

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW #452-2

with

Etsuo Sayama (ES)

February 10, 1992

Kapalama Heights, O`ahu

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Etsuo Sayama on February 10, 1992, at his home in Kapalama Heights, O`ahu. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, Mr. Sayama, let's see, last time we were talking about your experience at Waialua Agricultural Company.

ES: Oh yeah.

WN: And you didn't stay there for very long.

ES: Yeah.

WN: Can you tell me what happened or why you didn't stay very long?

ES: Well, as I told you, before I got into Waialua, among ten of us Orientals, I was the only one that got a position. And that was the only [*plantation*] I noticed that the head agriculturalist was a nisei, Sam Kawahara. And I later found out that he was there because he was a protégé, or he had a backer in Atherton Richards, you know. I think was Atherton Richards, oh, Atherton family anyway. You know, they're well known in Hawaiian history. So I figure, well, he was willing to hire me was one step. 'Cause my other nine Oriental classmates, nobody got the initial step, see.

So I went there, but I told you about the first thing that struck me was I didn't mind getting into the field work, and exposure to all the different departments in the plantation so that you know where you stand. But Waialua [*Agricultural Company*] was a subsidiary of Castle & Cooke. And Castle & Cooke, you know, all the Big Five [*i.e., Castle & Cooke, American Factors, C. Brewer, Alexander & Baldwin, and Theo H. Davies*] people Downtown would send the newcomers from Mainland, or anybody, to the plantation to get exposure. You know, all connected, see. Waialua plantation was getting into diversified farming and was specializing in potato. And what happened was this fellow from Minnesota or someplace, he was a potato expert, came to work, and we worked together. And we were going through the first initiation, so-called, *ho hana* and *hapai [ko]*—you know, cut cane and all these things, that manual labor type. And he would get a monthly (wage) whatever Castle & Cooke Downtown was paying him. But in my case, I was supposed to get so much a month, but I had to do what the same

laborers were doing side by side with us.

WN: What was your title when you were hired?

ES: I don't remember. It's not like government, you know, they don't have [*titles*]. Government, I could have it all recorded, but over there. . . . And this was my first job. I guess practically an apprentice, the way they started me (chuckles). And I cannot keep up *ho hana* with the regular laborers. They used to pay us by how many lines, rows, you finished, see. So at the end of the week, I can't even hardly pay my dormitory. I had to stay in the dormitory, I didn't have a home, you know. Most of the people working in the plantation had plantation houses, but I didn't have a home. I couldn't even keep up (with dormitory) payments like that. That went on for weeks until I got indoctrinated. *Ho hana*, we'll do it maybe one week, or maybe less than the week. Or cut cane, you know. So at least you get the feeling of it. And of course another thing that kinda made me gripe was the fact that the five *Haole* boys that graduated with me came around to inspect what I was doing for the plantation. Here was I, doing actual work, and they were getting the benefit of my experiments or whatever, in potato or new type of cane, you know. They were getting good pay already.

So things started to pile up like that, and then there was a bit of unrest too, already, because the niseis were coming up in the plantation. And I remember the Kameda brothers and certain other people that was—well, they were good baseball players to begin with. The plantations had the rivalry, see. And they were in the influential position and they were talking about forming union. But, you know, they were still suppressed, and didn't have the strength, yeah. So later on, though [*in 1945*], the ILWU [*International Longshoremen's & Warehousemen's Union organized sugar workers on all islands*].

When I saw all those things coming up, I said, gee, I don't think I can live rest of my life under that kind of condition. I wasn't exposed to plantation life, that's why I couldn't take it, you know. I was a city jack, all my life was spent in the city, so I didn't know what plantation life was like. And all these other niseis that grew up in the plantation, to them was normal, you know. For example, lunch. I told you about it. But because it's a well-known item of lunch in Hawai`i, I want to repeat it. But I was in the dormitory, so the lady would prepare for us *kaukau tin*. That's the standard way, you eat, take lunch. My friends living in their home would bring same kind, but they get, every day, different kind of *okazu*, you know. (Chuckles) My lunch will have Spam. Spam in all kind of shape, you know, not only fried Spam. When you see the same thing over and over, you get disgusted. So I would exchange lunch with the fellows. Those fellows are glad because at home they get *nishime* and all kind of Japanese kind of *okazu*. And they like Spam because maybe the family couldn't afford to buy Spam.

But all these things came about. And another thing was the social life. I got no social life out there, I don't know anybody. Once in a while, they would have a dance at the gym, you know. I always waited for the weekend to come. And I don't have a car so I catch this—on Nu`uanu Street, where we were living, they had a candy store. The man will go and sell candy right around the island. So I would wait for him to come by on Saturday, I come home with him. And then go back late Sunday night. So social life was gone. I call it social life, but actually I guess I missed my girlfriend, next-door girl, who eventually became my wife. So all those things, you know, the working condition, the unfair wage system, and as I said, the isolation from the city that I was used to. I went to see Mr. [*John*] Midkiff, and I said, “You know, I'm thinking of leaving.”

And I'll never forget this, but he told me, in a benevolent way, "Mr. Sayama, I know you having a hard time getting adjusted, but both Mr. Kawahara and we like your work so far, and we'd like to see you keep on." He was fair-minded to have even hired Mr. Kawahara at such a high position. But I said I didn't think there was a future for me, in my lifestyle. And he said, "Well, you know, I'll tell you this, confidentially, but if you quit here, you gonna be blacklisted, and you will never work on a plantation system." You know, the Big Five [companies] had control [over *Hawai`i's economy*]. So he was indirectly telling me, "Even if you go back Downtown and you try to get into good firms, you on that list."

WN: Even if it's outside of Castle & Cooke.

ES: I guess so. I mean, I don't know how integrated they were, but he wasn't telling me explicitly, see. So I said, oh, gee, if I'm gonna get into that kind of position, I better think twice. But I said, well, I can go.

Because when I graduated, the social service department in UH used to look after me because (chuckles) as I told you, they got for me that scholarship, Prince Fushimi scholarship. And then they got for me that WPA kind [of] job on the farm, like that. So when I graduated, I guess they had a inkling of how the niseis were being treated, as far as leads to good positions. I forgot her name, but she told me, "Ey, you're real good in chemistry, so you want to go work for Honolulu Gas [Company]."

And I know later on, two or three (classes below me), Chinese fellow, he went to work and he became a good chemist over there. But I turned it down.

WN: Why?

ES: Well, I took sugar tech, why should I be chemist for [*Honolulu*] Gas? I gotta follow my conviction that why I took sugar tech was to be a good sugar technologist. And those days, it [*UH sugar technology department*] was acclaimed as one of the best in the world.

I remember later, maybe I should've gone to Taiwan or something. Hung Wai Ching was the secretary for Nu`uanu Y. And he went to Atherton House, I guess, UH. Had a YMCA over there. And then before that, he was the first one gave me a job at Nu`uanu Y, you know. Before I went Waialua, I worked [there] as a janitor [*in 1937*].

WN: This is Hung Wai or Hung Wo?

ES: Hung Wai.

WN: Hung Wai Ching.

ES: Yeah. Hung Wo was good in sugar and all that, agriculture. Hung Wai was, I think, engineering [*and real estate*]. So Hung Wai was surprised. I used to go Nu`uanu Y every day with my gang. And I was one class above them. But I was still with that group, my age level. You know, I told you about the skipping grades. And when I went, he said, "How come you not working?" And I told him about my plight, and he said, "Ah, until you get a job, go help Mr. Arakawa, the janitor."

So I started off as a janitor, you know. But he [*Hung Wai Ching*] was really nice to me. And during the war, he was nice to the niseis. So I never forget him. So I guess if I had gone out someplace and then started, I might have amounted to something, but didn't have the chance. And when I came back [*from Waiialua*], I told Nu`uanu Y people, I quit [*Waiialua*], you know. And they said, "Gee, why you want to do that?"

I didn't want to give out personal reasons, you know. But I said, "I had my own reasons."

