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Stanton H. Enchelmeier
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Oral History Collection

Stanton H. Enchelmeyer

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Dallas, Texas Date: April 7, 1976

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Stanton Enchelmeyer for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on April 7, 1976, in Dallas, Texas. I am interviewing Mr. Enchelmeyer in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was at Hickam Field during the Japanese attack on December 7, 1941.

Mr. Enchelmeyer, to begin this interview, just very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, tell me when you were born, where you were born, your education --things of that nature. Just be very brief and general.

Mr. Enchelmeyer: I was born October 15, 1918, in Providence, Rhode Island. I went through the necessary schooling to graduation from Central High School in Providence. From there I worked in a jewelry factory; as a matter of fact, it was Cohn and Rosenberger. It's now called Coro

Jewelry. That didn't pan out too well. I worked for awhile, but it was being confined behind locked doors where I was casting jewelry so another competitor in the jewelry business could not take up the secret that Coro Jewelry had of manufacturing. From there, why, I started drifting.

Marcello: Now this was during the Depression years, was it not?

Enchelmeyer: Yes, it was. I worked up and down the East Coast as a short order cook and soda jerk from Maine to Florida on Route 1. Pretty soon, why, my wandering feet took me up into Canada and then back into the United States and back to Boston, Massachusetts, where I enlisted on March 7, 1940, in the Air Force.

Marcello: Why did you decide to enter the service?

Enchelmeyer: I was hungry and I always had a fascination for airplanes. Anytime I'd get a little extra money that I didn't need to eat on, why, I'd do a little flying.

Marcello: In other words, you joined the service because of economics. Times were tough, jobs were hard to get, and the service offered a little bit of security.

Enchelmeyer: Right.

Marcello: Now at that time it was called the Army Air Corps, was it not?

Enchelmeyer: Right.

Marcello: Okay, where did you enlist?

Enchelmeyer: Boston, Massachusetts, on March 7.

Marcello: I assume that you didn't stay in Boston very long?

Enchelmeyer: No, I went to New Rochelle, New York, at Fort Slocum and waited to catch a boat to go to the Philippines. Then from there we went to the port of embarkation in Brooklyn, New York.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of going to the Philippines? I assume that that was just an assignment. In other words, did you not volunteer for the Philippines?

Enchelmeyer: Yes, I did.

Marcello: You volunteered for the Philippines?

Enchelmeyer: I signed up for the Philippines.

Marcello: Why did you want to go to the Philippines?

Enchelmeyer: Oh, I just don't know. I've always been a wanderer and a loner. I didn't much care about traveling in a pack because I have never been in a place in my life except one that I have ever disliked, and the only one was during the war years--Canton Island--and I believe it's a mile and a quarter long and about a quarter of a mile wide, and I bet

there were thirty thousand GI's sitting on that one rock (chuckle). But other than that, why, I have never experienced boredom. I have always been able to make my own entertainment in many fields of knowledge. I'll put it that way. Whether it's been crabs on the beach or coconuts growing in a tree or even a snowflake falling, I feel that I'm very fortunate in being gifted in that way.

Marcello: At the time that you entered the service, did you have any idea or thoughts about the possibility of the nation soon being at war?

Enchelmeyer: No, I didn't--not in that category. I believed that a war was coming on, but I did not believe that it was going to be in the manner in which it took place or the nation that it took place.

Marcello: You mean the nation with which it took place?

Enchelmeyer: That's right.

Marcello: That is Japan?

Enchelmeyer: Yes.

Marcello: Okay, so you mentioned that your port of embarkation was Brooklyn. Pick up the story from this point.

Enchelmeyer: Then we sailed down to Charlotte, North Carolina, and the ship we were on was the Leonard Wood, and her sister ship was the Hunter Leggett.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you went to Charlotte,
North Carolina. Charlotte is in the interior.
You obviously didn't go there by ship.

Enchelmeyer: No, but we landed to pick up people from Charlotte.

Marcello: I see.

Enchelmeyer: I believe they were from Fort Bragg. We stayed
there one day, had liberty, then got back on the
ship, and went down to Panama and through the
canal and up to San Francisco to . . .

Marcello: Mare Island?

Enchelmeyer: No.

Marcello: Angel Island?

Enchelmeyer: That fort . . . oh, jiminy crickets, I can't
think of the name of it right now.

Marcello: I can't either. It's a blank in my mind, and I
know which one it is, but I can't think of it.
So anyway, you got to San Francisco.

Enchelmeyer: Fort McDowell! Boy, we kicked that one around!
We were going to pick up the Grant, a ship, then
to go to the Philippines, as she was the only
ship that was able to make, I believe, the trip
to the Philippines.

Then at Fort McDowell, well, then they
said that there were no openings in the Philippines,
and they would either discharge us if we wished at

Fort McDowell, or we could stay and go to Hawaii on the ship that we were already on.

Marcello: And I assume that you opted to go to the Hawaiian Islands.

Enchelmeyer: Yes.

Marcello: What did you think about the idea of going to the Hawaiian Islands?

Enchelmeyer: I liked it very much. I had never been there, and it was a new experience. As I say, I've always been a roamer, and new things fascinate me, and it was another enjoyable venture.

Marcello: Okay, now up to this time, you had not had any basic training. Is that correct?

Enchelmeyer: Nothing to speak of.

Marcello: This was standard procedure, I believe, at that time. In other words, you usually enlisted in the service, and then you went to your permanent duty station, and then you took boot training or basic training or whatever it was.

Enchelmeyer: Right.

Marcello: Okay, so you went on to the Hawaiian Islands. I assume that you landed at Honolulu, so pick up the story from that point.

Enchelmeyer: They took us off the ship, and we got on a little train, narrow gauge train, and it went on out towards

Hickam Field. I don't remember how close to Hickam Field it got. I was thinking about that the other day, but I'll be jiggered if I can remember how close, but I do remember they took us in a truck then and on into tent city at Hickam Field.

