

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH EARL F. SCHNEIDER

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SHAUN ILLINGWORTH

NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY

NOVEMBER 18, 2002

TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Mr. Earl Schneider on November 18, 2002, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth. Mr. and Mrs. Schneider, thank you very much for coming down today.

Earl Schneider: Thank you.

SI: To begin, could you tell me a little bit about your parents and your father? He grew up in Brooklyn.

ES: Yes, my dad grew up in Brooklyn and my mother was born in Newark. They met ... in New Jersey, where his parents eventually moved. ... First of all, [he] worked in the railroad shops on the Lackawanna Railroad, ... located in Lyndhurst, Kingsland, New Jersey. ... Later on, he went to Mechanics Institute in New York and took a lot of engineering courses and became a Mechanical Engineer. [He] didn't graduate from any college other than the Mechanic's Institute. He belonged to the ASME, American Society of Mechanical Engineers. [Is there] anything further?

SI: Did your father's work take him away often?

ES: Yes. Later on in life, he became involved in designing automatic machinery and, as a matter-of-fact, he invented the first machine that put cork tips on cigarettes. ... He was located down in the southern region [of] South Carolina, where flax grew [and] where they made cigarette paper, [as well as] ... in Louisville, Kentucky where the plants [were where] they manufactured the cigarettes. ... He designed it and, after it was built, he would go down and assemble the machinery and get it working for them. So, he was away, sometimes, six months at a time during my lifetime.

SH: Did he work freelance jobs?

ES: He worked for a company that made machinery, so, all of his patents were assigned to the company ... for a dollar. ... For instance, he made a machine that probably [was] the first machine that squeezed oranges automatically. ... He devised probably the first golf bag that was able to be set up on the golf course in a tripod fashion. They used to lay them on the ground. ... My brother played golf, came home one day and said, "I wish you could design something where I didn't have to pick up the bag each time, that the bag would stand up straight." ... [So], my dad designed a belted piece that went around the top of the bag and ... two spokes came out of each side, dug in the ground and held the bag upright. So, it was probably one of the first times that anybody had ever seen that.

SI: What can you tell me about the neighborhood where you grew up?

ES: I was born at home in Jersey City ... and lived on Summit Avenue in Jersey City. ... The front street had a trolley car going back and forth between North Bergen and Jersey City. ... I was there until I was about five years old. There was a paper store across the street. ... I had a brother, older brother, and he would take me across the street to buy the paper every day. ... He went to school in Jersey City, but I did not. ... When I was five years old, we all moved out to

Lyndhurst, New Jersey. So, ... I don't remember too much about it [childhood], other than [that] there were stores underneath the apartment that we lived in and I rode a bicycle back and forth.

SI: What about Lyndhurst?

ES: ... I got there when I was just about five years old. ... My mother and dad never owned a house. They always rented. My mother always felt that my father was always going to be moving around the country and they didn't want to, at that time, get involved in a house they'd sell when they had to move. As it turned out, he did move around the country, but he always came back to Lyndhurst. ... At five years old, I started kindergarten in ... a little, red schoolhouse in Lyndhurst, right on River Road, which is still there. It's a historical museum right now, one of these one-room schoolhouses where they had kindergarten, first and second grades, one teacher, and I stayed there, probably, for three years, in this little one-room schoolhouse a block away from where I lived. ... I moved up to various elementary schools in Lyndhurst, Franklin School, Roosevelt School, eventually to Lyndhurst High School. ... [I] went to Lyndhurst High School in 1934. I was, I don't know whether I should tell you, fortunate enough or unfortunate enough that I skipped two grades, so that in my entire high school career, I was one or two years younger than everybody in my class. So, when I was a senior in Lyndhurst High School, I was at the age of fifteen and everybody else was seventeen or eighteen. ... I was sort of like the baby of the class. Lyndhurst had a large class with a small high school, so, they had to have split sessions. ... The first two years, they went in the afternoon and the second two years went in the morning. ... As it turned out, my wife was a freshman, going in the afternoon, and I was a senior, going in the morning, and we never met in high school. ... We finally did meet at a German dance in Hoboken, New Jersey. Her uncle took her there and I went with a friend of mine, Willis. That's where we met. So, I graduated Lyndhurst High School in 1938. I had taken college courses, but, at that time, the Depression was very severe and my parents really didn't have the means to send me to college. Should I go on?