And they said, "Oh, you want to sell insurance?" He tells me.

WN: This is all prior to Waiialua?

ES: No, after Waiialua.

WN: After Waiialua.

ES: Yeah.

WN: Oh, okay.

ES: You know, I quit Waiialua, so I gotta start over, what to do, you know. And Mr. [*Umematsu*] Watada used to be (at Nu`uanu YMCA) there. Later he was selling insurance, after he retired, I think he sold for Brainard & Black. Mr. Watada (said to me), "Ey, go sell insurance."

I said, "No, I don't want to be salesman." (Chuckles)

And so, I think that's when I took up a course in real estate. I went Honolulu Business College. And there was a—I forgot his name, Miyashiro or something. Anyway, I used to know him from before and I didn't want to take any old (course), so I was going to take bookkeeping. But he told me, "Ey, you know, real estate gonna be a good field, so why don't you take that up?"

So I started taking that up. During the time I was working Nu`uanu Y like that, I took civil service exam. And I got a call from Hickam Field. They were looking for surveyors. So I said, "Oh yeah, I might as well go (there) and then take night course at Honolulu Business College," you know, for the real estate. Because I started, I didn't want to drop it. So that's what I did. And I started working. . . . This is what, [*November*] 1938.

WN: How did you find out about the job?

ES: Hickam Field?

WN: Yeah.

ES: Oh, go Downtown, federal building and take civil service test. I used to take any kind of test. (Chuckles)

WN: As a surveyor, when you got there, were there a lot of niseis there?

ES: Well, in that group, I worked with none. My chief of party was a Kam[*ehameha*] School graduate. And we used to call ourselves chain man and transit man and all that. Transit man, one was Joe Kamakahi. He was Hawaiian, and I think he—Kam School too. Kam School was good trade school kind type, before, you know. And Teddy Cordez—chee, I don't know. He might have been Kam School too, because . . .

WN: Who's this?

ES: Teddy Cordez. C-O-R-D-E-Z, or something. And I was the fourth guy, you know. But there was two survey groups, and other group leader was nisei, but he graduated in engineering, so he was chief of party over there. So as far as discrimination, there was none, I think. But I wasn't conscious of that kind of stuff at that time. But it was just a matter of taking civil service test and then, oh, sometimes, if you have connections and they know about one test coming out, they will let you know. But in my case, I just went down the office and go look for whatever test was offered. In fact, one time, I even took, later on, post office [*i.e.*, *U.S. Postal Service examination*]. 'Cause lot of niseis were going in the post office work, see. Because no discrimination, you know, postal clerk. And I had taken that test. And in fact, during the war, when I was working Punahou [*School, for the U.S. Engineer Department, later known as U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*], I got a call.

Oh, we had to go, I think, McKinley High School, big auditorium. All of us taking test, see. And I told my—not my immediate boss, but the higher boss, I said, “Ey, I get this postal service (offer) and [*with*] engineering, I don't know if I can go too far,” because (my section) had mostly, I would say, half and half local fellows, and then from Mainland, see. And all our bosses were *Haoles* anyway. So I said, “I think I go work post office.” Because [*collecting*] stamps was my hobby already, you know.

So I figure if I work there, I can get all kind of—but the big boss [*U.S. Engineer Department*] said, “If you want to, I can release you, but they really could tie us down.”

WN: This is when now, when was this?

ES: During the war.

WN: During the war? You didn't have to stay in your job?

ES: Well, that's what he told me.

WN: Oh.

ES: “But if you really want to go, we'll release you.” Because I wasn't good engineer or anything, I was just a draftsman, you know. But he said, “You know, you not called for the draft because we gave you deferment. You're deferred because you were in war[*-related*] work. If you go to the post office, I don't think the post office can give you that same deferment.”

So I said, “Oh, I'll stick with you.”

(Laughter)

ES: And that was a good [*decision*], you know. I think I got further in with the Engineers, instead of at the post office. I might have climbed quite a bit in post office, but you just stay there, stay put. Whereas I went all over the world with the [*U.S. Engineer Department*].

WN: Were there other people in your situation too, during the war, were in this defense-related job, and then got offers to work somewhere else, but were sort of frozen?

ES: I think most of us were frozen. Well, wherever you want to go work, you have to think of two things: to get away from the draft. Lot of us had our name on that register already. And so, as the war progressed, they picked you one by one. And so that was one consideration. And the other thing was if you work for the federal [government], then at least for the duration [*of the war*], you set. Because the corps of engineers was into everything. You know, they were calling constructors from the Mainland and local contractors too. And so, it's not just like a small engineering firm. Corps of engineers used to be only interested in harbors and rivers. But now, it became, you know, war industry. And they were controlling. [*Fort*] Shafter had their own engineering department, but most of the construction were given to the corps of engineers. Of course, every army unit have engineers, but they were war-type engineers, and not this civilian construction. So we had supervision of everything. So even if you quit, then you would try to get work, you still working indirectly for the corps of engineers. That's the feeling you have, so why quit, when you have the direct tie-in with the federal government, and you're protected? And you don't know how long the war gonna last. So that's the decision, I think, lot of us made. So we stuck together.

WN: So when you first started [*working at Hickam Field for the U.S. Army Air Corps Quartermaster Department as a surveyor*], before the war started in 1938, did you have any inkling of that's what was gonna happen? You know, if I join the federal government, maybe I won't have to get drafted, or something like that.

ES: No, I didn't.

WN: Did that go through your mind?

ES: No. 'Cause we were too young to know the ramification of international relationship. Maybe the government, you know, the fact that they built Hickam Field [*in 1938*] was in preparation for the war. But we were too young to realize things. You know, in hindsight, yeah, I think it was that. See, because when Hickam Field was started, we were working for the [*U.S. Army Air*] Corps Quartermaster [*Department*]. Quartermaster in the army, you think of supply, yeah?

WN: Yeah.

ES: Uniform and this and that. But they were doing it and the [*U.S.*] Air Force didn't have much of a organization at that time. [*Hickam Field, built in 1938, was under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Air Corps.*]

WN: This is in—when you first started.

ES: Yeah.

WN: When you first started, your title was—you were with the [*U.S. Army Air Corps*] Quartermaster

[*Department, 1938–41*]?

ES: Right. So that shows even the government didn't think much of it. But later on, after working couple of years at Hickam Field, they said corps of engineers gonna take over construction of Hickam Field. So you quartermaster, and you have seniority, so you go to [*Fort*] Shafter. And I was moved to Shafter. And the construction we were doing was primarily building warehouses so the quartermaster can keep their supply. And that type of quartermaster you became. And the corps of engineers started building, of course, primarily for the war effort. And they hurried it up to build that Hickam Field, because war was in, you know . . .

WN: Imminent.

ES: Yeah, imminent. And the intelligence service, they got all the data. So they know what they were doing. And sure enough, before we can even prepare ourselves, bang, they hit us on December 7. And so, few days after that, us guys down Shafter (chuckles), we were transferred back to corps of engineers. Quartermaster, they were *pau*, they weren't gonna fool around with construction anymore. [*On December 8, 1941, all army construction and real estate matters were transferred from the U.S. Army Air Corps Quartermaster Department to the U.S. Engineer Department.*]

WN: So, '38, you were—it wasn't considered part of the corps of engineers when you first started?

ES: No, I started at Construction Quartermaster. And then in '41, right after the war [*started*], I became part of the engineers. And then from Shafter, I went to [*U.S. Engineer Department headquarters at Alexander*] Young Hotel.

WN: Okay, now, so when you first started [*working for the federal government*]—let's start from '38, what was your first job?

ES: Engineering aide [*for the U.S. Army Air Corps Quartermaster Department at Hickam Field*]. You know, when they look in the transit, and you see somebody holding the pole, I was the guy. But as I said, had Joe Kamakahi, and Teddy Cordez and myself. And Tai Hoi Lau, yeah. I was the youngest, and you know, the city jack, so I carry their lunches.