Marcello: You mentioned "tent city" at Hickam Field. Now you might explain why there was such a thing as "tent city" at Hickam Field.

Enchelmeyer: Well, the barracks, I believe, had not been finished, which is of cement and steel. They had this large quarter, and they could confine us into this one area for, I believe, it was six weeks where we were not to leave the Hickam Field.

Marcello: Now was this actually the period of your basic training?

Enchelmeyer: Yes, and I expect possibly if there was any kind of disease or something that they could keep it confined to a quarter rather than let it spread.

Marcello: Now Hickam Field was a relatively new base. Isn't that correct?

Enchelmeyer: Very new.

Marcello: And like you say, I believe that this is one of the reasons why you were quartered here at tent city. The permanent barracks were not finished yet.

Enchelmeyer: That's right.

Marcello: Okay, describe the boot training that you received here at Hickam Field during this period.

Enchelmeyer: Well, it was military courtesy for one thing, then learning your left foot from your right foot, how to take orders, how to take care of yourself personally in cleanliness and in military ways. It's more of an adjustment from, I would say, a teenager to manhood for most people.

Marcello: How would you rate the boot training that you received there? Do you think that it was good training? Fair training? How would you rate it?

Enchelmeyer: I would have liked to have seen it more stern because I personally think in a military way rather than a civilian way. I would rather have seen it stricter but with humanism entering into it rather than a bulliness.

Marcello: In other words, are you saying that there was a certain tropical leisure associated with duty in the Hawaiian Islands?

Enchelmeyer: Yes, there definitely was.

Marcello: Well, after you got out of boot camp, what particular specialty did you go into?

Enchelmeyer: Well, they had me assigned to pulling weeds on the grounds until I was with the 17th Air Base Squadron. It was strictly taking care of lawns and those kind of duties.

Marcello: The 17th Air Base Squadron?

Enchelmeyer: Right.

Marcello: Okay.

Enchelmeyer: I formed a very dislike for a staff sergeant who one day pushed me just a little too far, farther than I like to be pushed, and I worked him over with a rake handle. So from there, why, I didn't have any more home in that squadron, so I had to go look for a new home, and I found it with the 50th Reconnaissance Squadron.

Marcello: The 50th Reconnaissance Squadron?

Enchelmeyer: Yes. Her emblem was half-day and half-night. It was a square with a diagonal drawn through it. It was a squadron that was formed in France during World War I. It had never been based on the continental limits of the United States except for the Territory of Hawaii.

Marcello: What particular function did you have in this new unit?

Enchelmeyer: This new unit sent me to school, and I went to maintenance school. From there, why, I got on flight status.

Marcello: Which means what?

Enchelmeyer: Well, I was flying as an engineer.

Marcello: What sort of planes were you flying?

Enchelmeyer: We were flying the B-18.

Marcello: What was the function of these B-18's?

Enchelmeyer: It was mostly training and patrol. It was a twin-engine Douglas similar . . . the whole section, except for the nose, was the same as the DC-2.

Marcello: Now this B-18 was the forerunner to the B-17. Isn't that correct?

Enchelmeyer: Correct. I don't know how many ping pong balls it had in its wings, but it did. It had ping pong balls for flotation. When you put bomb bay tanks in there, it was at least a half a day's work. It looked like two coffins stuck in the bomb bays, and it had its own purging system, where if you had landed in water, you had a means of emptying the bomb bay tanks of seepage of water in them, also the wing tanks.

Marcello: What were the bomb bay tanks for?

Enchelmeyer: For a longer range. You could fill them with gasoline.

Marcello: Oh, I see. In other words, they acted as fuel tanks to give these planes added range.

Enchelmeyer: Yes.

Marcello: Describe how these patrols would work there at Hickam Field with these B-18's. In other words, what sort of an area were you covering? When did you go

out? When did you return? Just describe what one of these routine patrols was like.

Enchelmeyer: We'd leave in the morning just after sunup, and we'd get our PBX. I believe they called it PBX. It's been so long that I've forgotten. I hadn't thought about that. And we would fly . . . well, PBX was that you were leaving the limits of the island . . .

Marcello: I see.

Enchelmeyer: . . . so that you would not be shot down by something else. We particularly flew as far as Johnston Island and French Frigate Shoal and then back. That was our limitation.

Marcello: In other words, you were patrolling, I guess, what we would call a pie-shaped sector?

Enchelmeyer: Correct?

Marcello: Now when these patrols went out in the morning, were the islands being covered in a 360-degree circumference? Were there sufficient planes to do that?

Enchelmeyer: With the Navy and us, yes.

Marcello: Now you must have been one of the few Army units that was engaged in long-range patrol. I would assume that this was what you would call long-range patrol.

Enchelmeyer: Yes, it was at that time.

Marcello: Because from what I've read, I think normally the Navy was responsible for most of the long-range patrol and the Army for most in-shore reconnaissance. But I guess you were assigned to the long-range patrol because you had those B-18 bombers with the longer range.

Enchelmeyer: We took off at ninety; we cruised at ninety; we landed at ninety.

Marcello: You're referring to ninety miles per hour?

Enchelmeyer: If you had ninety, you had it made (chuckle). And it was a two-position prop; it was not a Hamilton standard constant speed or multi-pitch. There was just two, and in order to feather a prop, you had like an old tractor cantilever handle that you pulled up that had a regular drum around it like the brake of a car.

Marcello: When these B-18's went out, were they armed in any way?

Enchelmeyer: With .30-calibers, yes.

Marcello: I would assume that they wouldn't have too much armament on them, since the main purpose of these planes was patrol duty.

Enchelmeyer: Patrol, yes.

Marcello: And of course, armament would have increased the weight and consequently decreased the range, I would assume.