SI: I would like to ask you a few questions about your education. When did you actually skip those years?

ES: From third to fourth, those were like half years, like 3A and 3B. ... I skipped from 2B to 3B, and then, probably from 4B to 5B. So, it is two half years. That would make it a half semester for the whole year.

SI: Many of the people I have interviewed who went to school in a one-room schoolhouse often skip, I guess, when you have three classes put together, you would learn what the next class was learning.

ES: That probably had a lot to do with it. I was probably listening to the higher classes while I was in the lower classes. I don't say that skipping is a great thing to do, because you get out of school much more unprepared than if you had another year or two of maturity.

SI: What were your main interests, academically and socially, when you were going to Lyndhurst High School?

ES: Academically, I was very interested in mathematics and science. ... I took all the courses that would encourage me to go to college. ... I was a member of the National Honor Society, so, I got good grades and ... was mostly interested in math. I had trouble with solid geometry and ... had some trouble with physics, but I got passing grades. ... So, when I really decided that I would get a job, after high school, ... I was only sixteen years old at the time. I was sixteen in May and graduated the following month. I had to get working papers, because I was not old enough to go to work without permission from my parents and all of that. So, I got a job with Chase Bank and that wasn't because I liked math or figures or anything, it was just because that was the only job I could get at that time. It was coming out of the Depression in 1938 and there were just those kinds of jobs available; messengers, ... pageboys and things like that. ... I had job offers from Chemical Bank and Chase Bank. One of them was fifty-five dollars a month and the other was \$52.50 a month, with meals. ... My mother said, "Take the one with meals," because I ate like a horse, she said.

SI: You also mentioned that you took some college courses. What did you take?

ES: Yes. While I was with Chase Bank, the American Institute of Banking had their ... classes in the Woolworth Building on Broadway. ... I was working downtown, right near Wall Street at the time, Pine Street, as a matter-of-fact, so, I took some courses, two nights a week, at the American Institute of Banking. ... They [were] accounting courses, introductory accounting, introductory bookkeeping, things like that, and then, some banking and finance courses. So, ... by the time the war came, I started in '38 and, as you know, the war started in '41 and, after registering for the draft, I realized that it wasn't long before I would be drafted into the Army. ... I decided I would like to become a pilot in the Air Force and ... took all the tests for that and got letters of recommendation. ... [I] went to New York for a physical and ... flunked the eye test. I didn't have 20/20 vision.

SI: Was this the Army Air Force?

ES: This was the Army Air Force, yes. I would have been a second lieutenant had I gone the whole route, but I was bitterly disappointed. ... When you get a dispensation from the draft board to go into the Air Corps, they say, "If you don't do something within sixty days, you'd be immediately drafted." They don't wait your turn. So, I knew that it was only a case of a month or two before I [went] in the Army. So, I joined the Navy. I must say that, an interesting aside, in growing up, when I lived in Lyndhurst, I sang in a church choir, ... in Trinity Chapel Choir, New York City. ... I got that entrance through my brother, who sang there before me, and, for about eight to ten years, I used to go every Saturday and Sunday into New York and sing in the choir for practice on Saturday and church on Sunday and, therefore, I was ... not into school activities, because, every Saturday, when they had football games, I was in church, singing. So, I never really was one of those persons who was in the clique, you know, of high school and being young, to boot, I was sort of the kid, [the] baby of the class.

SI: Before we go into the war, how much did you know about what was going on in Europe and Asia in the 1930s, as Hitler was coming to power and so forth?