(Laughter)

ES: You know, you [*work with*] that kind, poles and stakes, carry that kind of stuff. And then we needed the high pole—you see, from Hickam Field to Fort Kam[*ehameha*] to our airport was cane field, those days. You try walk through the cane field with high pole like that. You cannot go sideways, you gotta hold 'em, you know. So I used to get all the dirty job, I was the lowest guy. Well, in anything, when you go in, you gotta learn from the bottom. And that's what I was doing. Although, educationwise, I had more than the whole crew there. Even the chief, he was a Kam[*ehameha*] School graduate. So, you know, as part of our course up University [*of Hawai`i*], we had to make a survey of the campus, our surveying class. So I knew how to use that instrument and then interpret that and make a drawing. So educationalwise, I had, but I didn't have the practical knowledge. And then, I was about the last to be picked, so (chuckles) started from the bottom, so to speak.

WN: How did the pay differ from . . .

ES: Waialua?

WN: Yeah.

ES: Oh, gee, I don't know. I don't remember much about Waialua money. But I know when I went to Hickam Field, GS2, \$102, starting pay. So that I never forget, because that's my first, you know.

WN: Hundred two a month?

ES: Yeah. And of course, that was considered good already to get \$100. And I was living with my folks yet, so that was ample. When the civil service thing comes out, you could see the different exam for different position, and you could see from GS2, it starts going all the way. But we were considered sub-professionals, see, SP2, sub-professional. When you get into the P, which is professional, then the pay became better. So I said, "Well, at least I know I have a future ahead of me." Since I like math and working there was all right, I said, "Well, I gonna try." And after that I had no choice, as I told you. I had a choice for post office, but I turned it down.

WN: So between '38 and '41, when the war started, you did that, you were the rod man?

ES: Yeah. Rod man or chain man. But then, as I said, I had lot of drafting experience, so once in a while, if the office in the drafting room, they lack people, they used to ask me to work in there. And then I became more proficient there, because manual labor was not for me. You know, that kind, with the fingers and hand, and math, interpreting degrees and angles like that, I was okay. So I did most work in the office. An engineering aide can mean any kind of aide for engineers, see. So whether it be for surveyor or for engineer, or draftsman, they can move you around, so they put me in the office. And I think that was a lucky move for me, because if I had stayed out on the field, the highest I could have gone was chief of party. But the way it turned out, step by step, after the long years, I finally got myself converted into engineer rating, because every summer we used to have university professors from UH come over and work for us during the summer. This is way later, see. And my engineering division chief was Jake Park, I think. He was an architect, and he told the professor, "Ey, this boy,"—they used to call me Sammy, Sayama was hard—"Sammy, he's been working with us kinda long time, and he was college graduate, can't he be put in a engineering group category?"

And this professor was nice enough, he went back and he saw all my record at university. He said, "Yeah, I think he has enough background with the experience and the education, he can be put in the professional group."

So I filled in all kind of paper and I submitted to the civil service, and they gave me a P rating. So after that, was better for me, because every time there was an opening, I can qualify, you know. And then, every time they want to give me a raise, on the P rating, you get better pay, see. So that was really lucky for me, and couple of people look after my welfare. (Chuckles)

WN: Okay, before we get into your moving over to the [*U.S.*] Engineer [*Department*] at Alexander Young Hotel, what I want to do is just ask you or talk to you about what you were doing the day that Pearl Harbor was bombed.

ES: Oh.

WN: Can you describe that day for me?

ES: Yeah. Early, when that excitement came up, I think I was listening to the radio to find out what the hell's going on, because, you know, you hear all that bombing noise and all that, but you don't know what's happening. So I turned to the radio, and then that's when I found out. I forgot his name, he said that this is the real McCoy, or whatever.

WN: Webley Edwards.

ES: Yeah. But . . .

WN: Did you hear sounds, noises?

ES: Oh yeah. But the one that really brought it to a climax, was the one, the projectile that fell on Kukui Street. See, we were living right on the corner there.

WN: Nu`uanu and Kukui?

ES: Yeah. That thing [*i.e.*, *U.S. anti-aircraft projectile*] fell, and of course, we ran right to the window, living on the second floor, and I saw bodies on the sidewalk. I guess they got blown out, when, you know, the explosion. And then the ambulance started to come, see. So then I told my parents, “Ey, I don't think we should stay in the city. We better go someplace.”

We didn't have car or anything, and my mother used to work for the Robinson family up Nu`uanu, and her cousin was the cook. And she had a domestic help's quarters, (away) from the main building. So she said, “Oh, let's go there. So get your stuff, and hurry up. Get pajama and things like that.” We didn't know how long we were gonna stay and what's gonna happen, see. But the idea was to get away from the city. So I don't even remember how we went, whether we had a bus or walk up or what, but you know, from Kukui to the [*O`ahu*] Cemetery, wasn't that bad. Of course, kinda uphill, yeah, after you pass Kawaanako School. But I was so used to with that area, anyway. So we stayed overnight with the lady. We slept over there.

WN: What went through your mind when you saw the projectile and the bodies out there?

ES: Oh, I thought Japan was gonna start bombing the whole place up. Oh, before that too, on Nu`uanu Street, where Foster [*Botanic*] Gardens is now, used to be a [*Hawai`i*] Chuo Gakuin, Japanese[*-language*] school. And the kids had Sunday school there. And my neighbors, you know, my future wife had three younger sisters, I think some of them were going Sunday school. And they came home, and said, oh, some of their friends got hurt and were taken to hospital. So that educated you more that, oh, this is a something real going on. Although later on, we read in the paper, it was our own [*U.S.*] unexploded projectile that came down all over the city. Because the bombing was strictly military, you know. But you couldn't tell in that atmosphere, differentiate that. So we took it for granted, you know. 'Cause really scared. And my wife's folks evacuated too. They went further up on Old Pali Road, because their good friend was working—the husband and wife was working as chauffeur and maid for the Cooke family up Old Pali Road. And so we got separated that time. But the next day was funny too,

right after that. Can I go to next day?

WN: Sure, sure.

ES: 'Cause that day, you know, that's it. We stayed up there just scared.

WN: What did you take with you when you went up?

ES: I don't recall. It was mostly my parents doing. And then, since we gonna stay with a good friend, you know, we figure everything there. So that kind of detail, I don't remember. After we got there, what we did, I don't know. I guess mostly listen to radio. (Chuckles) And I don't even know if we talked to the Robinson family. Because Japanese and *Haoles*, yeah, you know what I mean? You don't feel right, too, when they tell you Japan is attacking, you know. Because I know my parents them used to collect the silvery [foil] paper, you know, wrapped around the pack of cigarettes like that. Anything, they used to send Japan, because our parents are from Japan. They didn't know they were gonna fight America. And then they used to be pro-Japanese. And so I don't know how the Robinsons felt against us, you know. But we just stayed put in the house. And listened to the radio.

And the following morning [December 8], got up. They said, oh, they were calling all civil service and federal workers, report to your post.

WN: They didn't call you that day [December 7]?

ES: I don't know if they called. I don't have phone at home, and they don't know where to contact me. So by radio, they used to tell, oh, Pearl Harbor [Navy Yard] employees all go Pearl Harbor, like that. They may have, but I wasn't listening, you know. All my thought was get away with my folks to safety. So next morning I told my parents, "Oh, I gonna report for work."

'Cause prior to that, they had given us identification cards and whatnot already, you know. The army was aware of something coming up. So I had the ID card, and I went. And right there, by that cemetery, there's a bus stop. And I went out and there were several people, official-looking people, they said, "Where you going?"

I said, "Oh, I'm going to work."

"Where?"

"Fort Shafter."

WN: This is—you're talking about O`ahu Cemetery?

ES: Yeah.

WN: Okay.

ES: See, the Robinson family—you know the Hawaiian mausoleum?

WN: Yeah, Royal Mausoleum.

ES: And then, Robinson family, and came the cemetery. So the Robinson . . .

WN: So [*the corner of*] Nu`uanu [*Avenue*] and Judd [*Street*]?