Enchelmeyer: And then we used them for bombardier practice.

Marcello: Now how often would your particular plane go out on these patrols?

Enchelmeyer: Oh, we'd send them out, I'd say, once every three days.

Marcello: Planes were going out every day, but normally a particular plane would be going out once every three days.

Enchelmeyer: Yes.

Marcello: Would this sort of activity continue right on through the weekend?

Enchelmeyer: Yes, because we had the 14th Bomb, the 36th, 50th Reconnaissance . . . I've forgotten what all the other outfits were. I hadn't thought about that in thirty-some-odd years.

Marcello: How long did you remain in this particular routine? In other words, how long did you go out in this B-18? Did this routine continue up until Pearl Harbor itself?

Enchelmeyer: Yes, except when we were on maneuvers, and we were on maneuvers just prior to Pearl Harbor. I was over on Molokai for a little while, and on December 6,

we were on a gunnery mission. I was instructing some new fellows that we had come into the squadron not to shoot towards the aircraft during target practice, but anyway, one of the boys did. He shot towards this other aircraft, and as luck would have it, he hit the cable of the tow target, and the tow target broke and came back and hit our tail. It sent us in a nosedive for awhile and between the . . . I don't remember who was flying and who was copilot. I was in engineering. Between the strength of the three of us, we were able to pull it out of this, and I believe that all three of us were as white as this piece of paper before it was over with (chuckle).

Marcello: Well, this is getting a little bit ahead of our story, so let's get back to your routine. You mentioned that this routine did continue right up until the time of Pearl Harbor. Now I would assume that after you became the engineer in this airplane that you received some sort of a promotion. What rank were you at this time?

Enchelmeyer: I was a private first class with a fourth class specialist rating. I passed my exam for "first and two" . . . but "first and one" . . . "first and two" . . . and I believe, "three . . .

Marcello: When you say "first and one," "first and two," "first and three," what are you referring to?

Enchelmeyer: The specialist ratings were given to people in outfits, and from four on up were given to people on the line. It was a regular examination that we took once a year.

Marcello: How rapid or how slow was promotion in those days?

Enchelmeyer: (Chuckle) In the line outfits there were far less than what we . . . we were faster than they, but still it seemed like forever and a day. I didn't want to become a corporal or a sergeant or anything else like that because I was drawing the money of a sergeant with a "first and four," and yet I was nobody and didn't want to be anybody. I had no extra duties to pull, such as CQ, charge of quarters, or anything like that, so I was free to go and come as I pleased.

Marcello: Now by the time that you were flying these patrols, had you moved into the permanent barracks at Hickam Field?

Enchelmeyer: We had, yes.

Marcello: Describe what the permanent barracks were like.

Enchelmeyer: Well, it was a center barracks of a great big mess hall and then these wings coming off of it.

Marcello: In other words, the mess hall was in the center, and the various wings represented the living quarters of the men.

Enchelmeyer: I'm not positive, but I believe there was a little over 200 of us living in that one particular wing with the 50th Reconnaissance, which later became the 391st Bomb, I believe. I hadn't thought of that either in a long time. It was a good squadron.

Marcello: How close were these barracks to the actual runways and things of that nature?

Enchelmeyer: Oh, I would say about an eighth of a mile, somewhere in that vicinity.

Marcello: Did you have a pretty good view of the runways from where your particular quarters were.

Enchelmeyer: No, we faced one of the commissioned officers' quarters and the baseball diamond and the tennis court.

Marcello: Now Hickam Field was located pretty close to Pearl Harbor, was it not? In fact, there was just a chain link fence separating the two.

Enchelmeyer: (Chuckle) Which we used to go over or under during maneuvers and sneak off to town which we weren't supposed to because the Navy boys were allowed in town but we aren't. But we always managed to have a way to get in and out (chuckle).

Marcello: Did you have a very good view of Pearl Harbor from where your quarters were?

Enchelmeyer: Not a good view. If you could see between the palm leaves and things, well, yes, but you could see the ships coming in as they would pass by the foliage. Then you could see, but the foliage blocked an awful lot of it.

Marcello: Okay, what sort of liberty did you receive while you were stationed here at Hickam Field?

Enchelmeyer: When you weren't on duty, you could go into town, but once again, only 10 per cent of the outfit was allowed off the base at one time, so you had to plan. If you had something particular to go to and you found out that there was not enough guys off, why, then it was alright.

Marcello: How far were you from Honolulu?

Enchelmeyer: Oh, gosh, I think it's around ten miles. I don't remember exactly how far it is.

Marcello: How would you usually get from Hickam Field to Honolulu?

Enchelmeyer: By bus and sometimes one of the guys would have a car, and if he was going in . . . and the commissioned officers that had cars, they were fine fellows, and they would see a bunch of guys waiting for a bus, and if they were going, they'd say, "Hop in,

fellows, and let's go." They were a good bunch of people.

Marcello: How would you describe the morale in your particular unit at that time?

Enchelmeyer: In my particular unit, I would describe it as very good because most of the guys, believe it or not, that were in that company that I was in were ex-guardhouse people. I guess it was made up of more people from the guardhouse than anything else (chuckle). One night before I went to that squadron, there was a first sergeant by the name of Kleppinger, and there was a Major Higgins. He was a West Pointer, and he was a fine gentleman. He knew what kind of an outfit he had, and he knew that it was a rough bunch of boys. But, well, heck, with the whole outfit damn near from the guardhouse, why, it would have to be, and, of course, he asked many personal questions which he was entitled answer to.

Marcello: Now when you say these people were from the guardhouse, you meant that they had served time in the guardhouse?

Enchelmeyer: In the guardhouse, that's right (chuckle). And they were a fine bunch of guys, but they didn't stand much nonsense.

Marcello: You mentioned that the morale was good there.
What was the food like?

