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Interview with  
ROY ESCHMANN  
February 23, 1989

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas

Interviewer: Keith Rosen

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Approved: *Roy S. Eschmann*  
(Signature)

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Oral History Collection

Roy Eschmann

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Mr. Rosen: This is Keith Rosen interviewing Roy L. Eschmann for the University of North Texas Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on February 23, 1989, in Dallas, Texas. I'm interviewing Mr. Eschmann to hear his experiences and how he felt while stationed at Schofield Army Barracks in Hawaii when Japan attacked the island on December 7, 1941.

Mr. Eschmann, to begin this interview, please tell me some autobiographical information about yourself. For example, state your full name, when and where you were born, and your education.

Mr. Eschmann: My full name is Roy Lee Eschmann. I was born in Dallas, Texas. I have a tenth grade education.

Mr. Rosen: Mr. Eschmann, when were you born?

Eschmann: June 14, 1919.

Rosen: Mr. Eschmann, when did you enter the Army?

Eschmann: In 1941, February of 1941.

Rosen: Why did you chose the Army as compared with the other services?

Eschmann: Well, I was a "4F" in the crowd. I tried the Navy, the Air Corps, and I was turned down. I tried the Army, and they accepted me.

Rosen: So you enlisted...

Eschmann: I was in the Regular Army. Yes, I enlisted.

Rosen: What desire motivated you to want to go in the military?

Eschmann: Well, I guess because I had a feeling that we would be going to war shortly.

Rosen: At that time, from 1941 when you believed we were going to war, who did you think we were going to go to war with?

Eschmann: Japan.

Rosen: You did believe it was Japan.

Eschmann: Yes, I clearly believed it.

Rosen: That's interesting. You said you were "4F" in the other services. Do you have any idea why the Army would take you?

Eschmann: Well, I really don't know, but the other services said I had a small heart problem, which later I had bypass surgery and all that. But it didn't seem to bother me during the time I spent overseas.

Rosen: Mr. Eschmann, what were you doing at the time you entered the service?

Eschmann: I worked for Southwest Wheel and Rim in the shipping department. I was assistant shipping clerk.

Rosen: Was that a good job?

Eschmann: It was a very good job, yes--here in Dallas.

Rosen: So when you went to the military, you left a good job for some other reason.

Eschmann: Like I said, I wanted to join the service.

Rosen: Where did you go for basic training?

Eschmann: Schofield Barracks there on the island.

Rosen: You went into the military in February of 1941. Were you immediately transferred to Schofield?

Eschmann: Well, when I joined the service, I didn't join up to go to Schofield. I joined up as a soldier. For some reason, the ship I was on never got any further than Honolulu.

Rosen: Do you remember when that was?

Eschmann: Yes. It was four days later (chuckle). That's how long it took to get from San Francisco to Hawaii.

Rosen: So you went to San Francisco first.

Eschmann: Oh, yes. I went by train from Dallas to...I can't remember the Army post they sent me to, but I was there for about two months. Then they put us on a ship, and the ship stopped at Honolulu. I never got any further.

Rosen: What did you think of Hawaii when you arrived there?

Eschmann: Well, I thought it was great (chuckle). Most everybody was Filipino, Japanese, Chinese, and there weren't too many Americans. There wasn't much to Hawaii, but everybody did treat the soldiers nice. And there wasn't too many soldiers there because, like, the company I was in was just half of a company; I mean, there wasn't too many soldiers there.

Rosen: Can you describe basic training for me?

Eschmann: Well, you get up, have breakfast as fast as you can, and then fall out for reveille, get out there. They had a nice quadrangle there at Schofield. I used to love to march. Then you'd go through all these little drills, and then they would have

certain duties for you. Of course, you're a private. Then you would police up the area. Then they would assign certain things for you to do during the day. But I loved the close-order drill. I really did.

Rosen: Do you remember what month you arrived there at Schofield?

Eschmann: I made a mistake. I left on October 4, 1941, and arrived in Hawaii on October 9, 1941.

Rosen: Okay, so you were at Schofield for about two months, then, before the attack.

Eschmann: Right.

Rosen: Okay. From the time that you had enlisted in February and the time that you came over from San Francisco in October, were you in the military during that time period?

Eschmann: Yes.

Rosen: Where were you at?

Eschmann: Well, I wasn't stationed at any Army base. I stayed at home.

Rosen: Do you feel that basic training you received at Schofield prepared you well for the war?

Eschmann: No.

Rosen: How so?