ES: Yeah.

WN: Okay. That's where you were waiting for the bus.

ES: Yeah, around there. I think there was another bus stop above Nu`uanu and Judd. But anyway, that area, I don't know which one I went to. But then they were stopping people and checking up, where you going and what you gonna do, and all that. I guess they were looking for help, you know. And I said, "Oh, you know, I work for the corps of engineers. As far as Hickam Field, all that utilities like that, we laid out. I know where it is because I had to hold flag over all these things, see. And I had to go in the drafting room and draw, lay out the utility system."

So he said, "Oh, okay, go then."

But when I went on the bus, either from the bus or outside, I noticed plenty people working in the cemetery. And I think they had a trench digger or something, anyway, equipment. And they needed plenty people to dig trenches. Bodies were being brought to that area. You know, I hear later on, on Judd Street—before that, I think, somebody was going to work or something, and his car got hit or something on Judd Street. [*Three civilians on their way to work at Pearl Harbor were killed when their car was struck by a projectile on Judd Street.*] But anyway, I went to Shafter.

WN: How long did it take you, about, you know . . .

ES: I don't . . .

WN: Was there traffic, lot of traffic?

ES: I don't recall. But I know I got there, because I was [*then*] sent home. And the reason being that when I got to that gate, I showed my pass, but he [*sentry*] said, "If I were you, go home."

And I said, "For what?"

He said, "Change clothes."

And I had [*on*] blue, you know. He said they got rumors that Japanese parachuters in blue were coming down on St. Louis Heights and they didn't know where, but that was the rumor. So you had the face of a Japanese (chuckles), and you in blue. Said, you know, "Our soldiers might get trigger-happy, you walk around in Fort Shafter."

So I went home, changed clothes and went back to work.

WN: So you got back on the bus and went back home.

ES: Yeah.

WN: Change clothes, came back.

ES: I don't think they furnish us transportation or anything.

(Laughter)

ES: They needed the cars for all important stuff. And then later on, I think was Mr. [Harry] Makino, he was working with us at [Fort] Shafter. Anyway, few of the higher-grade engineers were visited by the intelligence or whatever, and then questioned and then I think they spent overnight, police station or someplace. But I was real low on that organization, so, you know, I don't have vital information that I could have supplied to the. . . . See, like Mr. Makino, he used to work on all the airplane hangars and all, he was the structural engineer. So he knew all the layout stuff. So I think he was questioned.

WN: Did he come back to work?

ES: Yeah, I think he did come back. And Ray Uyeno was the same thing. Oh, he was the other chief of party, Uyeno. And he worked with the corps of engineers way later too. Because I still remember him. But I used to work with him on the outside jobs too, when we were students at university.

WN: Let me turn the tape over.

WN: Okay, so we were still talking about that day [December 8, 1941].

ES: Yeah.

WN: When you went to work, do you remember what you had to do or . . .

ES: No, nothing like that. I don't remember.

WN: Was there a lot of confusion at Shafter?

ES: Yeah. One thing I remember is that, medical clinics inside there, they had too many bodies. You know, they were just stacking 'em up. That's what, all kind [of] rumors come out. I didn't actually go and look at it but, you know. So then, I thought to myself, oh yeah, maybe that's why they digging the graves up O`ahu Cemetery. But that's one thing stuck in my mind. But besides that, I don't know what was going on at Fort Shafter.

WN: Did you feel different because you're Japanese? Did you feel that you have to act differently?

ES: Well, subconsciously I must have. When they sent me home to change clothes, there's the first step. And then, I don't know if was at that time or later on, we had this *bango*, you know, ID, with a black band around. So, we were conscious of that, you know, discrimination already.

WN: Oh, just Japanese had that?

ES: Yeah, yeah. Or third-country nationals, you know. But mostly Japanese, see. And to begin with, you was conscious of that because when I was taking civil service test, even if you took the test, I don't think we could have qualified for Pearl Harbor work. The navy won't hire us. So I know I had that kind of things in mind, but that day, as far as being treated this and that, I had no concept. 'Cause as I said, we were small potatoes. If you were a influential, yeah, then. . . . You know, like the kind [of] *bon-san* and [*Japanese-language*] schoolteachers, all got taken. Of course, I didn't know at that time, you know. But didn't occur to me at all, because all my family is small. And—oh, but my stepfather [*Matsuki Tamura*] got fired, though.

WN: Yeah?

ES: He was working [*for*] Pacific Cable. And you know, later on, I read the story about that cable from [*General George*] Marshall. They sent 'em out through the cable, because all the wires were tied up. And the Pacific Cable guy *wen* deliver 'em about twelve o'clock that day, or something, after the war had started, you know. But my stepfather was an alien, so he was . . .

WN: What was he doing at Pacific Cable?

ES: General office work. And clean up and go post office, go get the stamps and, you know, the thing that come up, they mail 'em and, of course, try to call 'em and they confirmation through the mail. Things of that nature, I think. But I didn't talk too much about, “Ey, what you doing?”

(Laughter)

ES: Especially stepfather, you know. But one thing I learned from him was he used to buy first-day covers, and he used to buy stamps, and I learned philatelic stuff from him. And which window to go to get the special service for the kind [of] certain stamps, like that.

WN: So the—Mr. Makino, the people at Shafter, were they issei or nisei?

ES: Nisei.

WN: They were nisei.

ES: Yeah.

WN: Were there any aliens working at Fort Shafter?

ES: Chee, that, I don't think so. Because you have to be a citizen to get the civil service status.

WN: I see.

ES: Yeah. Of course, lot of the kind [of] menial job—they may work for army personnel as yardboy or cook or something, at home, like that. But as far as civil service, I don't think so. I don't recall anyway. All the Japanese I knew was civil service status. Like Uyeno and Makino, and Wynn Nakamura, he was electrical. But he came later, I think.

WN: So the family that lost their lives, that family at the saimin stand. Did you know them at all? [On December 7, 1941, a U.S. anti-aircraft shell exploded on the Cherry Blossom restaurant located on the corner of Nu`uanu Avenue and Kukui Street. Kikuyo Hirasaki, whose mother owned the restaurant, lost her husband and three young children in the blast, which claimed a total of twelve lives. Mrs. Hirasaki was seriously injured.]

ES: No, I didn't know them. I knew that there was a saimin stand there. But I didn't frequent that place, because my wife's parents had a saimin stand on the `Ewa side of Kukui Street too, see. On the same street, you know. And the only reason why I remember that place is I used to go to Nu`uanu YMCA, and I have to walk along that street, Kukui Street, and then you hit Fort Street, and you go up to Vineyard, the corner was Nu`uanu YMCA. So I passed the place all the time, but I never took notice, you know, except I noticed people eating saimin there.

WN: How badly was the building damaged?

ES: Well, to me, the damage wasn't too big, you know, but my focus of attention was only on the bodies. And all the shattered tables and chairs and all that. Of course, reading that article [*The Honolulu Advertiser, November 26, 1991*], it said it hit towards the kitchen, or something, and the force of the explosion forced everything out. And the entrance was kind of big, so that's the easiest way the force to go out. So I notice that, see. You just saw the bodies and people crowding and then ambulance coming and then we said, "Oh, let's run away."

So, no time to think about that kind. If that was our own, my own house, I would say, "Oh, what was broken." You know, radio, TV, or whatever, but you can't recall things like that.

WN: Was there a fire?

ES: I noticed smoke, yeah. But whether there was fire, and it spread or not, I don't recall at all, because we just discussed and took off. So I didn't even see the aftermath at all. And even when I came back, like that, to live back in the same house, I don't recall going over there, you know. Well, right off the bat, you had the blackout. You cannot be roaming any old place. So all you did was go to work and come home, and stay home. Put the black curtain down and if you use the light, you gotta make sure nothing leaked out. You were really confined.

WN: How long were you at the Robinsons?

ES: Oh, only that night [*December 7*].

WN: Oh, oh. So after that, you folks went back?