Enchelmeyer: The food was very good. I sure ate a lot worse.

Marcello: And I assume this might perhaps in part explain the high morale.

Enchelmeyer: Yes. And there was one outfit before the conscription which took place, which was in October . . . well, before that they were a bunch of guys that stuck together. I have never seen a bunch of men ever stick as close together as that bunch. If one guy got in trouble, everybody got in trouble. That was the kind of an outfit it was.

Marcello: In the course of a week, how often would you be able to go to Honolulu on liberty? Now I didn't say how often did you go, but how often would you be able to go if you wanted to?

Enchelmeyer: You could go if you weren't on duty and you had the means to get there and the means to get back.

Marcello: In your case, how many times a week would this be?

Enchelmeyer: Oh, seventeen dollars a day, once a month, didn't go very far, except if you were lucky in a poker game or a crap game, and if you were lucky, why, then you had that much more.

Marcello: Now you mentioned your pay as being seventeen dollars a month?

Enchelmeyer: Well, it was twenty-one, but they took out your laundry, you know, and it all whittled down to approximately seventeen dollars a day, once a month (chuckle).

Marcello: Yes, I know this is an old expression that they used to use. You'd get seventeen dollars a day, once a month. Okay, so what you're saying in effect, then, is that the low pay would have limited the number of times in which you would have been able to go to Honolulu.

Enchelmeyer: Right.

Marcello: Now what would a young, single airman do with his time when he went into Honolulu or when he had liberty?

Enchelmeyer: Well, as for me personally, I never was one to hang around in bars. There was the palace right close to the Army-Navy YMCA that I was very much interested in, and they hadn't started to restore it yet. Various things like that I've always been fascinated by. And then out in the Waikiki area, they had the Kapalani Park and a bandstand. The Royal Hawaiian Band would play out there at the bandstand. And there was one lady--I've forgotten her name now, but she was real tall--that had a beautiful voice, and a gentleman that was rather

very short but very stocky, and he had a beautiful voice, and they sang together. And the music they could produce, to me, was something because I've always been interested in music and things like that. Now that zoo that they have out there adjacent to Kapalani Park was something that you don't see in very many cities for the amount of acreage it has and for the amount of animals and birds and things like that they grow out there. Things like that always fascinated me, so I never was one to hang around inside of a bar. You know, I'm not opposed to drinking or anything like that, but for me one was fine because my mind was always wandering someplace else, like the University of Hawaii. I was enrolled before the war came in the University of Hawaii. I saw Major Higgins, and he okayed my going to school at the university if I'd be willing to work nights. And there was several fellows the same way.

Marcello: Was it very hard to get overnight liberty?

Enchelmeyer: No, not in the squadron I was in. Maybe that was the case in another squadron.

Marcello: In other words, you could leave in the evening, let's say, and stay in Honolulu overnight--just so you got back for your duty at whatever time you had to report in the morning.

Enchelmeyer: Right. Major Higgins was, as I say, a fine gentleman.

Marcello: Normally, when you stayed in Honolulu overnight, where did you usually stay?

Enchelmeyer: Oh, sometimes several of us would put up what we had together and get a room. I remember one night we had nine guys sleep in one room at the Royal Hawaiian--nine guys in one small room (chuckle). Or some guys would stay at the Army and Navy YMCA. There was only three hotels on the island at that particular time.

Marcello: In other words, staying in Honolulu overnight could be a difficult job because of the lack of room and so on.

Enchelmeyer: Right.

Marcello: I know that in the case of the Navy, those guys had to be back aboard the ship by twelve o'clock midnight, and one of the reasons was because of the fact that there was no hotel space in Honolulu. The Navy didn't want those guys sleeping in parks and out in the open and things of this nature because they'd get rolled and what have you.

Enchelmeyer: Oh, old Honolulu was rough. They played for keeps down there. You didn't know where you would wind up. But Major Higgins, if he knew that you knew

what you were doing and you weren't going to make a bum of yourself, he would okay it. There was no . . . that's the kind of a gentleman he was. To me he was a fine gentleman.

Marcello: Okay, let's pick up the story now from about November of 1941. By this time, relations between the United States and Japan were worsening. How closely were you keeping abreast with world events at that particular time?

Enchelmeyer: In the Honolulu paper, especially on a Sunday--I won't say always, but I'll say most of the time--there would be an article if war did break between Japan and American what our Navy could do to the Japanese Navy. As a matter of fact, it almost became an obsession. People would look at it and would say, "Well, what the heck are those Japanese thinking about anyway? Look here, our Navy could do this, our Navy could do that." It was almost every Sunday. I won't say every Sunday, but most.

Marcello: How secure did you feel being stationed here in the Hawaiian Islands?

Enchelmeyer: Well, we figured that our Navy boys would have things under control. The Japanese Navy might make a feint at us, but the dynamic powers of the United States Navy could quelch anything.

- Marcello: In other words, you felt relatively safe and secure here in the Hawaiian Islands?
- Enchelmeyer: Yes. We knew that war was coming, but we didn't think that it was coming from the angle from which it did come.
- Marcello: Now on the Hawaiian Islands at that time, and, of course, still today yet, there is a relatively large population of Japanese ancestry. Did you give much thought to these people and what they might do if war broke out between the United States and Japan?
- Enchelmeyer: We did give consideration--had thoughts of it--but not to a point where they would make a force of it. We always kind of figured there would always be a few crackpots or something like that that would involve themselves in something similar to that.
- Marcello: When you thought of a typical Japanese, what sort of a person did you conjure up in your own mind at that particular time?
- Enchelmeyer: The Oriental people have always fascinated me because you could never insult one. You could say anything you wished--call him anything you wished--but you could bet your bottom dollar that if you stuck around long enough he was going to get you. You could call him anything, and he'd look

at you and smile, but yet in the back of your mind you'd figure, "I'd better get away from him," because you cannot insult him. He may be insulted, but he's not going to show it. I've always been fascinated by the Oriental mind.

