the Bronx, Joseph?

JM: Yes.

JP: Did you go to school in the Bronx?

JM: Yes.

JP: Tell me a little bit about that, about growing up in the Bronx during the 1920s.

JM: How was it?

JP: Yeah.

JM: It was great times. Even though there wasn't much money around. Well, let's put it this way, I'll get back to the money because the recession—am I right?

JP: Well, the depression...

JM: Yeah, the depression.

JP: ...took place in 1929.

JM: ...took place in 1929, but you got to remember, we were recovering from World War I. There were a lot of soldiers—veterans—that were out of work. There was not any work because they had to convert over to peacetime and lot of them would take all kinds of jobs, like labored, laborers, you know, digging ditches. And but what happened was luckily there was a building boom beginning, putting up new apartment houses in certain areas that there were empty lots and so forth. And it was a good job. The laborers they did all types of work.

Of course, you have bricklayers. Now brick laying is an art. They make good money, for the times.

JP: So there's some work around the Bronx at the time.

JM: Oh, I saw a lot of apartment houses go up.

JP: So lots of construction going on...

JM: Lot of construction.

JP: What did your parents do? What were your...

JM: Well, my dad was worked for the trolley lines, Third Avenue trolley system. He worked as a laborer. And it was a steady job. It was long hours, no benefits. They worked six days a week, nine hours a day, only day off they had was a Sunday. I don't think—yeah, I think they did get one—I think they had—they get July 4 off, but they didn't pay him for the holiday. Christmas off and they didn't get paid. They had no union. And but my dad was a real go-getter.

JP: Did you have any brothers or sisters growing up?

JM: Yeah, I had my younger brother, who is only eighteen months younger than me, and then my older brother, Peter, that, and Anthony. There was—Anthony was the oldest in the family. Then—wait, no, Peter, yeah. Anthony, then Peter, then Viola. Viola was born up in Olean, New York.

Before my father settled in the Bronx, he had gone up to upstate New York where they were building the Erie Canal. And that was done all by labor, hand labor. So he did pretty well, but it was pretty rough. He had, because he had the two boys and had my sister Viola. And he wasn't making enough to support 'em all.

JP: Did your dad ever talk to you about politics?

JM: No, he knew nothing about politics.

JP: Never. Do you remember growing up in the Bronx, those great New York Yankee teams, that wonderful 1927 Yankee team?

JM: Oh yes.

JP: Tell me about them.

JM: Well, my older brother Peter became very interested. See, Peter and—Peter was born in United States and when they were having it rough, see, he sent him and my mother back to Italy. So until he could get really established, then he was sending money for passage back to the States.

JP: Now, who went back to Italy?

JM: Peter and Anthony was already in that place. Anthony was a half-brother.

JP: Okay.

JM: So he was in Italy, he was still in Italy.

JP: Was he born in Italy?

JM: He was born in Italy.

JP: Do you know where?

JM: Calabria. And Peter was born in upstate New York. He was three years old when he went back with my mother.

JP: So are both your parents Italian?

JM: Yes. And so time went by and eventually they had another child, which was Viola. And he was starting to—then he got the job on Erie Canal. See, he didn't have it because he was working for some farm—how can I explain it?

JP: No, that's okay. That's all right. So he went up to Erie and then he came back down to the Bronx with your mother?

JM: Well, the work came out, the paesans found out, some of the paesans found out that the trolley system was looking for laborers.

JP: The paesans, is that a family?

JM: That's, no, paesans are friends, close, come from the same town or village. And so he came down to the Bronx and he got the job on the trolley lines.

JP: With help from his...

JM: With help from...

JP: ...from the friends from the Italian...

JM: Paesans, right. And he had Viola. Now, he settled on Morris Avenue and 183<sup>rd</sup> Street. And the landlord name was Mr. Von POL-HIME, German, wonderful person. And where they lived was an old schoolhouse that dated back to the 1800s. And there was, it had two floors, you know, two sections. But it was pretty warm. It was made of stone, all stone. Meantime they had more children. They had, Francis came along and then Marian. I'm ahead of myself.