ES: Yeah, back to the house. Because everything quieted down, and then, when you listen to the radio, whatever news they tell you, all they tell you is maybe the aircraft carriers and bombers are out, but nothing is happening, so stay in your home and then, you know, blackout. And listen to the radio for further instructions. That's about all. I don't know if my parents had shortwave or what, but I know lot of the older Japanese used to listen to shortwave to find out if Japan was broadcasting anything. But soon, thereafter, they made everybody, aliens anyway, turn in their radio, and they took 'em away.

WN: So you folks turned in yours?

ES: Yeah, I think my parents did. Maybe they cut off the shortwave part and then gave it back to us. That part I don't know. But that's the only way we gonna find out. Communication, you know. And with martial law on, whatever law the military is giving, they give it to the radio station and they would, in turn, give it to us. And no more Japanese[-*language*] newspaper for us. That was stopped. And we don't subscribe to American paper. And as I said, after work, I used to go Nu`uanu Y, read newspaper like that, take a bath, you know. But all that was out. You just stay put at home and to take a bath, you get that bucket and you put 'em on the stove, and heat the water and put 'em in the basin and wash up. So was strictly confined to the house.

WN: Were there block wardens around there?

ES: I think there was, yeah. But I know one time I got caught by a policeman, though. He said my—I had a window, fronting Nu`uanu Street, and I think the upper part was open for air. We had this black cloth on the window and when you pull it up, then it automatically sealed off. But I think it was open and a light was going out. Knocking at the door, and my folks said, “Ey, you better get out already.”

Open the door, I look at the guy, policeman. “Who stay in there?”

I said, “I am.”

He said, “You know over there, the light is coming out strong, you know.”

So I went in, I said, “Oh yeah, I forgot to push it all the way up.” And I must have been reading something, you know, doing something. Then I look at him. I said, “Ey, you Moke, yeah?”

He said, “How come you know me?”

I said, “University, you used to play basketball, and I used to go gym.”

And his name was Ernest Moses. So he said, “Oh yeah, yeah. You went UH?”

I said, “Yeah.”

Then, he said, “Oh, okay, then pull 'em up, and then be sure from now on, now, I don't want to report you.” He let me go.

But if I didn't know the guy, I think I would have been thrown in the slammer or at least be fined. But that was one experience I had with the law, during that blackout. But happened to be my friend, that's why—not friend, but I knew him, you know. I follow sports up university, see. (Chuckles) That was it. But was a really scary life, though, those days. You don't know what gonna happen. 'Cause if they can sneak in like that, I said, gee, they can do practically anything, you know.

Later on, well, this is real later on—I got called in and asked by military intelligence. I got pulled in because of my [*stamp*] cover activities and my letters, you know. The guy, he had a dossier on me, because he knew I had a brother in Japan, and . . .

WN: When was this now?

ES: Later on . . .

WN: During the war?

ES: Yeah, during the war. 'Cause he asked me, "If my brother came on the submarine, what would you do to help him?"

I said, "First of all, I don't know how my brother look." I said, "We were separated when we were kids. You know, seven and five years old. And the last I heard, he was in Manchuria."

Then, oh, they ask all kind of questions, though.

WN: This is what, navy intelligence?

ES: Army, I think.

WN: Army. They called you in.

ES: Yeah. And they were headquartered at the Dillingham Building on Bishop Street. That whole building was [*used for*] intelligence, I think. And at first, I don't know why they picking on me, see. Then it dawned on me, you know. [*They*] said, "You've been corresponding with lot of military people, and sending out covers, and asking for APO [*army post office*] and navy cancellations. Why do you need that for? Unless you trying to get spy data."

I said, "Oh, that's our hobby." And I said, "Look, the first anniversary of Pearl Harbor, I made one, in honor of all our men that died." And I told 'em I been doing that ever since.

And I think the part that they really came after me was I tried to send a bunch of envelopes for the 442nd [*Regimental Combat Team*] to send back to me. Because I had plenty 442 friends in—100th [*Battalion*] and 442—in Italy. And since I was connected with YMCA, I used to send 'em YMCA newspapers. You know, we used to have once a month, or whatever. So I figure they hungry for information. And they also was lacking in stationery to correspond. That's what I found out from Arthur Komori. I don't know if I told you about the fellow in Australia, who escaped from the Philippines with [*General Douglas*] MacArthur. He was always asking me for that. So I send it to him, you know. So I said, "Well, I'll go do the same for the other guys and if they write to me, it's a plus for me, because they using the special cover that I had printed." And 442 one, you saw that picture, yeah?

WN: Yeah.

ES: The cover. And I had a space leftover on top, so they could write their signature, and outfit they belong to. And I get censorship stamp too, yeah. And later on, those covers sold pretty good, you know. Because the Mainland guys, they couldn't get that kind. So they wrote to me, and I would send 'em, but at that time, I was sending too many of the 442, I think. So that brought it to a climax, I think, for them to investigate me.

WN: So how did they notify you, that they were investigating you?

ES: Oh they send a what-you-call to the house. Pick you up and then you go.

WN: Yeah. And who questioned you?

ES: Oh, I don't know those guys.

WN: More than one person?

ES: I don't recall. I don't know what the interrogation was, you know. More scared than anything else, yeah. Because, by then, I had heard of internment and all that. So, I didn't want to go Mainland, you know, be interned. Especially my wife [*Yaeko Iwamoto Sayama*] was—I think she was out by then. I don't know if I told you, but after we got married in July of '42, she was in the hospital until '43. So, I guess by then she was out.

WN: So you got married in '42, right?

ES: Yeah.

WN: Tell me something about your wedding.

ES: (Chuckles) That's another thing, boy. We couldn't gather more than so many people, in a gathering. So we said, "Oh, no need go church wedding, because if we go church, you gotta call people and all that and get permission. We go get justice of peace." And then, of course, we had to work every day. So I said, "Let's go Sunday."

And I call up one of the justice of peace. I know he lived in Pu`unui. And, "Could you get us married?"

He said, "Oh, come over in the morning."

So, we went there in the morning. We didn't want to get too many people involved, so I had my best man, and my wife had her bridesmaid. And the Robinson family, there used to be one yardman, and he had a daughter and the daughter used to go YMCA night school. She was from Japan. And my wife's family, this guy lived with them for a while, and then he moved out, but he was also from Japan. And the two people from Japan wanted to get married too. But they don't know what to do. So I said, "Oh, come with us then." My wife and I will stand in as witness for them. And after they get married, we can get married.

So we had double wedding, practically. You know, we were first a witness for these two, couple. And then we had our own witness. And that's all you need at a wedding, justice of peace [and] a witness. And then we got married there, came home. And we were living next door to each other (chuckles). So we went over to my wife's side for our—I don't know whether it was lunch or dinner though. Oh, lunch, yeah, gotta be lunch. Because we went for honeymoon, my best man had a car, station wagon. Hirota Florist, he used to deliver flowers, so he took us out to Kokokahi, YWCA camp, you know, Kane`ohe Bay. And there's a bungalow there. I got pictures of that. And we spent our honeymoon there. And there was another incident there. I like go fishing so. . . . There's a long pier, and during the day I caught

some `opae. Put 'em in the net and then I tied string, and I put 'em underneath the pier. And next morning—*papio* is good fishing early in the morning, depend on the tide. So I told my wife, “Ey, let's go wake up early, go.”

“Okay.”

And then I took my pole and then we went out. And she was up, holding the pole, and I was underneath the pier, untying that `opae, the bait. And here comes the sentry with a gun. He say, “What you doing under there?”

“Oh, I'm getting this bait.”

So I brought it up and show it to him. And then, “What you gonna do?” This is early in the morning yet, see.

WN: Was it light yet?

ES: I guess it was. Must be, because I don't think I was fooling around with flashlight in a blackout, you know. Good thing my wife was there, too. She said, “We just came out on our honeymoon, and get no place to go, so we going fishing.”

And well, “Okay, then. But, you know, don't do the kind [*of*] suspicious thing as going underneath *da kine* pier, like that.”