Marcello: Now I know that the military on the Hawaiian Islands was worried about the possibility that some of these Japanese might engage in sabotage or fifth column activities. What precautions were taken at Hickam Field in order to guard against sabotage or any activity of this sort on the part of Japanese sympathizers on the Hawaiian Islands?

Enchelmeyer: The only thing that I could answer on that is this. What precautions the base took, I do not know. But this was when the Norden bombsight first came up, and every night we had men stationed protecting the Norden bombsight. For myself personally, in as many planes as I've flown in which that had the Norden bombsight, I never saw it, I have carried it and guarded it, but I have never seen it for this reason. I always figured that if something did come up that we were at war with some country, maybe Germany, Russia, or God only knows who, if I had never seen the Norden bombsight, I could never tell what the Norden bombsight was because I could

not tell of something that I had never seen. I don't know how far they could push me before I would break. I do not know that, so I figured if my resistance was low and they were able to make me talk, if I didn't see it, I couldn't tell, and so I might protect someone.

Marcello: I do know that one of the precautions that they took at Hickam Field, and the other air bases for that matter, was to line up the airplanes in nice, neat rows, and the rationale was that those planes would be much easier to guard against potential saboteurs if they were lined up in those straight rows. Now is this the way they were lined up most of the time at Hickam Field? Do you recall?

Enchelmeyer: At Hickam Field prior to going on maneuvers. When we went on maneuvers, then approximately two weeks before December 7th, airplanes were painted in war colors corresponding with the terrain where they were going to be, and they were scattered so that if we were under attack, an airplane could not come right down a straight row and wipe the whole business out. Several passes would have to be made if the camouflage showed the location of the planes.

Marcello: In other words, this was done when those maneuvers were initiated approximately two weeks prior to Pearl Harbor.

Enchelmeyer: Right.

Marcello: Describe what occurred on those maneuvers.

Enchelmeyer: I myself was wearing a pair of khaki trousers and an OD shirt and the old campaign hat and a pistol, a .45 automatic. We stayed around the airplane in that area at all times other than chow time. Sometimes we went out with dummy bombs to bomb a silk. That was . . . they dropped a dye into the water, and then we'd make various passes at it, and the bombardiers would drop at the silk.

Marcello: You call this a silk?

Enchelmeyer: Yes. And then some of the guys went out on bombing missions against the Navy with flour sacks. Now I never did get in on that type of a drop. I've only been in on the drops against a silk. And then we had tow target practice.

Marcello: And all this took place during these two weeks of maneuvers?

Enchelmeyer: Right.

Marcello: Were the regular patrols still being maintained?

Enchelmeyer: As far as I know, yes.

Marcello: But this particular plane did not engage in these patrols?

Enchelmeyer: No, we were always usually loaded with hundred-pound bombs to drop at a silk.

Marcello: What sort of liberty did you get during this two-week period when you were on maneuvers?

Enchelmeyer: None. My sister's birthday was on December 6. My sister and I, since we grew up, were very close. She is five years older than I. Each one managed to remember the other on their birthday, so I had money saved back that I wanted to buy my sister a birthday present but still wasn't able to get in or to send her a birthday present.

Marcello: When did the maneuvers end?

Enchelmeyer: On December 6 at 2:30.

Marcello: Okay, describe what occurred when the maneuvers ended at 2:30 on Saturday of December 6, 1941. Now what I want you to do from this time forward is to go into as much detail as you can remember as to what occurred on that Saturday of December 6, 1941.

Enchelmeyer: Well, at 2:30, approximately 2:30, they came out with an order to go on back to your main base, your main field. Everyone was scattered at different islands.

Marcello: And where were you at this time? At what island?

Enchelmeyer: I was over on Molokai.

Marcello: What were you doing over there? Is this where you were flying from?

Enchelmeyer: I was flying from there, either Molokai or Bellows Field, one or the other. But I was over on Molokai, and they said go back to your main field--which I was with Hickam--wash the war paint off the airplanes, turn your ammunition all in, and anyone that wished a pass could go to Honolulu. Now usually only 10 per cent of a company was allowed off of a field, whether it was Air Force or one of the line outfits, but they said anyone, so anyone means anyone or everyone.

Marcello: How much money did you have at this time?

Enchelmeyer: Just enough for a birthday present for my sister (chuckle).

Marcello: In other words, your payday had not yet occurred?

Enchelmeyer: That's right. Our payday was on December 10, on the tenth day of the month, and the reason for that was so that too many service people would not be in Honolulu at one time.

Marcello: In other words, when normally did most of the other branches get paid?

Enchelmeyer: On the first. There would be less fighting, easier on the eyes (chuckle). But nevertheless, we went back to Hickam Field, washed the planes down . . .

Marcello: Like you mentioned, they had water colors on them.

Enchelmeyer: Right. And the Navy boys . . . you could see the

ships steaming into Pearl Harbor. Now if I remember right, prior to 2:30, the only ship in Pearl Harbor, I believe, was the aircraft tender Curtiss. I believe that was the only one that was in, but anyway the Navy boys were steaming on in and ready for liberty.

Marcello: Now this was routine for the Navy, however, was it not?

Enchelmeyer: Right.

Marcello: In other words, they were usually always in on the weekend.

Enchelmeyer: Yes.

Marcello: The fleet would be on maneuvers through the week, and then they would come in on the weekend.

Enchelmeyer: Right.

Marcello: Okay, pick up the story from this point now. You've brought your planes back to Hickam Field, and you wiped them down. What did you do from this point?