JP: Well, how many brothers and sisters did you have total?

JM: Oh, see, oh, Annie, little Anna had died. The epidemic, influenza.

JP: Influenza, 1918?

JM: Yeah, the big worldwide influenza. She was a beautiful little blonde.

JP: And you were about a year old at this time. Right?

JM: I was about a year old, that's all. I was protected. The way you say it, women should nurse their babies because by being nursed, I had the protection. Okay. And so now my mother had—see, I was way ahead of myself. My father had sent my mother money twice or three times and my mother would write back, 'cause she, they were both illiterate. They had people write letters for them. And he told her, "I sent you so much money."

She says, "I didn't get it."

And this happened about a couple of times. So where the heck is this money going? It turned out that she had a sister living with her at the parents, my maternal grandparents. And his, the grandfather was named Joseph. I was named after him. And a sister was living—they were all living in the same house. They were well off. They had olive groves. They used to make oil and sell it to the stores and so forth. P.S., you know, people maybe don't believe in this but I'm a strict Catholic. I say a strict Catholic, I believe in what my mother told me that one night she's in Italy and she woke up, or she thought she was awake and at the foot of the bed was the Virgin Mary. And in her hand, she had an envelope. In Italian, she told her, she recalled her mother's name was Paola. The American version is Paula. Says, "Don't worry, it'll be here in a little while," holding this envelope in her hand.

She says it was so vivid that next day or day later, the postman comes with the mail. So my mother made sure that she got the, met the postman herself, because her sister was taking the money and keeping it, her younger sister.

JP: When did your mother come back to the States?

JM: About—no, she had Peter there and there was Dominic. So she couldn't take—he didn't want to leave, by the way. He was having it pretty good, pretty well off there. So she came back around nineteen, 1907 or 1908.

JP: That's okay. Let's go back down to the 1920s again and you're growing up in the Bronx.

JM: Yeah.

JP: Did you attend high school in the Bronx?

JM: Yes.

JP: Okay, did you graduate from school?

JM: No.

JP: How long did you go, for how many years?

JM: Three years.

JP: And you dropped out...

JM: I dropped out, I wanted to get a job. I was playing ball and all that.

JP: Playing baseball?

JM: Yeah.

JP: So you liked baseball?

JM: Oh yeah.

JP: So you liked the Yankees?

JM: Of course.

JP: Yeah. So you remember those 1927 teams, Gehrig and Ruth?

JM: Oh yeah. I saw Ruth play, all the greats.

JP: At Yankee Stadium?

JM: At Yankee Stadium.

JP: Outstanding. Okay, so now after high school, when did you decide to enlist?

JM: Nineteen, in 1940, see, I had—first of all, this is what happened. In 1936, there was a big snowstorm and everything was tied up. And my father was a very good worker and this Irish supervisor liked him. And they had this, what they called a crane car that used to carry the rails already cut to bring, to replace the old, rusted and corroded rails.

JP: So the trolley lines?

JM: The trolley lines. And they needed someone, a helper. There was a motorman that operated it and had like a crane that could pick up the rail and then swing it over, around and put it down and there'd be the gang would guide it into the spot that was already prepared with the ties. And there was a lot of jealousy because my father got the job. And the reason why he got it because he was a very good worker. He never goofed off or anything like that.

JP: So this is 1936?

JM: No, it was about nineteen—see, I was about six years old.

JP: Oh, so this is 1923, then.

JM: This is about 1923, yeah.

JP: Okay, so when you had gotten through high school and you quit, you had decided to enlist into the armed services.

JM: Well, first what I did was I played with the neighborhood team and we had a very good team. And we were together about five years.

JP: What position did you play?

JM: I started out as an outfielder, centerfield. And we lost one game in five years.

JP: Who was your favorite baseball player?

JM: Who else but Joe D, Joe DiMaggio. And I got an autograph from him when he was stationed in Hawaii. He was at Hickam Field.