Eschmann: Well, our equipment was obsolete. Our rifles were World War I. I was in a machine gun company. I had a Springfield rifle, and it had pits in it that you could put your finger in. The machine guns were in the same condition. Our belts were all rotted. You had to load them by hand. I'm referring to the machine gun belt, the water-cooled machine guns. We had a few air-cooled machine guns. We had the long bayonets. Our uniforms were all World War I. Everything was World War I vintage. We got paid \$21 a month. That's about all I could tell you about it (chuckle). That should be enough.

Rosen: You mentioned the pay of \$21 a month. How was that for you?

Eschmann: Well, I smoked and I bought a carton of Bull Durham's and one package of cigarettes. By the time they took out for my laundry...you had to pay for your laundry and get your campaign hat blocked. That was taken out of your pay. When you went to get your pay, you probably would get four or five dollars after everything was said and done.

Rosen: In those days that wasn't very much money.

Eschmann: No, not really.

Rosen: So you didn't enter the military to make money.



Eschmann: Oh, no! I think I was making quite a bit more than \$21 a month.

Rosen: Did you join for patriotic reasons?

Eschmann: Yes, indeed. And I am still patriotic.

Rosen: How long did basic training last?

Eschmann: At that time I think it was supposed to last probably eight weeks, but it didn't last that long. For some reason we went on an alert before my basic training was up. The first thing we done...in the Regular Army at that time, a soldier was real sharp. He took pride in the service. It wasn't long--I'm talking about a couple months before the attack--that they took us to a firing range. I had my Springfield, and I was a sharpshooter. My sergeant done told me that if we ever went to war they were going to make a sniper out of me. So they took up my Springfield. This was an old gun, but it shot good. They gave us the M-1. Like I say, we were on an alert, so they gave us the M-1's. Then they took the old World War I uniforms and gave us...they took our leggings away.

Rosen: Uniforms from World War I.

Eschmann: Yes.

Rosen: These were the uniforms you were wearing in 1941.

Eschmann: That's right. Everything I had on was the same outfit. I don't know whether somebody in World War I wore them or not, but they were identical to what they wore in World War I--from top to bottom, shoes and everything. We didn't have the combat boots, so then they gave us combat boots, which come up four or five inches above the ankle, I guess. I definitely knew then that something was going to happen.

Rosen: Did you have any idea what that "something" was?

Eschmann: Well, I knew that we was going to go to war. I talked to quite a few of the people, and I told them, "I believe the Japanese are going to attack us." They'd say, "They can't get over here." I said, "Well, do you think we could get over there?" And they said, "Yeah," which we probably couldn't have. But I said, "Well, if you think that, they can sure get over here." And that's the honest-to-God's truth.

Rosen: Mr. Eschmann, you said that your basic training was supposed to last for eight weeks but ended up lasting a shorter period of time. Do you remember about how many weeks?

Eschmann: Maybe six, because they was taking everything from us and redoing it, like, our rifles and stuff like that. But we'd still get out there and do close-order drills early in the morning. You had to do that and calisthenics and weapons training.

Rosen: Could you describe Schofield Barracks?

Eschmann: Well, I thought it was a beautiful place, well-arranged. The outfit that I was in originated--made up--right there at Schofield Barracks in World War I--the 25th Division.

Rosen: You were in the 25th Division?

Eschmann: That's right, 19th Infantry. During World War I, the 25th Division had one star. A star means you had participated in combat. We wore it as an insignia on our belt buckle or whatever. And now they have three.

Rosen: Three stars?

Eschmann: Three stars. We had two stars from World War II. But I wasn't in the infantry then.

Rosen: What were you in?

Eschmann: I was in the 7th Air Force.

Rosen: At Schofield?

Eschmann: No. I was telling you about the infantry, and I'm proud that I was in it. But it goes back about

three weeks or four weeks after Pearl Harbor. I don't know if you want to hear about that.

Rosen: Well, we want to concentrate on the events leading up to Pearl Harbor at this point--when you were there in October up to the attack on December 7.

Eschmann: Do you want me to tell you about the attack?

Rosen: Well, we will get to that in a moment. Let me go back for a moment here. At Schofield Barracks where did you live?

Eschmann: I lived right there at Schofield in the barracks. They were nice, clean barracks, and you had a big quadrangle--big square--out there. Different companies had different quadrangles. Schofield is a very large place. It would hold thousands of men, yes.

Rosen: How did you feel about the older soldiers?

