

Allan Thompson #24
December 6, 1984

Q: Where are you from originally, Mr. Thompson?

A: I'm from Hoboken, New Jersey. I was born there, raised there.

Q: When did you join the Army?

A: Well, I was drafted in April, '41.

Q: In April of '41?

A: That's right.

Q: What was the first unit you were assigned to?

A: I went to Fort Dix to be inducted. Then I went to Fort Eustis for my Basic. After my basic training, I was put on a train and went to Fort McDowell, and from there we waited for transportation to where we were going. I really didn't know. So we got on a ship and it was heading to someplace in the Pacific, I imagine, and we wound up in Hawaii, was the first stop. I understand is how, why, still I'll never know. Let's see, my name is Thompson. I imagine they took the last half of the alphabet, and we got off the boat and we were put on Hawaii there. And I understand the first half of the alphabet, I imagine, went to Philippines.

Q: When you got to Hawaii, what Unit were you assigned to there?

A: Well, then I was assigned to 251st CA RGT.

Q: Where were they stationed?

A: In Camp Malakole.

Q: What was Camp Malakole like when you got there? What do you remember about the place?

A: The place inland there is, as I said before, never used to the Army life at all, but it was really something new to me. Now it's a stay in a beautiful place, nice climate and everything else. You know I had to make myself do stuff like that. I mean as far as experience in the Army life goes, I really started enjoying it in Hawaii. No, see, the best part of the thing was your basic training, because they kept you busy for so many days. You were coming and going.

Q: When you were at Camp Malakole, what was your regular duty?

A: Well, I was assigned to Headquarters Battery.

Q: What did you do there?

A: And then from there I went into the communication, and the poles...you have to wire the poles and stuff like that. And I wound up on the switchboard.

Q: What did you do on the night of Dec. 6th, 1941; the night before the attack? Do you remember?

A: Well, on Dec. the 6th, I had a weekend pass. It was Saturday morning and I went to Honolulu with a few of my buddies there. We walked around and after we started looking around, we had a few beers and we come out. And that weekend pass, that meant I could have stayed overnight. But I come home, oh I figure about 8:00 that evening, and I was going back on Sunday. I went to this church service and I went and had my breakfast. This is on Dec. the 7th, I went to church, and had my breakfast, got my paper. I was in my bed reading the paper when the attack started, which I really didn't know about the attack until a lot of rumors. And we ran out.

Q: What was the first thing you saw or heard that made you think something out of the ordinary was going on?

A: Well, one of the Sergeants come into the barracks and he told everybody to fall out; the fellows, were in the barracks. And we went out there, and as we looked up in the air, and to tell you the truth I really couldn't make nothing out because they were so high, the so-called planes. Then we were told to go back in and get all our gear, and fall out in our order again, which we did. Then we got in trucks and went to a place we have is a Marine airbase there. It's located in the sugar cane field. They call that the Ewa, [E]-W-A. Now I don't know whether that's right or wrong. And we was in there; we was situated around the camps where we're located. I said before, I was in Headquarters.

Q: Was Camp Malakole bombed or strafed at all?

A: Well, my way of thinking is I don't think so. It might have been, see. Because I was down in like a dungeon operating the switchboard, see what I mean. Then after that, got duties assigned there, guard duty. And there was like a tower there. I call it a crows nest; it was that high up. That day we walked up you know, and spent so many hours there looking toward the Pearl Harbor surface. It was like blown away to me, the way it was all lit up with the flames and everything. Naturally the people working there, getting rid of stuff for the shipyard workers. And then we heard rumors about the land here being else, and the place we were in, cornfields, x-amount of feet so high and all, and the wind would start blowing... NAZI! You gotta be nervous and it was really new to me, let's put it that way. And I was really scared to tell you the truth. But with the war on, we got used to it. But as far as firing any rounds at anybody, I don't recall doing it. But you know, a lot of warning stuff like that; you hear them flying in the air, you know. But the main thing we were looking for was planes coming in. And then we had our duty

there until our next orders and I really don't know how long we were out to tell you the truth. But the next place out was Guadalcanal; wasn't too bad there.

Q: How long did you spend on Guadalcanal?

A: Often, as I said before, I really don't know about the time. There wasn't too much action there. Then it got slowed down. From there we went to Fiji. It was a beautiful island. We loaded ships and stuff like that. There was no action there. Guess you want to say where was my next call. The next call was Bougainville. There wasn't too much; there was a little action around north of Bougainville too. But as far as action was the other men, I read in the paper and saw on newsreels. I didn't see all that but I say we were lucky to tell you the truth. That's all I can say.

Q: Well, I appreciate your coming up here and sharing your reminiscences with us.

A: Yeah well, happened to be a long time and thank God I got out of it. My cure is of all this, the men that we really left on the Arizona. The way people are today, I don't think they really realize about the men who lost their lives there; especially the young generation. What you emphasize puts that way, because with the so-called building different bombs and stuff like that. People don't really know what happened. If Japan had the bomb, what would happen to California. And also, the way they talk was they could have walked into Hawaii too, as far as the destruction they know they had done.

Q: When you were there, after Pearl Harbor, What did most of the men in your outfit think about the possibility of invasion? Did they think that if the Japanese invaded that they could have taken Hawaii?

A: Well, my way, as I said before, the way the rules were going, my way of thinking is I didn't actually know what damage they did until we heard it from the true facts. But the Navy and all their stuff, and they damaged the airfields. Of they had a fairly decent amount of men, they could have come in and taken Hawaii. And I said before, these people today, you got your congressmen and senate guys like that. I mean they're probably doing a good job but they're all against this bomb bit and stuff like that. I can see their reasons; they cost a lot of money but if we don't get something like that, because the way the Country is today. I don't know...it's in bad shape because, I personally think, I mean, but no political reasons, stuff like that, I think President Reagan is trying to do a good job. They might think he's wrong, well, that's their opinion too. Which I appreciate their opinion; I can be wrong too.

Q: Well, thank you for giving us your opinion and your memories.

A: Thank you very much.