ES: Probably very little. I ... did not take any of that very seriously. I don't remember being involved in any of the activities of Hitler and what he was doing to the Jewish population or something like that. I ... was not involved in that, being the age of thirteen, fourteen and fifteen. So, ... I don't even remember being involved in ... worrying about Japan. I never anticipated that Japan was our enemy until, really, the day of Pearl Harbor.

SI: Where were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

ES: Pearl Harbor, as you know, was on a Sunday and I was with Gloria, my prospective wife at that time, but, actually, we were just dating. ... We were out with my parents on a ride and, while we were on the ride, I guess when we came back home, we heard about it. So, we were, of course, shocked, as was everybody, but ... I guess the depth of it really hadn't hit me until weeks later, when I realized that we were going to mobilize and we would go to war.

SI: Do you remember if there was any initial panic or fear in your neighborhood, blackouts, that sort of thing?

ES: No, I don't remember any panic. I don't remember anybody really getting upset; I mean, I'm sure they were upset. We were all upset, but I don't remember anybody going to any extreme[s], yelling or anything like that. It was fairly calm, because I don't really think most people knew the depth of what was going to happen. I don't think we realized what was going to happen.

SI: You had an older brother.

ES: I have an older brother, yes. He was born in 1915, so, he was about seven years older than I. So, we really weren't very close. He was always, of course, with a completely different crowd. ... I was a kid brother and about the only thing we had in common was that he taught me to play ping-pong, because he needed a partner, and he taught me good and there were times when I even beat him, after he'd taught me, but, other than that, I don't remember us being very close.

SI: There was a pre-war draft. I was wondering if you knew about that, through him, perhaps.

ES: He was married and he did go into the service. Yes, he was in the service probably about three months after Pearl Harbor. It was after Pearl Harbor and, being that he was older at that time, I assumed they didn't want to send him overseas or that kind of action, so, he went to Atlantic City and became a drill sergeant. On the boardwalk, they took over all those hotels in Atlantic City. The Army Air Force ... trained their recruits in Atlantic City and he was a drill sergeant. ... His whole career was involved in getting the troops ready to go overseas or to go for further training. ... He had been married at that time, so, his wife went with him wherever he went, Greensboro, North Carolina and Tennessee, and he came out of the war without ever going overseas.

SI: The Navy was not your first choice. Was there anything in your life before the war that made the Navy more of a fit?

ES: That's a good question. When I was a kid, my dad used to take me down to Lakehurst, where they had the blimps. They weren't called zeppelins, but they were called dirigibles and they were Navy. That was a naval air station in Lakehurst and I used to see the *Los Angeles* moored at their tethers and I think, at that time, I sort of liked the uniforms and the clean life of the Navy, so-to-speak. ... I think I probably didn't even realize it, but, in [the] back of my mind, I sort of felt the Navy was a cleaner life, without getting into the trenches and all that kind of thing. So, that is really why I think the Navy appealed to me more than being drafted into the Army. ... The Marines, I didn't think about it at the time, but I guess I'm glad I didn't go into the Marines, because they ... trained so hard and they were the first line people and so many of those [guys] never came back. So, as I say, those were the ones that really gave their [lives].

SI: In the period between Pearl Harbor and entering the Navy, do you remember seeing how the home front changed as a result of the war?

ES: Yes. It was just about a year from the time that Pearl Harbor came that I was sworn in the Navy. I was working with Chase Bank right up until I joined the Navy and, you ... see, my father became a warden and ... had arm bands and ... sirens for warnings. ... He would go out in the street with a flashlight and I think we stayed in the house. That part of it, I remember, ... the sirens, the wardens and the training and so forth. Then, of course, ... my father, being an engineer, he became involved in aeronautics and he actually ended up going out to Wright-Patterson Airfield and working on the first hydraulic landing gear of an airplane. He was involved with that, but, yes, that one year, things were more somber. The rationing really hadn't set in much. I don't remember ever being deprived of anything; food, we had always ample [amounts]. There were things that [are] laughable now. You had to turn in a tube of toothpaste to get a new tube of toothpaste. You couldn't get new tires for your car. They had to be recapped, but those didn't apply to me, basically. They were more for the older people.