Enchelmeyer: I went and took a good shower, put on clean clothes, and two other guys and myself headed for Honolulu-- we hung around together all the time--to buy my sister a birthday present and send it on to her and which we did. And Honolulu was crowded. I went and bought my sister a pair of silk pajamas. By the way, she still has them. She's never worn

them, I don't believe. But anyway, we had then just enough money to get a bus at the Army and Navy YMCA, and then we went back to the base.

Marcello: What time did you come back to the base that evening?

Enchelmeyer: Oh, I would say it was around ten o'clock, 10:30, somewhere in that vicinity.

Marcello: And what did you do at that point?

Enchelmeyer: Well, I went in the day room and read until tattoo blew and then taps, and then I went and finished reading in the head. Old Pelky says to me, "Pappy, let's get up early in the morning. We ought to have early breakfast, and let's get on the tennis courts," because we played tennis almost every Sunday. Well, early Sunday morning he woke me up and we went to early chow.

Marcello: Let's back up here a minute. What sort of condition were the men in that came back to the barracks that night? In other words, did you notice that they were perhaps more drunk than usual, or were they raising more hell than usual or, again, what sort of activity was occurring that night as the men drifted back on to the base? Do you recall anything?

Enchelmeyer: Not on the base, no, because about a couple of days after payday and as many crap games as were going

on and poker games going on, there was very little money on that base.

Marcello: Well, at this time, it was not even a couple of days after payday because you had not even had payday yet.

Enchelmeyer: That's right. It was on the tenth.

Marcello: Okay, so in other words, most of the men who came back on the base that night were in fairly good shape?

Enchelmeyer: Right.

Marcello: This is an important point, I think, because a great many people are under the impression that Saturday nights in Honolulu were nights of drunken orgies and debauchery and this sort of thing.

Enchelmeyer: As far as the Air Force people, no, because they were more privates than anything. Well, with many people in Honolulu, everything is jammed, and if you are going to go into a bar, it's going to drain you financially. So the only boys that really had any money were the Navy boys, and they had it on the books and they could draw it. The line outfits, why, they got paid on the first, so they had a chance of one fellow ending up with the whole works, and nine chances out of ten, he was a 20 per cent man.

Marcello: In other words, he loaned money out at 20 per cent

interest, and you're referring to the man who was the winner in the crap games.

Enchelmeyer: That's right. As far as Air Force personnel, there was very little money on the base.

Marcello: Okay, so this brings us into Sunday morning, as you mentioned, you had made arrangements to play tennis. Once more I want you to pick up the story at this point and go into as much detail as you can remember as to what happened on Sunday, December 7, 1941.

Enchelmeyer: Pelky and I went to early breakfast. After that we went upstairs and got our gear and headed for the tennis courts.

Marcello: Now normally could you stay in the sack as long as you wanted to on a Sunday morning if you didn't have the duty?

Enchelmeyer: Right.

Marcello: And did a great many individuals do this?

Enchelmeyer: Yes. A lot of fellows liked to stay there until dinnertime. We got down there on those tennis courts, and we were volleying.

Marcello: Now from the tennis courts, what sort of a panorama did you have of either Pearl Harbor or the flight line at Hickam Field or any of the other military installations?

Enchelmeyer: Our view from the tennis court was of the baseball diamond. The foliage stopped our complete view of the channel into Pearl Harbor. The barracks blocked our view of the flight line and also of the hangars and the guardhouse, so other than looking towards the mountains, why, our view was distorted.

Marcello: Okay, so pick up the story at this point. You were in the process of playing tennis.

Enchelmeyer: We were volleying.

Marcello: What was the weather like that day?

Enchelmeyer: Beautiful, still--just ideal for tennis. We started volleying, and all of a sudden we heard a flight of aircraft getting closer and closer. Well, finally, it was such a large armada that Pelky said to me, and I would carry the nickname of "Pappy," he said, "'Pappy,' the damn Navy's out early this morning, aren't they?" I made some remark, I'm sure, but I said, "Yeah," and we stopped for a moment and watched them.

They started down like on a dive towards the harbor, and all of a sudden we heard one bomb. We heard something go "BOOM," and then the smoke started rolling. He said, "Somebody goofed!"

But an airplane then was flying low over Hickam Field, and I assume he saw Pelky and I on the tennis court, and figuring that possibly that we were

some kind of "wheels," that we were able to play tennis, he banked his craft over and headed right for us. We saw this stuff spitting out of it. My brain didn't register quite fast enough, and Pelky hollered and said, "'Pappy,' get the hell out of here! The Japs are here!" It did not sink in until he went overhead, and I saw those rising suns on it.

Marcello: How close were the bullets to where you were standing?

Enchelmeyer: If I was as big as you, I'd be shot to hell because I had . . . I'm rather slim. I was a little heavier then than I am now, but I had little bitty welts over my body that they had just missed. Like that (gesture), just little bitty welts.

Marcello: Little welts? In other words, the bullets had just nipped you.

Enchelmeyer: Just nipped my rib cage. Well, I did not know I was hit. I was hit in the leg. Thank God, they were only flesh wounds! I didn't know I was hit until I went to run and after it dawned on me that it was the Japs. While he was shooting, the only thing that I had registered in my mind was a previous sham battle where they used the wax bullets, and that's the only thing that registered. The Japanese Navy did not register until after I saw the rising sun going over my head.

Marcello: How low was that plane flying when he strafed you?

Enchelmeyer: I would say no higher than fifty feet (chuckle).

Marcello: So what happened at that point? Now you had been hit. Did you realize after the plane had made his run that you had been hit?

Enchelmeyer: Not until I went to run. When I went to run and I moved my right leg, it locked. It locked, I would say, in a "four" position, and I could not release it. It would not go down, so whatever happened to my tennis racket, I was least concerned at that particular time. So I rushed--hopped rather --on one leg over towards the armament building which was a wooden building, and Pelky had a water-cooled .30-caliber machine gun set up.