JP: He's been in bad health lately but he's doing better.

JM: They say that he's recovering.

JP: He is.

JM: Well, my favorite before Joe was Babe Ruth. I liked Lou Gehrig, he was, boy, he was, he loved to play. He played hard.

JP: Did you play ball in the service? At all? You did?

JM: Yes, oh sure.

JP: What did you, were there organized teams you were involved in?

JM: Yes.

JP: At Pearl?

JM: Yeah. They had the south sector. That was considered the south sector, Schofield Barracks was the north sector.

JP: Did you play centerfield? Did you play the outfield?

JM: I, see, I became an infielder because I—when our team, the neighborhood team broke up, there was a team called the Allentown Red Sox that traveled around, semi-pro. And you get about three dollars a game. Three dollars is

a lot of money. And I had a car that—‘cause I had gotten. See, this is what I was telling you, 1936, my father got sick. He had, because there were, he was in the car barns with another man and they cut the rails. They had a hacksaw about that long, they had to cut it. And all these guys are shoveling snow. (Inaudible )saying he’s got some nerve, and they complained to the straw boss. And I blamed the straw boss for my father’s death.

JP: The straw boss?

JM: Yeah, he was a CALA-BRASE, but he was able to write, read or write. So the other men complained to him, “How come Dominic is in the car barn and we have to shovel snow?”

So my father had pride. He heard this and he says, “Look,” he says, “I’ll go out and help.”

What they used to do, they used to have trucks and they used to put this plywood all the way up, real high, where they could put a good load of snow, shovel up. So the snowstorm, they worked all night, with the snow was really—it snowed like crazy. And they worked all night and then when they had the lunch break, they said, “Come on, let’s go, get a couple of shots.”

My father never drank out, but this time he went. And whiskey is the worse thing to drink in cold weather. And he did, he got—the snow ended and they sent them home. Now from where they were working was about, oh, would take about maybe—well, because of the snow, normally would be, say, forty-five minutes. It took over an hour. And when he got to a point, the trolley car that he was on, got stuck, it couldn’t go any further. So he was about a mile away from home. And the motorman told him, “Hey Dom,” he says, “I can’t go. I’m stuck.”

So he got out, started walking up this Pelham Parkway. Did you mention that you knew something about Pelham Bay?

JP: We had talked yesterday about that and I told you that I didn’t.

JM: No, you didn’t. Well anyway, this Pelham Parkway, a beautiful parkway.

JP: It's in the Bronx?

JM: In the Bronx. From what I understand, I don't know whether someone told me or I read about it, that was the first parkway built in the United States. I'm going back, way back, to the 1800s.

JP: So your father now...

JM: So now he's got to walk and the snow is that deep. And he's walked up, 'cause he could walk up the Pelham Parkway to Williams Bridge Road and then up to where we lived, on Yates Avenue. And now, no sleep, he had the liquor and he got as far, about a half a block away from home and he slipped in this and fell in the snow. And he laid there, he couldn't get up.

Now a woman in the Bronx, she looked out and she saw him laying there. And she knew she didn't know him. She knew he was related, because my aunt had moved to the same block that we lived. So she knew my aunt's family, my cousin Joe, and she called up and said that I think your father has fell in the snow, in front of my house.

So my cousin Joe, the guy was built like a road. He came down and he picked 'em up because my father was fallen asleep. And he shook 'em, "Uncle, Uncle, *tiu*," in Italian, say *tiu*, *tiu*.

Woke 'em up, he picked 'em up and put him over his shoulder and walked him right to his house first. He got him in. They took his outer clothing off. Got some hot coffee. What the hell you call it? I got a blank. The Italian coffee.

JP: Café?

JM: Cappucino. And they made him drink quite a few cups of it until he was a little awake. And he dried off a bit then my cousin got his own dry coat, put it on his back and he walked him up to the house. It was another about five or six houses. And when he got home, naturally my mother took all his clothes off and gave him a hot bath. Dried him off good, put on his long

johns, put him in bed. But he already had caught a fever. And he, what happened was when he had to urinate, he passed blood. That was a bad sign.