SI: Since you were commuting to New York for that year, did you ever notice people looking at you funny, since you were not in uniform?

ES: That did happen. As a matter-of-fact, our neighbor across the street, one day, when I was on my way to work, and I used to walk to the railroad station in Lyndhurst, ... she was coming back from the store with a bag and she said to me, "I'm wondering why you're not in the service?" and she said, "You know, my son is in the service and he graduated the same year as you did and you're not in the service," but what she didn't realize is that her son was eighteen and I was sixteen and, therefore, his number came up and he registered before I did, but I'm sure there were looks from people who wondered why I'm walking around in a suit and tie and not in uniform. ... That probably has a lot to do with wanting to get in the service. I mean, you don't feel it or you don't think you feel it, but you do feel it. I wanted to help and I honestly did want to help.

SI: You had some problems getting into the Air Force because of your eyes.

ES: Yes, I'll tell you a story about that. When I first went into the Air Force Recruiting Office, in order to get an application blank, you had to take an eye test and I took an eye test and I

passed. They gave me the application and I filled it out. It was quite detailed and I had to get three good references and I did [and] sent everything in and ... was accepted. [They] told me to come in for a physical in Grand Central something [Grand Central Palace?] in New York on Lexington Avenue.

SI: Was it a post office?

ES: I don't think it's the post office. ... The Army had taken the building over and they were using that for physicals for the conscripts to the Army. Because I was an Air Force possible they put me in front of every line, because the lines are humongous, and so, when I went in, I would go to the head of the line and get my examination and everything and went through, like, in two or three hours and, at the end, they gave you [an] eye test and I flunked. ... I was so disappointed; I could not believe it. [The] man said, "Take a walk around the block," Grand Central Palace, I think it's the name, now that it occurred to me. "Take a walk around the block," he says, "sometimes, you know you're upset and come back." I did come back, and still no change. He said, "I'm sorry," he says, "but I have to flunk you out." He says, "We have to have pilots with complete 20/20 vision and yours is just off." So, as I said, about three weeks later, I went down to the Navy recruiting place on Broad Street in New York City, which was only a block away from Chase Bank, and I took the exam and they had the eye chart in front of me and I said, "Oh, I wonder how I'm going to do." He said, "Don't worry about it." He says, "Just take a few steps until you can read it properly. You know, just stand here; if you need to take a step forward, just take a step forward." So, I took, like, two steps forward and I was able to read the chart perfectly. He said, "Okay, you're in." What I didn't know is that if I had taken two more steps forward, I would have been out, because they have a line on the floor and, if you passed that line, you're not in. Of course, they didn't tell me that. He said, "Oh, don't worry about it, just keep going until you could read it," you know. So, thank gosh, I didn't, you know, go up in front of it. ... I did get in the Navy and I waited a couple of days and I was sworn in, and then, they told me to go home and report back the next day and that went on for probably a week. ... Each time, I would leave home with a bag of toiletries and, each time, they would send me home, and then, one day this was it. I got on a troop train in Penn Station, New York [City], and, [at] that time, a lot of recruits were going to Sampson, which was [where] New York State University [SUNY] had a campus. A lot of them were going to Chicago, Great Lakes, but we got on the train and I never got off the train until I got to San Diego, California, [after] seven days on the train. ... I went to boot camp in San Diego, the first time I'd ever seen palm trees. I had never been out of, pretty much, ... New Jersey until that time and I was just about twenty years old.

SI: It does seem unusual, because the Navy usually sent the East Coast guys to Sampson or Bainbridge.

ES: Nobody expected it. I think my parents and Gloria, at the time, expected to hear from me like a day or two later and they didn't hear from me for over a week, but, finally, we made it. We stopped at Green River, Wyoming, and they allowed us to run up into the town for maybe fifteen minutes and get a drink of Coke or something and come back to the train. That was the only time I was off the train, I guess, in seven days.