Marcello: Now how did he get the machine gun set up?

Enchelmeyer: God only knows! I don't. He had it set up, and I only remember, as far as that point is concerned, of him hollering to me, and I stayed at it as a sandbag while he followed . . . while he shot it. He had it wedged in some way that I could maneuver myself as a sandbag to serve as sort of a stabilization.

Marcello: In other words, you were holding the machine gun while he was firing it?

Enchelmeyer: Not holding it because that would have been too

hot, but I do remember having my hand underneath it, underneath the breech, and where my other hand was holding, I don't remember that. But he was firing it, and the barrel wilted.

Marcello: Now by this time were you firing up toward the channel itself?

Enchelmeyer: No, towards the hospital. The hospital was north of us towards the mountains. But the machine gun petered out along with all our ammunition, and he hollered to me, "'Pappy,' you're on your own! I'm heading for the flight line!"

Marcello: Now by this time was your wound bothering you anymore?

Enchelmeyer: My leg was still knotted up. It would not release.

Marcello: In other words, when you say it was locked in "four" position, it was bent probably with the heel back toward your thigh, and you couldn't straighten it out. Okay, so what did you do? Now by this time, I gather since you had melted the barrel on that machine gun that the air must have been filled with airplanes.

Enchelmeyer: It was.

Marcello: Did you hit anything?

Enchelmeyer: I'm almost positive. I won't swear on it, but I do believe that he hit the airplane that was

going to bomb the hospital because that bomb fell, I would say, approximately fifty yards shy of the hospital.

Marcello: Now by this time, you probably had gathered your wits a little bit. What sort of emotions or what sort of thoughts were running through your mind?

Enchelmeyer: How to get the most secure cover possible (chuckle) until we could regroup or something. I knew that with that one leg that way I wasn't going to be able to do much good. I knew that.

Marcello: Now at this particular time had the Japanese been bombing the baseball field? I knew that later on or sometime during the attack they bombed the baseball field because they thought there were oil tanks and so on there.

Enchelmeyer: That was during the second wave. This was happening during the first wave.

Marcello: Okay, so what happens at this point, that is, after you had actually melted the barrel on the machine gun?

Enchelmeyer: I moved from cover from the trees so I could see what was taking place. I got over on the ball diamond. I got on the pitcher's mound. Of course, being rather slim in stature, I could get protection from the mound being a little bit high and hugging close.

Marcello: But the mound was right out in the open, wasn't it?

Enchelmeyer: Yes, but by being high, I could flatten myself where I had less of me exposed. Well, the first wave ended, and I was beginning to get up and see where I was going to go from there. All of a sudden on that ball diamond I heard "BOOM." Well, I hugged the mound as best I could, and there was a lot of booming around me which seemed to be forever and a day. I don't know how long it actually was.

Marcello: We're into the second wave now?

Enchelmeyer: Second wave. I don't know how long that wave lasted, but I do know that there were a heck of a lot going on. And after that particular deal was over with . . . and later on I found out . . . and I believe someone told me that there was twenty-one bombs that landed on that infield. And the only thing I can say is that the man upstairs was sitting on my shoulder. He was taking care of me for some reason.

Marcello: In other words, during that second attack, you stayed out there on the ball diamond hugging that pitcher's mound throughout the entire action.

Enchelmeyer: Yes. I didn't dare move. I was scared to move.

Marcello: Okay, were you hit by any shrapnel or anything like that while you were there?

Enchelmeyer: I was not hit by shrapnel, but I was hit by coral rock. I had little pieces of coral embedded into my skin.

The third wave came, and it seemed to me it was low-flying, and it was more or less of a personal bomb nature.

Marcello: In other words, they were just . . . there was really no organized attack in the third wave. They were just hunting whatever was left.

Enchelmeyer: Right. And someone came over to me and said, "Soldier, are you alright?" I said, "Yeah, except for my leg." And he saw someone, and he hollered at a truck. It was a dump truck. He says, "There's one over here!" Now this is his words. He says, "There's one over here!" The fellow in the dump truck said, "Is he alive or dead?" I remember that fellow's words. He says, "He's alive!" He says, "Well, get him over here!" So when I got over to this dump truck, the fellow that was driving the dump truck was a friend of mine. He had served in the Philippines. His name was Reynolds. He was driving it, and he says, "'Pappy,' what in the hell you doing?" I said, "Hell, I was playing tennis with Pelky." "Oh," he says, "'Pappy,' you ride up here in front with me."

Marcello: Are you experiencing any pain at this time, yet?

Enchelmeyer: No. No pain to speak of.

Marcello: Are you bleeding very much?

Enchelmeyer: Just a little bit. It was hot; it felt warm.

Marcello: Was there a hole in your leg or anything like that, or had the bullet more or less just grazed the outside of your leg?

Enchelmeyer: No, it went through. A couple of them went through the flesh. He gave me his .45, and he says, "'Pappy,' if anybody shows up on the highway, shoot them." I says, "Why?" He says, "Because we had snipers." So they loaded the truck end up with a bunch of buys, and we went to Triplett General Hospital. When we got there, only two of us alive got out, and that was he and I.

Marcello: What do you mean when you say . . .

Enchelmeyer: The rest of the guys were dead in the back.

Marcello: Oh, you mean that were in the dump truck?

Enchelmeyer: Yes.

Marcello: I see.

Enchelmeyer: We went into this office, and a doctor came rushing in--I don't know what for--but anyway, he came rushing in. He was opening drawers as fast as he could, and he picked up a .45 pistol, and he picked up a .45 clip, and all of a sudden he put them together--the clip inside the pistol--and when he

did it, he wasn't realizing what he had done. He had loaded that clip, and when he did it, he pulled the breech back, so he had a shell in the chamber. When he did, he realized what he'd done, and he just stood there and looked at it. He turned to me, and he says, "Soldier, do you know how to unload this?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, I don't know why the hell I loaded it." So he handed it to me, and I ejected the clip from it, and ejected the cartridge from it and gave it back to him.