Eschmann: Well, I was treated fine because I was Regular Army. That made lots of difference.

Rosen: As opposed to being a draftee?

Eschmann: A draftee, yes. Of course, when the draftees came over there, they started giving the Japanese people and the mixed people problems, you know. They just ruined everything for the soldiers that had been there for years. As a matter of fact, my first

sergeant was supposed to be discharged in a couple of weeks. Naturally, his time went on; he didn't get discharged. But the draftees sort of messed it up for the Regular Army soldiers. I don't believe we had any of the draftees there at Schofield at that time to amount to anything.

Off the record you were asking me about a bunch of "tent cities." I sure don't remember a "Tent City" at Schofield. We had a golf course there, and we had a small air strip there that they kept a few fighters on. But I know there wasn't any tents in that area because the officers wasn't going to put no tents on their golf course (chuckle). That's the only place that I can recall that we really got any fighters off the ground when they bombed us that morning.

Rosen: We'll get to the actual attack in just a few minutes. How old would you say most of the soldiers were at Schofield?

Eschmann: Well, I was in my early twenties, but I would say they were ready to retire because that was the Regular Army, and they had made a career out of the service.

Rosen: So most of the soldiers at Schofield weren't teenage boys who...

Eschmann: There were no teenagers that I can recall, not in my outfit, anyway. Of course, I wasn't there long enough to know too many people, you know, in other companies. We had the 24th Division there plus the 25th Division. One of them was the Wolfhound Division. But most all of them was Regular Army. I'm going to say 90 percent were Regular Army. Most of them were career men.

Rosen: You said a moment ago that one of the divisions was known as the Wolfhounds.

Eschmann: Wolfhounds.

Rosen: I've never heard that expression before.

Eschmann: That's right. They were the 24th Division. They were the Wolfhounds. I shouldn't say this about them, but they had lost their colors in World War I. When you lose your colors, you know, that's bad. They figure you're not ready for more combat. That's really the truth. Some way they lost their colors in World War I. They were designated as the 24th Division. All these guys wore a wolf on their insignia, and we wore a bugle. That's the

difference. They got them back in World War II--  
their colors.

Rosen: So the bugle was the insignia for your division.

Eschmann: That's right, the 25th Division, yes.

Rosen: How was morale at Schofield?

Eschmann: Great! Great! It was great. We had everything we  
wanted...food. I ate better in the Army than I ate  
at home here in the States, I can assure you  
(chuckle). The food was great.

Rosen: And your comrades?

Eschmann: They were great! They were all nice. Of course,  
everybody goes to downtown Honolulu on the  
weekends, you know. There wouldn't be too many men  
left at Schofield. There really wasn't a lot of men  
there before Pearl Harbor because there was no full  
company, you know, completely full. Maybe they were  
at half-strength or something like that. I really  
can't say for sure.

Rosen: Okay, we're going to come back to what your company  
and the guys did for entertainment in a moment  
here. At the time of the attack, what was your  
rank?

Eschmann: I was a private.

Rosen: Private. And you were you assigned to what organization?

Eschmann: Well, I was in the 25th Division, 19th Infantry. I am really not sure of the company, but I believe it was Company B. I was in a machine gun squad.

Rosen: You were in a machine squad. You had already won some awards for your ability to shoot.

Eschmann: Yes.

Rosen: In the 25th Division, 19th Infantry, discuss your responsibilities after you got out of boot camp.

Eschmann: Well, I really didn't have any, no more than any other private. We just picked up cigarette butts and maybe cleaned up the barracks. You were assigned duties just like any other job. It was just a job, you know. Maybe you were assigned to clean the commodes and all that stuff. I never did get to do any KP because when I was in school I took ROTC, and that helped me out a great deal. When we left Dallas to go in the Army, they made me a temporary sergeant because I'd gone to Tech High School here in Dallas and took ROTC, and I was a sergeant in the ROTC. It really helped me out a lot. It was hard to get rank in the Regular Army during peacetime. They made me a PFC after they



cleared me from boot camp, and that gave me \$27 a month. I got six bucks for that stripe (chuckle).

Rosen: Tell me what you did for recreation and social activities.

Eschmann: Well, we had movies.

Rosen: Were these movies on Schofield?

Eschmann: Oh, yes, we had that. We had baseball; we had volleyball.

Rosen: Were athletics very important at Schofield?