SI: What was it like to cross the country in a train?

ES: Interesting.

SI: Having never left the New York-New Jersey area.

ES: That's right. You know, ... you make a couple of friends right away and you know who you like and who you don't like and we were in parlor cars, where you had a table in-between the seats, and we ended up playing cards, and so, it was very enlightening, I guess, to be away from home on a train, not knowing where you're going and not knowing what you're getting into.

SI: Was it all sailors on the train?

ES: Yes. The whole train was completely [Navy]; the whole train load was going to San Diego for naval training, the whole train load. ... During that time, there were railroads that had received grants from the US government for land, so, the US government used those railroads, because they wouldn't charge them for the use of the tracks going through, and we ended up going up to the top of Michigan and coming down in Chicago and, anywhere there was a free railroad, we went. That's why it took seven days. Any time a freight train came through, we [were] pushed aside for three hours until it came and went, but it was interesting and, getting off in San Diego they lined us up and none of us really knew what we were getting into, pile[d] into a bus and that was the start of something new, boot camp, where they were jabbing you on either side with needles and vaccinations, checking your teeth, cutting your hair and, by the time we got into bed, like, at night, it was, like, midnight and you had to go through getting your clothing and carrying it on your shoulder, and then, of course, ... "Well, we get to bed at twelve o'clock; I guess they'll let us sleep in the morning." That was quite a joke. Five-thirty in the morning, it's up and at 'em, and then, we started boot camp.

SI: How quickly did you adjust to the rigors of military life?

ES: For me, I would say it was not too hard. Growing up, as I said, I belonged to this choir and I used to go to a camp down in Metedeconk River called Camp Nejecho, [the] New Jersey [Episcopal] Choir Camp, and all the choirs in New York and New Jersey went there for weeks at a time. So, I slept in beds, double-decker beds, and I was by myself, away from my parents, for three to four weeks every summer. So, I really didn't feel as badly as some of the kids who really had never been away from home. So, I adjusted quite quickly.

SI: Had you ever been in the Boy Scouts?

ES: No, I was never a Boy Scout, never had time. I was always singing.

SI: When you got to boot camp, were you assigned to a training company?

ES: Yes. I guess it would be about twelve weeks of boot camp, roughly three months, and you are learning to dive into tanks with your clothes on, get them off, and survival tactics. They used

to march us, actually, to a pool that was near the Pacific Ocean, sort of like an amusement park pool, and we marched there and got dunked in the water and learned how to take your pants off and make a floatation gear out of those. Some of the kids that didn't know how to swim had to learn to swim. Fortunately, I did know how to swim, but most of it was just marching and guard duty and trying to get you disciplined, you know, washing your clothes at a certain time, coming back from breakfast and not being allowed in the barracks. ... If you had to go to the bathroom, you had to go at a certain time or the barracks were closed. ... If you wanted, if it was cold outside, in the morning, you could wear your pea coat, but, then, in California, by noon, it would be like ninety degrees and you'd be sweltering or you'd go in the morning and freeze, and then, you're okay at, ... you know, twelve o'clock. So, they taught you, basically, I won't say dehumanize you, but, in boot camp, you're not much different than your buddy, you know. Everybody is the same and you've got to learn to accept and obey orders.

SI: Did this training unit consist mostly of guys from New Jersey and New York or was it a mix?