We called our family doctor. And Dan, incidentally, knows of this doctor.

JP: This is Daniel Martinez?

JM: No.

JP: Oh, Daniel...

JM: Dan Fruchter.

JP: Dan Fruchter.

JM: Because this Dr. Munsen, for—oh God, why can't I use the same word? He was one of the founders of Union Hospital. Union Hospital at one time was just a frame, was a mansion. And it was at the location just where they are now. And Dr. Munsen was our family doctor.

He drove all the way from Fordham, because they had, the plows were clearing the streets. And he examined him. He saw the blood, he says, "I gotta get him in the hospital."

Well, my father lasted three days. There was no antibiotics in those days, unfortunately. And he died on Washington's Birthday.

Then, well, the company has a policy of hiring offspring of good workers. He had been working for them for about thirty years, close to it. So I got a job with the trolley lines. But I didn't do any labor work. I worked on the grinding crew. It was an apparatus with like cartwheels on it that you swing around and lower it with a crank, lower it down to the track and it cover on the bricks. It would grind it. And it would get the power from the overhead line and pull the trolley car.

JP: So you worked on the grinding crew for...

JM: Yeah, grinding crew.

JP: ...for how many years?

JM: About a year and a half. What happened was I was doing great. I was making—I was the king of the hill. I was making nineteen dollars a week and I was able to buy a car. I was the only guy in the crowd that had a car. And then they voted in a union, the transport workers union. And got a raise up to twenty-three dollars an hour—did I say an hour—no, nineteen dollars a week.

JP: A week.

JM: Twenty-three dollars a week, we got a raise. Then we gonna start to give the benefits, like sick leave and stuff like that. And unfortunately, because I was a junior man, now the company was going to try to get, you know, get back at the union. They're gonna say, "Well, we don't need the people for this job. We don't need anybody for this job."

JP: Well, let me get the chronology straight here.

JM: I got laid off.

JP: You got laid off, 1936, 1937. Your father died in 1936?

JM: Yes, I started work.

JP: So we're in the midst of the depression here.

JM: Yes.

JP: And you're making twenty-two dollars a week.

JM: Yeah.

JP: That's very fortunate.

JM: Very fortunate, right.

JP: So you got laid off as nineteen, what, 1938?

JM: Nineteen thirty-eight, yes, to be exact.

JP: Were you thinking about joining the service at that point?

JM: No. Nineteen thirty-eight, then when I got laid off, I hooked up with this traveling team called the, they called themselves the Allentown Red Sox.

JP: This is a baseball team?

JM: Yeah. They used to travel the tri-state, like New Jersey, Connecticut, Long Island. We'd play night games over there. They had these portable lights.

JP: Night games in 1938?

JM: Yeah. And so I was an outfielder, so I was getting \$3 a game. So I had the car they gave me the gas 'cause I was able to take four guys in the car. So we played quite a few games. We played against the Sing Sing Prison team. That was something. And we went to the, we played this team out in Long Island. We played them a double header.

JP: This Sing Sing team, was that the name of the prison?

JM: Yeah. It was called Sing Sing, Ossining, Ossining, New York. And we also played the Ossining hometown team. And we played this team out in Long Island called the Malverners. It was enclosed, you had to pay admission to get into the game.

So we played a double header against them. We beat them twice and had a great day. I got about six hits in both guys. I made some great catches in the field. At one point, it was a short hit to left center. I tracked it down and I doubled the guy off at second base. I'm telling you this because to tell you what happened later. So we won both games. So the manager of the team, they call them the Malverners, he went like this to me. He didn't want the owner of the team to see. And I said, "What do you want?"

He says, "What's this guy paying you?"

I says, “Three dollars a game and gas money.”

“How would you like five dollars a game? Five dollars a game and gas money?”