Well, when they took me down to where I was going to stay, they took a dead man out of the bunk, and they put me in the bunk. Well, everything was calm, and that afternoon the girls from downtown . . . we always called them the "working girls."

Marcello: You're referring to the prostitutes?

Enchelmeyer: Yes. They came into the wards, and they were a great bunch of girls. I'll never say one word against them. They helped more than anyone would ever realize what they had done, and from that moment on to this moment today, I have more respect for them than I had ever had in my life, and 99 per cent of them are good people. But they got in there, and they worked like troupers. That

night, of course, they left the hospital and everything. They did all they could do.

That night, someone hollered "Gas!" God almighty! So if you ever saw GI blankets ripped apart in a hurry, you should have seen it that night. Everybody got hold of a piece of a GI blanket and just ripped it and rushed into the latrine to soak it down with water to hold it over your face in case there was gas. Now I don't know how much good the blankets soaked with water could have done, but anyway it . . . I won't say it was mass hysteria, but it could have. It could have developed if somebody hadn't taken hold of the reins and quelched it. But somebody did, thank heavens.

There were some trigger-happy people, and I guess that if they saw lightning bugs or something they would fire at will at night, or maybe at some poor old boy trying to sneak back from that international track meet that was run. But that could have developed into mass hysteria, but it didn't, thank heavens.

Marcello: What are you referring to when you mention the international track meet?

Enchelmeyer: (Laughter) Everybody was taking for the mountains! So there was more guys that didn't come back for

two and three days than there will ever be realized.

Marcello: What sort of casualties were coming into the hospital?

Enchelmeyer: Oh, there were amputees, left and right. They had them stacked. I saw bunches of arms and legs. I remember one old boy from the same outfit. He was a staff sergeant that was newly married, and he had brought his bride over from the States just about a month or two months before that. He had both arms and both legs blown off. I had a stick that I was walking with, and he said, "For God sakes, 'Pappy,' shoot me!" The poor guy, well, he had no arms and no legs, just a torso. I could see his dilemma, and they were just keeping him alive with transfusions and what they could, and the poor guy was out of his mind.

But then the next day, the Salvation Army came in, and they were very, very fine people. And they did all that they could do. Then about two days later, I did see a lady from the Red Cross. She came through and wanted to know where my parents lived.

After that, why, the girls that performed their services in the houses, why, I had a lot of respect for them, and I still do.

Marcello: In the aftermath of the attack, that is, that very night, what were some of the rumors that you heard floating around?

Enchelmeyer: Oh, gosh! They were ready to land on the West Coast. Anything you wanted to hear, they'd hear it. Of course, we had a complete radio silence.

The next morning, this was a fascinating thing. There's two things that stick out in my mind more than anything that there is. The next morning--I would say at approximately eleven o'clock--KTOH in Lehua, Kauai, Hawaii, played a song that said, "Why don't we do this more often?" That was the first thing. But the second thing that stuck in my mind . . .

Marcello: What did you think when you heard that song?

Enchelmeyer: (Laughter) Oh, I've always been an easy-going guy and making light out of things . . . but the second thing that sticks in my mind, and the most glorious thing that I can think of, and I have thought about it many, many times, was when I was going in that dump truck towards Triplett General Hospital before we left Hickam Field. In front of the hospital, there was a flag pole, and sitting on top of that flag pole was a flag. She was limp because there was no breeze. But she

stood there just as majestic as anything that I could ever think of. I go to Hawaii quite often now, usually about three or four times a year, because I feel good over there, and I like it over there. But everytime I got back on Hickam Field, although the hospital is not there now--that building has been made into some other area--but that pole . . . I can still see that flag sitting there just limp, just hanging down. Even though she was hurt, she was sitting there just as majestic as anything that I could ever describe, and I wish that some man that had the means and the vocabulary that could have described that had gotten hold of it because it was beautiful.

Marcello: Well, Mr. Echelmeyer, I think that's probably a good place to end the interview unless you have any further comments that you would like to make. I've asked all the questions that I think are pertinent to your experiences at Pearl Harbor. Is there anything that you would like to add to the record?

Echelmeyer: That day at six o'clock in the morning, we had a bunch of boys--good-natured as most of teenagers and those in their early twenties usually are--and by noon we had a whole army full of seasoned men. I do believe they can say what they wish about our

teenagers of today. We only see a small portion of them, but I believe from seeing what I saw then and what was taking place, and the attitude, that our country is in good hands. Our boys that are growing up and our girls that are growing up, they may say, "Yeah, yeah, they're this and they're that, they're something else," but when the chips are down, step aside because they're coming. I would say that is the American heritage, the American way of doing things, whether they're Polish, they're Armenian, they're colored, they're yellow, or what they are.

Look at Senator Inouye of Japanese descent. He's one of the finest people that we have in the Senate today, and people ridicule him. But still he had that American heritage. His family possibly has the ways of the old country, but he has grown up in a new country of new things that his thinking like ours.

And when they say that our government is deteriorating, I question it. Why I question it, we only hear about the things that have gone bad. We haven't heard about the things that are good because the good things don't make the news. So far as our country is concerned, I believe in our people. I really do.

Marceline:

Well, Mr. Enchelmeyer, I want to thank you very much for ~~taking time~~ to participate in the Pearl Harbor Project of the Oral History Collection. You've ~~said a lot of~~ very important things, and I'm sure ~~that~~ scholars are going to find your work ~~most valuable~~ someday when we get this transcribed and make it available.

Enchelmeyer:

Well, ~~if I've~~ done any good, least amount that can be, ~~then I'm~~ most happy to do it because I believe in ~~our~~ country. I really do.