Eschmann: Yes. You could lay in your bunk. If they would let you have a break, you could lay in your bunk maybe one hour a day, but it had to be spotless when you went back out to do your other duties, whatever they were. I really don't know whatever all of them were, but they kept you pretty busy.

Rosen: Did you participate in any of the sports at this time at Schofield?

Eschmann: I played a little baseball, yes. I used to play baseball here in Dallas when I was in my teens. I played a little baseball for the Dallas Police Department.

Rosen: Did participation in sports at Schofield help in getting rank or privileges?

Eschmann: Maybe if you was real good at something, you know. But it's not like it was as you see it on TV. It wasn't like that.

Rosen: Are you referring to the movie, "From Here to Eternity?"

Eschmann: Right. This guy [Robert E. Lee Pruitt in the movie] was also a real good boxer, but he loved the Army for that bugle. He would not box, and they gave him a hard time.

Rosen: What did you do socially off Schofield?

Eschmann: Well, like I say, most of us had made friends over there with the Japanese, the Filipinos, and Chinese. We'd made friends, and my sister was over there.

Rosen: Your sister was living in Hawaii?

Eschmann: No, she lived at Hickam Field.

Rosen: Your sister was also in the military at that time?

Eschmann: Right. She was a parachute rigger.

Rosen: I understand that the soldiers at Schofield would go over to one of the cities or towns on the island to find activities. Could you elaborate on that?

Eschmann: You mean go to another island?

Rosen: No, not to another island. Did you leave the base very often?

Eschmann: No. I couldn't. You didn't have no money. If you don't have any money, you can't do very much. I done a lot of fishing because that was free, and there was plenty of water. I had a Japanese friend there who could make beautiful custom fishing rods, and he taught me how to make custom fishing rods out of bamboo. They were real nice. You could put a reel on them, put all the eyes on them, and I could go all day long.

Rosen: So you had at least one Japanese friend.

Eschmann: Well, I had more than one.

Rosen: A number of Japanese friends.

Eschmann: Oh, well, that's all there were over there-- Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos.

Rosen: What did you think of the Japanese before Pearl Harbor?

Eschmann: Well, in my honest opinion--and I believe this to this very day--I felt...of course, I know there were spies and everything else over there, but there were a lot of good Japanese. I have nothing against the Japanese people. I didn't hate them because I had met so many that I knew they were good Americans.

Rosen: On Schofield Barracks was there much gambling?

Eschmann: Oh, yes, lots of gambling.

Rosen: How did it operate?

Eschmann: Well, you only had a few there that were really good gamblers. They were Regular Army, and they were going to retire, you know. Most of us played poker. You didn't see shooting dice until after Pearl Harbor, and then there was a lot of that. Every payday, they'd get right down on the danged floor and start shooting them dice. Poker was too slow for some. They shot dice for big money, and you didn't last long in that game.

Rosen: Did that cause any problems?

Eschmann: Well, a lot of the guys couldn't even go into town because they wouldn't even have bus fare (chuckle).

Rosen: It sounds like in this case you didn't have to worry about that.

Eschmann: I didn't gamble much then, not at that time, no.

Rosen: You didn't go into town very often either.

Eschmann: No, I didn't go into town very often.

Rosen: Were there any changes in your routine in the time leading up to December 7. You mentioned there was an alert.

Eschmann: Well, I don't know if it was a change in my routine or not, but I started watching people more. I'll go to December 7. Is that okay?

Rosen: Sure.

Eschmann: I had just come off of guard duty in downtown Honolulu. We were on alert. I had just had breakfast and had gone upstairs. I had gone upstairs, and that's where I was. I'd just gotten up there. I had breakfast downstairs, and I bunked upstairs. I'd just gotten up there, and I heard all this bombing.

Rosen: I want to go back to a few things that happened before this. Talk about what you did on December 6. You said that you started watching people more. Could you be more specific?

Eschmann: Well, I've always been like that. If something bothers me, I look around...I really don't know how to explain it to you. When we went out that night--I don't know--probably twelve o'clock, I didn't feel right. I really didn't. I told my partner, "I think you and I ought to stick pretty close together." There wasn't too many soldiers in downtown Honolulu on December 6. I think the

companies were on alert, and there wasn't too many people on the streets.

Rosen: Did the military put you on alert at that time? What kind of routine was different for you there?

Eschmann: Well, I was carrying live ammunition.

Rosen: They substituted dummy ammunition for live.

Eschmann: We never carried any dummy ammunition. We never heard of it. I think they gave us two M-1's. I don't know what you call them now, but they gave us two...I really don't know how many cartridges it would hold. But that's what we carried. That's the only time we ever had any live ammunition.