(Laughter)

ES: “We thought you might be putting something, you know, detonator, or something.” You know, they think of anything, see. Trigger-happy, you know, those days.

WN: Were there a lot of sentries around Kokokahi?

ES: I guess so, all the shoreline. Because later on, that morning, Waimanalo, somebody was shot at. I don't know if he was injured or what, but similar situation. Maybe the guy went out fishing too early, you know (chuckles). So that's the two things stand in my mind about my wedding, cannot forget (laughs).

WN: Now, were your parents at the wedding? Your mom, your dad?

ES: Oh, yeah. Well, for the *kaukau*.

WN: Yeah, what about the wedding ceremony?

ES: Nah. No more cars. So only us, and the two Japan people that was getting married. Four of us. And I guess we must have jammed in into the station wagon, one car.

WN: There was a law saying that Japanese cannot—too many Japanese cannot congregate.

ES: No, not only Japanese.

WN: Oh, anybody.

ES: Anybody! If you have more than so many people congregating, you have to have permit from the . . . You know, just like playing the fireworks at New Year, you gotta get permit, now. Same thing, you gotta go police station. Police is under military anyway. Get permit to do that, see. So rather than go through all that, hardly anybody knew we got married even.

(Laughter)

ES: And more worse after that, three months later she was in a hospital, for practically a year. So lot of my friends never knew we got married or . . .

(Laughter)

ES: I don't think I got many wedding gifts.

(Laughter)

ES: And plenty people got married during the wartime, my age anyway. Because I went to a fiftieth wedding anniversary [*party*], last Saturday. This guy was Richard Kato. He was our YMCA friend, so I got invited. And at the table, my YMCA clubmates were all on the same table, so we start discussing, I told them, "Ey, if my wife was living, I would have my fiftieth anniversary this July, you know."

Then the other guy said, "Oh, ours all gonna be next year, fiftieth anniversary."

So lot of people were going steady, decided to get married because of the war, uncertainty, yeah.

WN: I see.

ES: So a lot of my clubmates all got married. So next year, I gotta go plenty fiftieth, golden anniversary [*parties*], I think. But a lot of 'em, they said they not gonna do it big. But this fellow, he had three kids. And he must have had those three kids early, because at that [*party*] the grandchildren was going to university already.

(Laughter)

WN: When you say uncertainty, I mean, what, like what went through your mind? You know, why get married at that time?

ES: Well, you going steady and then, I guess, you figure you don't know what's gonna happen, so might as well. Oh, in my case, another reason. Lot of other people were thinking the same thing. My wife's parents had somebody call and ask, say that this guy was interested in my wife[*-to-be*]. So if they can bring a go-between. You know, Japanese style, yeah. So I think, by then, my in-laws knew that we were going steady, so turn 'em down. But you know Japanese folks, the go-between especially, think, oh, you saying that just to not [*get married*] you know. So they sort of put us in a spot, see, that it was the real McCoy. So that was one step already, you know. So I guess we figured, we living next door to each other, might as well get married

and she only going move one door away. And so didn't change. She gonna work for the parents, at the saimin store, you see. Then I'm going to keep on going work up corps of engineers. And our parents depended on us. My parents, anyway, because he [*stepfather*] didn't have the job with the cable company anymore. And hard to get job, you know, at that age, with his background. He was working at the Moana Hotel. My mother used to do quite a bit of work, though. She was going catering. But even catering *wen* come right down because no can hold parties, yeah. And so I was a sole support, you know. In fact, my stepbrother—I forgot what grade he was—but I was sending 'em to school. And I'm the only breadwinner in the family, under that wartime conditions. So if we got married, well, no more expense. I mean, the only thing she wouldn't do was too much household [*chores*] because my mother was there. But she was too busy helping her parents with the saimin store. But instead she got sick, so more worse. She wasn't with us for one year. And those days, Le`ahi Hospital, the Japanese looked upon it as like sort of a, not disgrace but, ostracized kind [*of*] place, you know. Because that was a . . .

WN: TB [*Tuberculosis*].

ES: . . . consumption, yeah TB. You know, just like leprosy. You know, Japanese, they didn't like TB. So that was another thing that I overcome, you know. Even our friends, lot of our Japanese old folks, they don't want to go *mimai*, because that was that kind of hospital, you know. But I'm glad she went there, because otherwise her life would have been really shortened, I think. Because she got good care, I think was [*territory*]-run, I'm not too sure—but they had a social worker there. And I told 'em my plight, and then they really reduced that amount I had to pay for her upkeep. You can imagine if I had to pay one year at Queen's Hospital. Well, I would be broke already.

WN: Okay, so you were with the army corps of engineers [*i.e., U.S. Engineer Department*], so when, what part of the war did they move [*the main headquarters*] from [*Fort*] Shafter to Alexander Young Hotel?

ES: Oh well, I don't know when the [*U.S. Engineer Department*] had taken office in the Young Hotel, because I was at Shafter [*with the U.S. Army Air Corps Quartermaster Department*]. But when the war broke out, I was moved to Young Hotel [*i.e., transferred to the U.S. Engineer Department*]. And from Young Hotel to Punahou [*School*], oh, was practically immediate. [*On December 8, 1941, the U.S. Engineer Department occupied Punahou School and established there the headquarters of both the Honolulu Engineer District and the Hawaiian Constructors, a subcontractor.*]

WN: Oh, so you weren't at the Young Hotel for very long.

ES: No, no.

WN: Just a matter of days?

ES: Yeah, I guess so.

WN: Did they take over the whole hotel?

ES: No, certain floors. [*The Alexander Young Hotel roof garden, a popular Honolulu night spot,*

*was also occupied by the U.S. Engineer Department after the outbreak of the war.]* On the upper part. But I was hardly there. And then that's another thing I remember—when they moved to Punahou. All us guys, we were reporting to Young Hotel. They took over Punahou, but the move came later, because they gotta fix up Punahou School. So we used to go (chuckles) fool around Downtown. And I'm a town boy, so I know all kind [of] place in there. They gotta bring all the stuff down through the elevator, and then move 'em to Punahou. And they said, “Oh, when the thing go Punahou, make sure you come and help now, because you know what table belongs to you and all that.”

So they gave us leave, see, that morning. (Chuckles) We never go report to Punahou on time. And some of us, we went movies and all kind.

(Laughter)

ES: We got demerit for that day. Just like army, you know, this kind. You know, they call 'em demerit, in the military system. And I think I got deducted pay for that day. That's one of my, black mark on my service career. (Chuckles) We said, “Ah, the way you guys take things down the elevator, we figure going take so many hours.” And move and unload and all that, so went movies and then the movies took longer, so we got there too late (chuckles).

WN: How would you get from your house to Punahou?

ES: Bus. Or . . .

WN: Alexander Young Hotel would have been more convenient, yeah.

ES: Oh yeah, just walk down. But I was used to riding bus, because as I said, I never owned a car. And then, I used to finagle a ride from somebody, somewhere. I would make friends and then try get a ride. Especially those days, because blackout, you want to come home early. And we used to work—I don't know, I don't think was eight hours. Maybe we used to work ten hours, I don't know, I forgot already. But I couldn't go visit my wife in the hospital because no more bus system after working hours, blackout, you know, unless you have your own car. And then, even the car, the headlight, you put the certain kind of opening, you know.

WN: Yeah.

ES: So, I couldn't even visit my wife in the hospital. But my boss was good. He was a stamp and cover collector too. He told me, “Oh, go work certain time and then either get comp time, or take annual leave. We let you go.” Wednesday afternoon used to be my visiting hour. I used to go visit her. And then Sundays. Because Saturdays, I think, we used to work.

WN: Did the corps take over the entire campus?

ES: Oh yeah, yeah. Everything.

WN: What was it like? I heard there was, you know where they have the night-blooming cereus . . .

ES: Yeah.

WN: . . . they had fences over there?

ES: Oh yeah, barbed wired kind, yeah, entanglement.

WN: Yeah. So what building were you in?