And with me was one of my friends from the neighborhood team. Whitey, he was a shortstop. And this kid, he made the minor leagues. Now what happened was I said, “Okay.”

He says, “Look,” he says, “I want you to, I want Whitey,”—we called him Whitey—“and you.”

So all we had to do was drive from the Bronx, the Whitestone Bridge wasn’t built yet. You had to take a ferry to Long Island.

JP: I think we’re going to have to stop there for a few minutes and change the tape and we’ll continue.

JM: Okay.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

JP: So, now, you had played baseball between, let’s see, 1938, 1939. You had gotten injured and that had pretty much had ended your playing career. Now you’re thinking about joining the service. Where did you enlist?

JM: In New York.

JP: And what year was that, Joseph?

JM: Nineteen forty.

JP: Okay. And then from that...

JM: October 5, 1940, to be exact.

JP: So you, at this time, you were twenty-three years old...

JM: Yes.

JP: ...when you decided to enlist. You were one of...

JM: Yeah.

JP: ...were you an older enlistee?

JM: I, well, there were a lot, some about the same age. Some a couple of years younger, like Dan. He's only a year younger than me.

JP: Had you—had there been rumors or talk about potential conflicts with Japan at the time? Of course, the war in Europe was going on.

JM: No. No, we didn't, we had no idea.

JP: So you went off to recruit the training...

JM: Yes. Here's what I—well, how I happened to go into the army, one of my friends—he didn't play ball—he was about two or three years older than most of us. He enlisted in the army, went to Hawaii. He was, his stepfather was a cop and he used to abuse him. When I say abuse him, he called him lazy, blah, blah, blah. So he joined the army to get away from him. So he wrote postal cards back to us. And when he finished his two years of duty, he came back to the neighborhood naturally and was still in uniform. He says, "Any of you guys ever join, want to join the army, ask for coast artillery Hawaii," I always remember that.

So I thought of that and I knew they had great sports out in Hawaii. And so I says, "Well, this is it."

So I went down and I enlisted down in Whitehall Street. That was a federal building.

JP: This is in New York City?

JM: New York City.

JP: So they send you to Hawaii?

JM: Yeah.

JP: Tell me about Hawaii. What was your first impression?

JM: Hawaii, I loved it. We arrived—we left the Brooklyn army base on the [USAT] Republic on the...

JP: We're going to stop, one moment.

(Taping stops, then resumes)

JP: So, Hawaii, your impressions, beautiful place.

JM: Yes. Well...

JP: And vastly different than New York.

JM: Well my first impression was when I, when we boarded the transport, the families were allowed to come down to see us off. My mother was really crying very badly. She was still in black. She was mourning my father. And I—something that I would never be able to do, pay for, was this trip to Hawaii on an army transport. You go down the west, you go down the coast to Panama Canal. Now, I read all about the Panama Canal was built. Here I am in it. And we went through the canal to the—and how the locks were worked. That was amazing. That was amazing. People should go down there just to see how they work. And when you go to the Pacific side, it's sea level. It was lower on the Atlantic side, that's why they have the locks. Then we went up the—and they gave us passes on both sides. And Panama was beautiful. They were—I thought it would be real—now here it is, December, and gee, look at this. This is December? We're in summer weather. That's what impressed me.

And so anyway, we went up the coast to San Francisco. We laid over two weeks, was almost two weeks. And in those two weeks, we got two passes to go to San Francisco, a great town. I liked it very much.

Then we shipped out and took us six days. It was all, this transport was captured from the Germans. It was a German-built boat. It was small. It was very slow. I think the top speed was eight knots.

JP: Was it coal-powered or oil-powered ship?

JM: I'm not sure. I never took—I didn't see any dirty black smoke or anything. It could've been because...

JP: Now, at this time, you had been assigned to a specific unit?

JM: No. We went as casuals.

JP: What's a casual? Explain.

JM: Casual is one that's unattached to any outfit.

JP: Okay.

JM: You're new. You're a rookie.