Rosen: What did you think you were on alert for?

Eschmann: I had no idea. I figured, though, it was just what happened. I think somebody knew that something was going to happen. I really do.

Rosen: You said that you expected an attack. Did you expect that it was going to be an air attack or what kind of an attack?

Eschmann: No, I didn't think it'd be an air attack. I figured they might invade on the account of the few people we had. We couldn't stop them on our position. I wasn't carrying a full fieldpack at the time. When

I got the full fieldpack, I knew we were going out to sea.

Rosen: Did you feel that the military had prepared you or trained you to defend against an invasion?

Eschmann: Well, no. I had never seen them train anybody for combat except, like, when you go through recruit training--stick a dummy with a bayonet and pull it out. That was about it. As far as I remember, I'd never seen any tanks over there. None of us foot soldiers were ever trained for combat.

Rosen: If you weren't trained for combat, what were you trained for?

Eschmann: Well, we were just soldiers. In case war did break out, we were there. We did know how to shoot, but I wouldn't say we were very good soldiers. Some of us could shoot real good, and some of us couldn't shoot too well. At least we had an army, and that's just about all we had, was an army. I doubt seriously that we could have defended the islands with the men that I knew there and the ones I saw. They would have done their duty, though.

Rosen: I'd like you to describe December 6 now. I want you to tell what you did on December 6.

Eschmann: Well, it was just really another day, no different from the rest up until we came in that afternoon. Usually around 4:00 we'd come in, take a shower.

Rosen: Come in from what?

Eschmann: Our duties for the day. We might have took a five-mile hike or a ten-mile hike, and then we would have worked around Schofield keeping the place up. We'd take our shower, and then we would have dinner. That was the usual day. There were a few days that we would go out and stay a couple of nights, you know, put the pup tents up and spend the night--just to be out in the open.

Rosen: Do you recall specifically on December 6 what you were doing that afternoon?

Eschmann: Like I say, when I came in about 4:00, I was told that I would be going on a...like I say, I knew we were on alert, and I was told that I would be going on patrol duty or guard duty or whatever you want to call it for six hours. I prepared myself for it. I fixed my combat pack, which you had to carry. It was very small, not like a full fieldpack. It weighed three or four pounds. At 11:00 I was awakened by someone.



Rosen: You said you had dinner about 4:00 in the afternoon. What did you do between dinner and 11:00 on December 6?

Eschmann: Like I said, I prepared myself to go on patrol, guard duty, like, fixing my pack and having everything ready just to put it on when I was awoken to go.

Rosen: You did get some sleep then.

Eschmann: Oh, yes, I had probably three or four hours of sleep, and then my partner and I went on patrol in downtown Honolulu.

Rosen: Did you leave the base at all on December 6?

Eschmann: No, I don't think so. I never left the base. I couldn't leave the base at that time. Until you get through with all your recruit training, you can't leave the base, and I was still a recruit.

Rosen: What time did your guard duty begin?

Eschmann: Twelve o'clock.

Rosen: So you had six hours of guard duty that began at midnight?

Eschmann: Midnight on December 7.

Rosen: And you said that you were guarding downtown.

Eschmann: Downtown. You know, power plants, areas that you need in case of an emergency.

Rosen: Were these all civilian facilities.

Eschmann: Oh, yes, yes.

Rosen: Was it normal for the military to guard civilian facilities?

Eschmann: I really don't know. Nothing like that ever happened before.

Rosen: So this was the first time.

Eschmann: We were looking for sabotage. A saboteur doesn't care if it's civilian or whatever, I wouldn't think so (chuckle).

Rosen: Had you ever been on guard duty like this before?

Eschmann: Never, no.

Rosen: Was this normal to have guard duty at midnight at this time?

Eschmann: No, no, this was unusual.

Rosen: You say this was the first time you had guard duty.

Eschmann: Well, like I say, someone knew that something was up--I can definitely tell you that--and they were protecting certain areas. There were very few soldiers downtown, and there were very few sleeping in downtown Honolulu and no drinking going on at that time--not downtown. I don't think they had closed the bars yet, but they closed the bars on December 7. They closed everything--all the houses

of prostitution and everything. Soldiers couldn't even buy a drink, couldn't even buy a beer. I don't know how long that went on because I didn't stay there very long after Pearl Harbor.

Rosen: Mr. Eschmann, what time did you get off of that guard duty, and where did you go and what did you do after that?