ES: I was in the old schoolhouse.

WN: Oh, Old School Hall?

ES: Yeah. That's the first one built, building [*on Punahou campus*], you know. That's why I'll always remember that. And I took pictures, mostly inside. So when I donated those pictures to Mrs. [*Mary*] Judd, she was real happy. She's the archivist at Punahou now, see.

WN: Okay, you folks were office, office work. But were there like bulldozers and tractors and things on the campus?

ES: I think there was, because Hawaiian Constructors were stationed there too. And as I said, before we moved, they built plenty temporary buildings.

WN: Oh, in Punahou?

ES: Oh yeah, on the grounds. And, you know, like Dillingham [*Hall*], the big hall next to the Old School Hall, where they have shows and whatnot, auditorium. They built a mezzanine floor. And the engineering division had that building too. And we were next to that, see. Our building, the second floor, where we stayed, was the drafting room. The first floor was for equipment for surveyors like that. And then the Dillingham Hall was for all that electrical, sewer, all the different engineers inside there. But I didn't go over [*there*] too much, because we were strictly limited to our. . . . Young Hotel, you can walk down the whole hotel and you can see everybody, but [*at Punahou*], we were in separate buildings. And then, lot of the [*U.S.*] Army people were assigned to us too, you know. Like for engineering, or surveying like that. So we get to know the army guys. And we had a ball team. I used to be a pitcher, so we used to play ball with the army guys.

WN: Where, on the campus?

ES: Campus, yeah. And then all the different [*U.S. Engineer Department sites*], like Farrington [*High*] School was called area so-and-so. You know, all the different places at different areas. And they used to come and we used to play ball. So Tommy Kaulukukui was the head, and Joe Kaulukukui was connected too. So I remember Joe Kaulukukui coached us, one time, when we went Moloka`i for play ball. I don't know how we got there, but we went Moloka`i, play ball. And Joe was with us.

WN: So your team was the corps of engineers team?

ES: Well, no. Within the corps of engineers . . .

WN: Oh, I see.

ES: . . . we had plenty teams.

WN: Oh, I see, I see.

ES: As I said, each area had their own teams. And then within Punahou, survey mapping, we had our team. Lot of the engineers, they not the type that play ball.

(Laughter)

ES: Only all rough guys like us got the skill to play ball, see. But all the different units over there had a ball team. And the [*Hawaiian*] Constructors too, the contractors. 'Cause otherwise, no more diversion. Of course they have other kind [*of*] diversion, but as far as social kind life, well, I was out already, anyway. I worried only about my wife.

WN: Were there barracks there? People lived over there?

ES: Yeah. That's why they had the post office. Those civilians that lived there, they didn't have APO, see. The military, they get APO. So a post office was erected there. You know the main gate, the corner of Punahou and Wilder, the gate there? You come little bit inside, to the left, they built a temporary building. And war bond building and post office was side by side. So I made good friends with them and (chuckles) I got all those war bond cancellations, like that.

WN: Oh. Was there a sentry in front . . .

ES: Oh yeah.

WN: . . . the gate?

ES: Right. And you know, Punahou got lot of gates, you know, so I think some of the gates were all shut up. Punahou Street gate, yeah. And to the athletic field, and all that. And then they had lot of quarters there too. And of course, not as many buildings as there are now, but you know, they had it all over there.

WN: I read somewhere where that athletic field was used as a nursery or something.

ES: Oh, could be, yeah. Because, you know, nursery, mostly for camouflage. They had to make nets and plants and whatnot, so they can camouflage all that, see. Well, I guess I gave the pictures away. I had pictures of those. Because the corps of engineers had the two editions of historical documents. And when that Punahou archivist interviewed me, I said, "I give you mine, because my family not gonna be interested in my corps of engineers activities." So from 1895, I think, to 1965, was one volume. And then up to 1985, there was another volume, so I donated those.

WN: So what kind of projects were you involved in, during the war, as draftsman with the corps of engineers?

ES: As I told you, earlier, mostly doing tracing work. The engineers would draw plans. We would do the tracing. And then, in the beginning, they couldn't get the cloth, the tracing cloth printed. Nowadays, everything is preprinted, you know. Comes in sheets and all printed. We used to

draw the border and then the title block. We used to do, day after day, the same old stuff, you know. Just like we're on a production line, to make plenty of these, for the other division and engineers to do. Mostly we were concerned with the not too complicated drawings, at my level anyway. Field drawings. But lot of these projects were all outlying areas where they had no preliminary plans, you know, the survey data. So you start from scratch. You send the crew out to survey and then you drew the plans and control points, and the contours, so that the engineers can site whatever needed to be sited. If the tree is in the way, you cut down the trees and all that. But as I told you, the biggest one we did was with, later on, [*the building of*] Tripler Hospital, 'cause [*the area*] was mountainous. And that was a mean project, so they cut trails, then they put the markers so that they flew over by helicopter or plane, and they took aerial photos. And then we put that in the—what they call that—you know, you have a screen, you can put the film, and then you can watch.

WN: Oh, infrared?

ES: No, you know, when I say screen, it's just like this TV size, you know. The films will come out and you can see the picture. And those days, I don't think they had infrared and all that, but you could see the contours and because you have all this spot marked out and surveyed, that's all the control points. And from that, you can draw contour lines. Contour lines is, every ten feet, or every five feet, you draw lines so that you can see the gradation. And then you drill hole to see what kind of formation it is, depending on what kind of footing you need and all that. When you go to a mountainside and you have to do it in a rush, you cannot send surveyors out, so we did it aurally.

WN: Why was Tripler [*Hospital*] built so late? [*Construction began in the fall of 1944 and was completed in 1947.*]

ES: Well, I—that I think is a matter of priorities, yeah, as far as money is concerned.

WN: Because it wasn't completed until just when the war was ending already.

ES: I think so, yeah. But . . .

WN: But that was a top priority project?

ES: Well, no, I mean—when I say priority, air fields and all the other things had higher priority. And then, the campaign was moving towards Japan, so you know, no more casualty this side. Except that they don't know where to put 'em [*i.e., patients*], so they started bringing 'em back to Hawai`i. I don't know what the logistics of those things are but, well, when the war broke out, they sure could have used a . . . That's why before, during the war, I think, all the hospitals were taken over by military. But eventually they had to return those facilities.

WN: Plus, they set up temporary hospitals too, right?

ES: Oh yeah. You know, wooden structures all over the place. But eventually, they had to. And then I guess, that thing dragged on and maybe they saw that Korean War, forthcoming. So the casualties, they gotta take care, you know. And Hawai`i being in the middle of the Pacific, logical place, so I guess Congress was willing to appropriate the money. But they sure taking their time about giving the veterans their hospital, though, in Hawai`i.

WN: I guess one of the top priorities for the corps was the repairing damages caused by the. . . .

ES: Oh yeah. Restore Hickam Field, for example. 'Cause the war was in the air already. And we had [*aircraft*] carriers and all that, so Pearl Harbor [*Navy Yard workers*] work hard like hell and restored lot of those. And then, slow boats from Mainland [*would*] bring troops down here. They have to have a place to stay. So when lot of troops come in, then you gotta have facilities. So lot of the schools [*were*] taken over too.

WN: Right.

WN: Okay. Let me ask you just a little more questions. This Hawaiian Constructors you were talking about, was that a private firm?

ES: It was private, yeah.

WN: Contracted by the U.S. Engineer [*Department*].

ES: Right.

WN: And what kind of jobs did they do?

ES: Oh, any construction. You know, temporary facilities, mostly.

WN: But did the corps have their own construction . . .

ES: No, they . . .

WN: . . . going too. Oh, everyone was contracted.

ES: Yeah, contracted mostly. Faster that way. The engineers mostly is for engineering when you go to war. You know, you build temporary bridges, or temporary roads, things of that nature. That's why they have the corps. But this wasn't a battleground. You know, their engineering is on the battlefield. But this became sort of a staging. . . . Too bad I don't have that book, that corps of engineer book. They have it written out like that. [*Erwin N. Thompson, "Pacific Ocean Engineers: History of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the Pacific, 1905-1980".*]

WN: I'll look at it.