JP: So it wasn't until you actually got to [*Fort*] Kamehameha or Hawaii?

JM: Until we got to Fort Kamehameha, when, now we arrived at Christmas Eve day. We got there, it was still daylight. So we anchored out. We wondered why the hell are we anchoring out. Why aren't they letting us go off. They wait until nightfall. I don't know what the reason was. I've been trying to find out for years why. Well, they pulled in at night, as soon as dark came down. And right at the Aloha Tower, you know. And they line you up alphabetically, okay. Everybody is alphabetical. All A's here, B's, C's. So they go along the line, "What's your name?"

They give the name and so I was in a group that was L, M, N. So NA-PO-ZO, DOO-REE. Anyway, there was eight of us. “Okay, you guys get on this truck.”

Okay, then go along, “you guys get in this truck.”

Well we had several on the same truck going to Fort Kamehameha. Some of them were going to, maybe, Fort DeRussy or the other forts. And that’s— then we got to Fort Kamehameha. We immediately went into the gym, the basketball court, nice gym. And they had short arm inspection.

JP: I think, I think we’re going to stop there for now and we’re going to resume this interview sometime in the next day or two. I want to pick up the story...

(Taping stops, then resumes)

JP: The following oral history interview is actually the second part of an interview conducted with Joseph Medure. We began this a couple of days ago and tonight we’re going to finish up on Joseph’s oral, oral interview. It’s still conducted by Jeff Pappas for the National Park Service, USS *Arizona* Memorial at the Imperial Palace Hotel in Las Vegas on December 8, at five p.m. here in Las Vegas. And Joseph, you were on, you were at Fort Kamehameha on December 7...

JM: Yes.

JP: ...1941. Briefly though, just to recap, you told me quite a bit about yourself and about your baseball career, growing up in New York, in the Bronx and now we’re going to go straight to the morning...

JM: The morning.

JP: ...of December 7...

JM: Good.

JP: ...1941 at Kamehameha. Describe for me Fort Kamehameha. What is it? What was it used for?

JM: Fort Kamehameha was the harbor defenses of Pearl Harbor. It had, they had very large guns, long-range guns and other, not anti-aircraft, but search lights for the, to light up naval targets at night. But it was well, pretty well fortified and that's about all. Well, that's just the way Fort Kamehameha was. And it was built in the 1920s.

JP: What kind of artillery did you have there, that morning?

JM: Okay, okay. There was no, we didn't fire any artillery. We couldn't. There was no ammunition. And we had no anti-aircraft batteries. We did have one battery but they had no ammunition. They had to get it out from ordnance. But that morning, I didn't get up—you didn't have to get up early for chow one Sunday. Chow was from seven to eight o'clock. You could walk in the mess hall before eight o'clock. And I got in there maybe about 7:30, thereabouts. And they had a special breakfast that morning. It was for the short-termers who were returning to the States after their two-year tour of foreign duty. And they would finish their hitch of three years in the States. And they always gave a nice breakfast and dinner also, 'cause it would go on all day, 'cause they were leaving the next morning on an army transport.

Dan Fruchter, you know, did he tell you he was due to go home?

JP: No, he didn't.

JM: He didn't tell you in the interview?

JP: No.

JM: Well, he's gonna be sorry. Anyway...

JP: At least I don't remember. He may have.

JM: Yeah, okay. I got in the mess hall and I was surprised. And I says, "What's going on here? Three entrees."

And then they explained to me, 'cause I wasn't aware of it. So I sat down, I got up and I figured I'll start out with eggs. They had eggs, French toast and

pancakes. And everything went with it, bacon and so forth. So I was eating, everybody was eating and I would say it was about a quarter to eight that I went up. I figured I'd try a few pancakes. And I got back to the table. I started eating and about that time, about ten minutes to eight, as it turned out, I found out, we heard this large explosion. And the whole barracks shook. It was like an earthquake.

JP: Now, what was your specific duty at [*Fort*] Kamehameha?