Eschmann: Well, I was relieved, I'm going to say, about 6:00 a.m., and I went straight back to Schofield and got rid of my gear. I put my rifle back up and then went downstairs and had breakfast. By the time I got back upstairs, I had been on base probably an hour. I'd changed clothes, and that's when I started hearing these "BOOMS." Then they started doing the machine gun fire.

Rosen: About what time was this?

Eschmann: Well, it seems like 8:00 sticks in my mind, something like that. Naturally, everybody ran outside to see what was going on. Then we saw the planes, and we knew they weren't our planes because they all had that rising sun on them. Then we knew they were Japanese. Then we go back upstairs and get our rifles.

At that time on Sunday morning, Schofield is pretty well dead, and everybody is gone. All the officers were gone at that time. So we got our rifles and went downstairs because you have to go through the orderly room and all that stuff to get to the supply room to get the ammo.

Rosen: Did you have trouble getting ammo, or was the supply room open.

Eschmann: No, it wasn't open. Those planes would come from Hickam, and that supply room was vacant. Those planes would come down, and they'd start shooting. They had these big concrete pillars, and we'd stand behind them. They finally opened the supply room.

Rosen: It took someone higher than you to open it.

Eschmann: Yes. But the ammunition--the way it was stored--we didn't have too much that you could just grab up. You'd just have to take a single cartridge and put it in your rifle and start shooting. Like I say, nothing was prepared. Most of the bandoleers were for the old Springfield rifles. Then we had to fill up the magazines for our M-1's. We all had M-1's, you know. After we got organized, the sergeants stationed us around. When the Jap plane went by--their bombers and their fighters--they looked like

American planes. We were probably shooting some of our own planes down. We probably got more of our own planes than Japanese. Everybody was just shooting at everything. You couldn't even distinguish our own planes.

Rosen: How close did the Japanese planes come to you?

Eschmann: Well, I'm going to say a hundred feet.

Rosen: A hundred feet.

Eschmann: That's right.

Rosen: Could you see the pilots?

Eschmann: I could see the pilot just as well as I'm looking at you. They just came right over the top at Schofield, and they just barely missed the barracks. They came down right over Schofield and started machine-gunning. When they got close to us, we'd go ahead and keep on firing until they came across the quadrangle. There were other barracks on the other side of the quadrangle--you know, it was a big square--and they'd start firing. If you couldn't get them when they were coming our way, then the other barracks would fire at them. They got Hickam, and then they'd come over Schofield. They'd fire as they came across. That's the way I remember it. I don't really know how many men got

killed in my outfit, but I think there were four or five.

Rosen: At this point, when you got the rifle and ammunition, were you under orders? Was this organized, or was every man essentially taking it upon himself.

Eschmann: Every man just had to take it upon himself. I had my own rifle. I had it all the time. I never put it away. You kept your rifle. You always kept your rifle, but you didn't have any ammunition--never any live ammunition. The only orders we got--and then we'd have to stop firing our rifles--was to load the machine gun belts and get water for the machine guns.

Rosen: Where did the water come from?

Eschmann: If you were standing on the front porch of the barracks, to the right was the kitchen. It extended out to the street and went around the quadrangle. On the right-hand corner, it extended out about forty feet--the kitchen--and the hydrant was on the right-hand corner of the kitchen, which extended out from the triangle. So you had forty feet of open space to go to fill up your water for your machine gun.

Rosen: From a hydrant, you say.

Eschmann: From a water hydrant. It would be sticking out right.

Rosen: Is that from a fire hydrant?

Eschmann: A water hydrant like one you would use to water your yard with.

Rosen: So it was right out in the open.

Eschmann: Oh, yes.

Rosen: How much of a danger was that?

Eschmann: There was quite a bit of danger because you were sticking right out if you were in the street. It was right on the corner. You were out in the open. There was nothing but open space to your left and in front of you. The only space you had was the side of the kitchen.

Rosen: Did you have to go for water?

Eschmann: I made about five trips, I guess.

Rosen: While they were strafing?

Eschmann: Oh, yes. We had orders to get loaded and get out and take up our position.

Rosen: And you were operating the machine gun, also?

Eschmann: No, I wasn't shooting anymore. I'd been ordered to load machine gun belts. I done put my rifle down.

Rosen: During the attack what were you thinking about?

Eschmann: I can't answer that, really, but a few hours later I could answer you. I knew something was going to happen.

Rosen: How did you feel during the attack?