ES: And in fact, was interesting, you know, one of the chief of engineers over here was [*Albert K. B.*] Lyman. Hawaiian ancestry, you know. He was a colonel. Real interesting in that respect, so lot of the Hawaiians said, "How come this Hawaiian guy go take over Punahou School by mistake?"

They don't know if it's a mistake or real, see. [*For a semi-historical account of the circumstances behind the U.S. Engineer Department's occupation of Punahou School on December 8, 1941, see Russ Apple's article, "Army Occupation of Punahou," in Honolulu Star-Bulletin, July 8, 1985, p. A-13.*]

WN: Yeah, you don't know the real story.

ES: Yeah, all kind of speculation. Because University of Hawai`i and Punahou, so near to each other to begin with. And if you go that way [*i.e., toward University of Hawai`i*], you gotta pass there [*Punahou*]. And then get "College of Hawai`i," or college of something.

WN: "O`ahu College" [*the former name of Punahou School*].

ES: O`ahu, yeah. See so, you would think that's the university, yeah? [*Apple's article suggests that the U.S. Army mistakenly occupied Punahou School instead of the University of Hawai`i, based on a sign on Punahou's front gate which read "O`ahu College."*]

(Laughter)

ES: And no forewarning, you know, they just break in over there. The caretaker was taken by surprise.

WN: Was it set up like a military base? Was there like stores, PX [*post exchange*], or anything. . . .

ES: That part I don't know. I don't know if they had one canteen and all that kind [*of*] stuff. I think they must have. They must have used the [*school*] cafeteria to feed the civilians and the military, you know. But as far as store kind, I don't know. But since they went so far as to provide post office, they must have had all the facilities there. But as civilians, we're not allowed to patronize that, so.

WN: Oh, I see.

ES: You know, only the military and then the guys with special passes or badge.

WN: So only military [*personnel*] lived over there?

ES: Yeah.

WN: So you civilians . . .

ES: No.

WN: . . . you didn't get housing.

ES: But the contractors that were contracted to come over to work, may have been given quarters there. And they may have been given cafeteria service. And then like buying war bonds. And postal service had to be separated. Of course, they had their own dispensary.

WN: What about lunch? Where did you eat lunch?

ES: Oh, I used to bring lunch. Eat in the same room. (Laughs) 'Cause work, work, work, those days, you know. You didn't have carefree kind. I don't know what the hours were, but, you know, we used to all bring our own lunch. And you don't go outside, and drive off for lunch

hour like that. And no more any kind of drive-ins or fast-food places like that. Anyway, lunch, you know, so easy to bring from home. And then, those days, you conserve. You not gonna spend. So, you try to get by with a minimum. In fact, one guy I know, I used to admire him, boy. When we were down Shafter, every day he eat fruits, you know.

WN: Yeah?

ES: Yeah. Mango season, you know, guavas, mango. All kind of—he was not even a vegetarian, he was a fruitarian, if you have a word for something like that. And he used to survive.

WN: You mean—oh, that's all he ate?

ES: Yeah. He believed in fruits. So we used to think how the hell this guy can—I don't know what he does for breakfast and dinner. But lunch, yeah, he only eat fruits. And we had cafeteria already, by the time we went Fort Armstrong, you know. Civilians can go eat in the cafeteria, see. But get all kind of people. (Chuckles)

WN: So besides Tripler [*Hospital*], were there other big projects that you were working on?

ES: Well, we used to do all the, what they call temporary construction. Tripler [*Hospital*] is the only permanent kind.

WN: Oh, you mean, you used to help draw the plans for temporary buildings?

ES: Yeah. But as I said, while in there, most of my work in the early years was in connection with the field maps, you know, to place these temporary construction on. That's why our surveyors was in the first floor and we were above on the second floor. So primarily that type. And then, at Dillingham Hall, where they had the two stories of work there, they had their own draftsmen. The engineers had their own draftsmen to do electrical, or plumbing, or structural, all the different civil categories. They had their own draftsmen. So I didn't get into the technical side too much. I would say, my work, mostly, was a carry on from Hickam Field, from surveying into putting in drawings what the surveyors brought in.

And as I said, in the beginning, we used to mass-produce papers, sheets like that, and tracing cloth, which went to the other engineering offices to use. But they cannot print 'em, so we were the living printers. You know, repetitious stuff. But you need a border and then title blocks. And put in the corps of engineers symbol and all that. And we used to do that kind [*of*] tedious kind [*of*] work. I used to be crackerjack. We used to have a template, you put ink in 'em and you just follow *pukas* in this cellophane, for lettering. Not freehand. And then later on, this two-arm kind [*of*] prong lettering set, we used to use plenty of that. I became really a crackerjack using that. In fact, after they were going to surplus that kind of stuff, I bought some of those equipment and I use that in making my covers. Instead of freehand printing, I use the mechanical. And of course, I had my own mechanical set, because that was given to me by the Robinson family. One of their boys had taken sugar tech, and he passed away, you know, accident. So when I went to the university, and my mother's cousin told 'em I was gonna take sugar tech, they gave me all his stuff. And I still have that drafting set, was given to me, because I couldn't afford to buy one drafting set. Of course, the government would furnish us lot of things, but some of the stuff, you like to use your own personal stuff. So I made good use of that.

So as far as my engineering contribution to the corps, it's minimal (chuckles). But it was a necessity, because the engineers can't draw anything up until we get the ground, yeah. Anything starts with the ground, see. And we have to have the foundation decided. If it's a stream, or road, all that has to be meshed in. So wherever they build, we have to get the surrounding [*area*] all laid out. And then we give 'em to the engineers, higher engineers, to work out the details. So we're the starting point. But from the [*standpoint of the*] finished work, it's minimal, because . . .

WN: Did you have strict deadlines?

ES: Oh yeah, we used to work like hell. 'Cause in demand, eh. All the different areas and I guess each military unit wants this, wants that, you know. So like Waimanalo, Bellows Field, like that, I think there was lot of work involved there too, but I don't recall, though. That may have come later, but that area was used for temporary [*structures*] too. You know, all these things was temporary, you see. Because you don't know how the war is going.

WN: You mean like quonset huts and . . .

ES: Yeah.

WN: That's what you folks did?

ES: Right, right. But just to place the quonset hut, to line 'em up, you know, if it's like this, then you gotta see if you can get a level area with minimum of work. If it's like this, then you have to build a retaining wall and fill 'em up. So, when you make the drawing, you give the engineers an idea of where is the level place and where the utilities are available for electric line and water line and sewer line.

WN: But the actual quonset hut, you know, that's . . .

ES: Yeah, that's . . .

WN: . . . standard, right?

ES: Yeah.

WN: They're all built the same, but then you had to decide where to build it . . .

ES: Yeah.

WN: . . . things like that.

ES: Yeah, those are prefabricated stuffs, see. It goes up fast.

WN: They built all over, right?

ES: Yeah.

WN: They built in parks and things?

ES: Oh yeah. Any kind of place. Where is vacant, and if you don't interfere with the school. But of course, they try to minimize so that kids gotta go to school. . . . Like at McKinley [*High School*], they planted vegetables and all kind on the grounds. 'Cause you need food, eh. You cannot import from the Mainland, take time. So, vegetable gardens was all over. Vegetable gardens, and then bomb shelters [*were built*] all over the place.

WN: Did you folks make bomb shelters?

ES: No. (Chuckles) No more yard. We just living in the tenement. And . . .

WN: What about Punahou kids? Where did they go school?

ES: I don't recall, that's why I said if I had that book, it would explain, but they were using certain school facilities, you know. I don't recall. [*Punahou School held its classes in private homes and on the University of Hawai`i campus.*]

WN: Do you recall seeing any students on the campus . . .

ES: No.

WN: . . . while you folks were working there?

ES: No, not at all.

END OF INTERVIEW