JM: I was in searchlight outfit. Searchlight operator.

JP: Okay.

JM: And we were the 41<sup>st</sup> Coast Artillery was eight-inch railway guns. Okay. And any kind of an action, in the event of war, the guns would be towed by an engine on a narrow-gauge track. And they would pull, they had all their own positions, all over the west shore. So we had firepower on all the shore sides of the fort. We had one buried in the hills, with fourteen-inch guns. We had very—in any eventuality, we could have made a good account of ourselves. And the eight-inch railway guns were very accurate. And as a matter of fact, the Battery B, who won the Knox Trophy for the best firing. The Knox Trophy was emblematic of the best fire, best record made by any artillery.

JP: Very good. So let's continue that morning...

JM: Okay.

JP: ...7:45, you had breakfast for short-timers.

JM: Okay. Then, but after the explosion that shook the barracks, the mess hall led into the orderly room, or vice versa. And it was not from the mess hall side, so they couldn't come in. And someone starts pounding on the door to the mess hall. And I went why are they banging on the door? You just come in the regular screen door that we had.

So someone opens it up and this young kid from Philadelphia—I'll never forget him, Italian kid. Red-headed kid from, come running in, beet-red

face. And Sergeant Greeves, hell of a nice guy, staff sergeant, he comes running in, “The Japs attacking Pearl Harbor and Hickam Field.”

So everyone laughed. They said, “Aw, come on. Sit down, have a cup of joe.”

“You SOBs take a look outside!”

I happened to be one of the last ones in the mess hall and my table was right near the door. So out of curiosity, I got up and I opened up the door and I stepped out and as I stepped out, I see this Jap Zero just pulling out of a dive. Now we had been training...

JP: Now, what is your position at this [*Fort*] Kamehameha to Battleship Row and Ford Island?

JM: Well...

JP: You can see...

JM: I can, yeah, I couldn't see. No, we couldn't see. We could see, then we saw, we could see smoke, that's all.

JP: Okay, right.

JM: We must've been about maybe half a mile away from the harbor itself.

JP: Okay.

JM: Now we were at the entrance, we were at the channel, that's what the, how the fort was built to protect Pearl Harbor. 'Cause we had two seven-inch guns at Fort Weaver and a sub fort.

JP: Okay, so you can hear noise and you see this Japanese Zero now.

JM: I looked out and I saw it. I knew it was a Jap Zero 'cause we had been training, we had the training film on orientation of recognition of what a

Japanese plane looked like. And that, I saw the big red ball on the wings. So I ran back in, I says, “The Japs! It is the Japs! I just saw one go.”

With that, everybody scrambled out of the mess hall. First thing we did was to go to the rifle rack and get our rifles. And the supply sergeant was nowhere around. He’s the only one had the key. Because they had a lock on it, see. The rack was ground, the rifle laid in like that.

And so the next best thing, there was a fire axe laying. Broke the lock off and got our rifles, then we had to go and get some ammunition. It was in the ammo shack in the back. It was sort of a clearing. It was isolated.

JP: Now how far was the ammunition shack from the gun rack?

JM: Well, the gun rack was in the barracks. And it was just maybe two—there was a building behind that. It was a rec[reation] hall. And then the ammunition shack.

JP: So someone got in the ammunition shack.

JM: They had to break that open too, break the lock on that to get in. So the guys handed out several clips and we put them in our belts, you know. You know the army belts?

JP: Mm-hm.

JM: And so we went back and we had trees all over the place. We were real camouflaged. And we loaded up and we take pot shots at all the planes that were going by. I was with a buddy of mine and I said, “What the hell are we doing?” I says, “This is ridiculous. We need automatic weapons.”

So we went back to the...

JP: Now has [*Fort*] Kamehameha at this point, had you sustained any damage?

JM: No.

JP: Fired upon yet?

JM: No, no. So we went back to the ammo shack and there was three or four fellas, all privates, and one corporal. And they were loading up a machine gun belt. The old World War II, World War I water-cooled machine gun. And so we started helping load the belts. And I says, "Wait a minute," I says, "That ammunition is not good enough. We're going to need armor-piercing and tracers."