Eschmann: Well, I didn't like going out and getting that water. Really, no one else did either. Those barracks at Schofield were well-built. As long as you stayed away from windows or something like that, you did all right. That's when them ol' boys went under the pool table there, and I don't blame them (chuckle).

Rosen: How long did the attack last?

Eschmann: I believe it was still going on when we left.

Rosen: When did you leave?

Eschmann: We were there probably two or three hours during the attack, and then we had done got ourselves loaded.

Rosen: Was there any organization during the attack?

Eschmann: I didn't see any. I don't even remember seeing any officers.

Rosen: Where were the officers?

Eschmann: Like I say, they partied on the weekends. That was strictly a party activity on the weekends. I'm talking about when I was there. I don't know what



happened there after I left because I didn't get back for five months.

Rosen: Were there officers at the barracks at this time?

Eschmann: Oh, no, they didn't live with us. They'd party at the Officer's Club, stuff like that. That early in the morning, I'm sure they wasn't in the Officer's Club.

Rosen: Mr. Eschmann, you said that the attack went on for two or three hours while you were there and that you were filling machine gun belts and getting water. What did you do after those two or three hours?

Eschmann: Well, we had to load our own ammunition. No one came to pick us up. We loaded our own food out of our own kitchen, and all of our supplies, ammunition, guns, and we left--that's all I can say--while they were still attacking. How much longer it went on, I don't know.

Rosen: Let me go back a moment. You said they were bombing, and they were strafing. How close were you to the bombing and strafing?

Eschmann: Well, I was right there. I mean, when the plane is only 180 feet or 200 feet away...they didn't bomb Schofield. They only strafed Schofield. They

strafed us. We had an airstrip there, and I really don't know if they bombed it or not there at Schofield. We had a few fighter planes there.

Rosen: You were right in the midst of the strafing?

Eschmann: Oh, yes, yes.

Rosen: You said that you left. Could you elaborate on that? What happened that caused you to leave?

Eschmann: Well, we had to take our positions in case they invaded.

Rosen: At this point, orders are being given?

Eschmann: Orders were being given.

Rosen: About what time was this happening?

Eschmann: Well, 11:00, something like that. For two or three hours, I never saw an officer.

Rosen: These orders were coming from...

Eschmann: From the sergeant in charge of us. See, at that time a corporal had more rank than a first sergeant does today--in the Regular Army.

Rosen: So what orders were you given?

Eschmann: I wasn't given any. Our whole outfit was told to patrol this one beach. That's all that was said. So we got in the truck, and we went to our position.

Rosen: What was your position?

Eschmann: I don't remember the area's name or whatever we called it. It really didn't have a name, but it did have a number or something. We were put off about every 300 feet or 400 feet--two of us. We had full fieldpacks and a pup tent. We had a machine gun set up. We got our ammunition and our water. They gave us some bread and Span. Then they went on and let somebody else out.

Rosen: You say that they took you to beaches.

Eschmann: Well, this was always our position.

Rosen: Okay.

Eschmann: We'd been there before. We knew where we were going. It wasn't just some beach they had taken us to or that they stopped at. It was a regular position that was assigned to us in case of an invasion.

Rosen: At that point was there fear that the island would be invaded?

Eschmann: There wasn't much talking going on, you know, person to person. But after we got set up and everything, I wouldn't have been surprised. I wouldn't have walked down to that next pup tent because I never would have made it. Somebody would have shot me because they'd shoot at anything.

They'd shoot at everything (chuckle). You didn't dare get out.

Rosen: Were the soldiers trigger-happy?

Eschmann: That's right! They said they saw paratroopers and everything else. Quite a few nights I went out there, and somebody on guard would say he saw paratroopers land or something like that. They'd call us all out, and we'd go out there in the rain, and there wasn't nothing.

Rosen: Would you describe yourself during that time period as trigger-happy, also?

Eschmann: Would I consider myself trigger-happy? No, I sure wouldn't. I was a good shot, and I knew that if I'd shot at anything, I'd hit it. I was on guard like that myself--deep in the night--and that's when you start to get scared. When you're walking out on them beaches or up on that lava rock and stuff like that you, it does make a chill go up your spine.

Rosen: You went off to the beaches to prepare for an invasion.

Eschmann: That's right.

Rosen: About what time did you get there to this beach?

Eschmann: Well, it probably took us about an hour-and-a-half, I would say. It was quite a ways from Schofield.

Rosen: How long were you out there at the beaches?