Now I was just a private, a PFC. and he said, "You're right."

So we got, busted up a couple of boxes. And so I got 'em right here and I grab a clip of armor piercing alternating with the tracer until—it took us almost a half hour. Now our belts on the machine gun held about 250 rounds. Then in the meantime, I says—two guys were loading up two BARs and the clips.

JP: A BAR is a Browning...

JM: Browning automatic rifle [*BAR*]. One of the best rifles ever made. That was my baby. I took, nobody wanted it, but I took one. I took it with me out in the field. And so we all said, "So what are we doing? Where do we set up?"

So the best place we figured was to go behind the mess hall where the garbage trucks used to back in or would back in, there was like a concrete wall. And we set up the machine gun. We only had a small ground tripod, a ground mount, so there was nine of us. I had a BAR, another guy had a BAR, and the other guys were helping, held the belt. And we were biding our time. And we could see smoke coming and we heard explosions going on constantly. This was about near the end of the first wave of planes. Then the second wave came in and we just wait and you see smoke and everything else.

Finally this Zero, this Jap Zero, comes pulling out of a dive from Hickam Field. See, Hickam Field was to our right. And he leveled off and we all went on, now let, and we said, and the corporal said, "Now, open up!" And we opened up with the two automatic rifles and the machine gun, and baby, we hit 'em.

He began to smoke. Smoke started spewing out of the plane and he disappeared over the line of trees. Then he was heading towards the ocean. We don't know, we don't know where he landed or crashed. At that time, we didn't know. But many years later, there was an article in our Pearl Harbor Gram, and it was by a medic that said that medic described that plane that was, that crashed on the beach at [*Fort*] Kam[*ehameha*], the beach was a—not the beach, but a coral reef. The water was low there. The guys used to go fishing there. That's where that plane crashed. There was thirty-nine planes shot down that day, believe it or not. Unfortunately if we had more warning, it would have been a different story.

JP: I'm going to stop you there, Joseph. We're going to be running out of film shortly. And before we finish, I would like for you to explain to us the medals that you have, that you're wearing today, because you weren't wearing them two days ago, when we...

JM: No, 'cause I only wear it when I'm with formal dress.

JP: You only wear your medals with formal dress?

JM: Yes.

JP: Okay, do me a favor now and I want you to hold out that, your Pearl Harbor medal. And I want you to point it into the camera and I want you to explain what that is and when you received it, if we could get it as well, okay. Explain.

JM: Okay. This medal was given to us by an act of Congress. And we received them about ten years ago.

JP: And what is that? What's the name of the medal?

JM: It's a Pearl Harbor medal. It's just what it is. On the front of it is the *Nevada* underway. That was the only—you know that—that was the ship, major ship that got underway that morning.

JP: What's on the rev—what's on the flip side?

JM: On the other side, it says, “Pearl Harbor”—I can’t read it.

JP: It says, “For those who served.”

JM: For those that served, who served. Okay. And that’s it. Now...

JP: Actually there’s a little more. There was some more. “Which will live in infamy.”

JM: Okay. So it was. Like this?

JP: The medal says, “A day which will live in infamy.”

JM: Right.

JP: “For those who served.”

JM: For those who served.

JP: Very good. And how about the medal here on your lapel?

JM: This was—a law was passed in New York state to honor members of residents of New York state...

JP: Why don’t you move your hand so we can get a good good shot of it?

JM: ...residents of New York state who were at Pearl Harbor that day.

JP: So that...

JM: This is a...

JP: ...a medal given by the state of New York to the Pearl Harbor survivors from New York.

JM: From New York, yes.

(Conversation off-mike)

JP: Well, Joseph, I think we're going to end the interview here. I'd like to thank you very much for coming back today for finishing the story. Thank you.

JM: You're welcome. Any time.

END OF INTERVIEW