Eschmann: I was there about five or six days.

Rosen: Five or six days. What kind of contact did you have during this time with the rest of the military or civilian population?

Eschmann: None whatsoever.

Rosen: No radio?

Eschmann: No radio, nothing. No food. When they put us there, they gave us two cans of Spam and bread and left us.

Rosen: What was going through your mind?

Eschmann: Well, I says, "We're going to have to get us something to eat." And I did. But I'd always heard that a person who leaves their post in wartime would be shot. But I told this partner of mine, "Hell, I'm going to go get me something to eat, and I know where a store is." And I did. And I charged it to the United States Army. I most certainly did!

Rosen: At that point, you had mentioned that there was gunfire. How long did that gunfire go on?

Eschmann: You mean these trigger-happy soldiers?

Rosen: Yes.

Eschmann: It was still going on when I left the infantry.

Rosen: Five or six days later?

Eschmann: No, three or four weeks later.

Rosen: You could still hear the sounds of gunfire?

Eschmann: That's right.

Rosen: Did you hear any rumors during that time period?

Eschmann: About what?

Rosen: The Japanese.

Eschmann: No, because nobody had been anywhere to hear anything. We never talked to anyone. We didn't see anybody but the guys we left with.

Rosen: And you heard an occasional report that a paratrooper had landed and...

Eschmann: Well, I know that because when I went back to the CP [command post] that first night I was there, well, that's the first thing I heard. And out we go--all of us, you know. Well, not all of us, but the biggest part of us. That was some guard, you know. He probably had a telephone, or someone called over to the CP.

Rosen: When you got to where you wanted to get food, you had to go to a civilians place to get food?

Eschmann: A civilian store, yes--a Japanese store.

Rosen: Japanese?

Eschmann: Oh, everything was Japanese over there.

Rosen: What was your attitude at that moment or at that time?

Eschmann: I just told him I wanted to buy some groceries, and I was going to charge it to the United States Army, and he let me have it, you know, canned goods and stuff like that. We wasn't the only ones like that. All of us were like that--about ten of us.

Rosen: What did you think of the Japanese that you went to get food from, having just been attacked by the Japanese?

Eschmann: Well, as far as I remember, that's all I went after. He didn't bother me, and I didn't insult the man or anything. I just told him what I wanted and the way I was going to pay for it, and he didn't hesitate. He probably would have let me have the store. I don't know (chuckle).

Rosen: Was there any evidence of sabotage by the Japanese islanders after the attack?

Eschmann: Well, from where I was stationed, around the island they had these telephone communications boxes. They were quite large, about as large as a trash dumpster. You know, that's a pretty good-sized. Yes, we caught quite a few trying to sabotage the telephone system. Me and my buddy caught one. They

were on the highway. That's about the only sabotage that I knew of because that was the only thing that was out in this particular area, were those telephone communication systems.

Rosen: What do you think about the Japanese after the attack?

Eschmann: Well, I didn't think too much of them, you know (chuckle). You can't very well do that and see your friends get shot. There were lots of men killed there. But I guess time heals everything, you know.

Rosen: What did you think of being on the island after the attack?

Eschmann: I started trying to get out, but I couldn't. I was trying to get out of the infantry.

Rosen: How come?

Eschmann: Well, the way things happened, after I got out of the infantry, I went to radar school. I was with one Navy man. I was in the Air Force at the time. It didn't seem to me like things were strict enough. I felt like this could happen all over again.

Rosen: To the Army? When you were on the island?

Eschmann: Yes.



Rosen: You said you were in the Air Force. You meant the Air Corps?

Eschmann: Seventh Air Force, United States Army Air Force. There wasn't no Air Corps then. It was the United States Army Air Force. I got out of the infantry.

Rosen: Why did you join the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association?

Eschmann: Well, I know there's not many of us left, you know, and I think they help--this particular group. I don't say that we should be no more recognized than anybody else that has been in combat. I'm sure that there are guys who saw a hell of a lot more combat than we did. We got caught with our pants down, and we didn't have a fighting chance. Those men over there didn't, either. But I joined them because that's the day, as far as I'm concerned, the war started and so many men got killed. They've helped the soldiers. That's all I can say.

Rosen: This is probably a good time to end our dialogue. I want to thank you for participating and contributing to the Pearl Harbor Project. This information will be important to anyone who want to read about Pearl Harbor. Thank you, Mr. Eschmann.

Eschmann: Thank you.

[End of interview]