ES: It was a mix, yes. I met people, who I went [through] almost three or four years in the Navy with them, from various parts of Texas, Iowa, Washington State. Most of them were from the Midwest and West, not too many from the East. It was really a mix and everything, of course, is alphabetically. All your buddies are named with an "S," because, if you're Schneider, it's Scott and Schroeder and Regan and Ryan and, if you happen to have an "A," you're with the Burnets and the Adams. So, all my friends, actually, ended up turning out to be in the latter part of the alphabet. ... One thing that might be interesting is that, in my company, which [was] comprised of two barracks, one barrack, two halves, Henry Fonda was what they called a recruit petty officer. He was the same rank as us, apprentice seamen, but, because of his notoriety, they made him a recruit, temporary recruit, [petty officer]. So, whenever we wanted a pass or whenever we went ... in town, we had to go to him and ask for a pass and he would sign the slip with the pass on it. So, Gloria always says, "Why didn't you keep those passes with his signature on it?" I said, "If I kept them, I wouldn't get off the base," [laughter] but ... we'd all march out to the bus from our barracks on liberty day and it was probably a quarter of a mile. All the busses are lined up, going to San Diego, and we get to ... where the busses were and Henry Fonda would say, "Good-bye, boys," and he would get into a convertible with two blondes, you know, and he is the same rank as us, you know. When I got out of the Navy, I found out that he became, I don't know, I guess a captain or something like that. He was a high-ranked officer and I barely made it to radioman second class, petty officer.

SI: One man I interviewed was a second lieutenant bombardier in Europe and he was in the same unit as Clark Gable.

ES: Oh, really?

SI: He was the same rank as Clark Gable, but they would all go to the officer's club and Clark Gable would hang out with the generals.

ES: It's true. [laughter]

SI: Within this group of men from all over the country, did you notice any regional differences?

ES: I guess so. There were differences. In some of my group were older fellows, mostly more older fellows, and I always hung out with the group of Smiths, for some reason or other; that's the "S factor" again, with a Charles Smith and a Richard Smith and a lot of Smiths ... from various states, all with different backgrounds, you know, some farmers and most of them seemed to be from farm countries, really. A couple of them [were] from Galveston, Texas, but we all got along very well. ... We're all in the same boat, so-to-speak, so, I don't think anybody felt any more superior than anyone else. ... I had one of them that really, he was, how should I say? liked to be in charge, you know, like, if we're walking together, "You wait here and I'll wait here. You go get it," you know, that kind of thing, but he was harmless, you know, and we laugh about it now. I see him a lot. He's ... still my Navy buddy, but he was one of those who used to, I won't say lorded over me, but he would say, "I'll wait here. You go get it."

SI: One thing that strikes me is how young the men in the service were, particularly in the Navy and the Air Force.

ES: Yes, we were really kids and we were really kids, I mean, twenty years old, twenty-one years old. Most of us, probably, never had been out of our home state or home city, you know, and so, everything was a wonderment, really. California, being so beautiful, you know, ... when you did go downtown to San Diego, it was so different from, you know, New York or New Jersey areas, but, as I say, we formed cliques very quickly and, when you go downtown, you find yourself with a clique of five people. ... What are you going to do? We would rent a camera and we would take pictures, and then, we'd [have] copies made and we'd all send them back home to our parents. ... Then, we'd go to the USO [United Service Organizations] in San Diego and they had young ladies there that would sit with you and have coffee, you know, nothing sexual or anything like that. They were just friendly, you know, wanted to talk to you and make you feel at home or a home-away-from-home. So, we always sort of drifted into the USO before we did anything else and have a cup of coffee, and then, go from there.

SI: From various interviews, I have the impression that San Diego could be a very wild town during the war.

ES: Yes, it was. It's always been a Navy town and it's cleaned up a lot now, but they were there. It was really a wild town. ... To somebody like me, I'm not a prude, but I wasn't out looking for women, you know, and so, this group, ... we would be going to a movie or miniature golf or going to the San Diego Zoo or horseback riding and things like that. The other guys, the first thing out is they want find some chicks, you know. You find out who matches and who doesn't match you.

SI: Were you trained in all of the general things you would have to do on a ship?

ES: In boot camp, yes, I was. They taught you a little bit about general knots and things like that and, when you graduate from boot camp, then, after that is when you specialized. You take tests, aptitude tests, and they determine from those tests whether you're suited for mechanical work, you know, engineering, boat repair, yeoman, bookkeeping, accounting and, apparently, I

turned out to ... [have] an aptitude for radioman. I don't know why, but I guess I could distinguish tones in my ear. They'd do dots and dashes, and then, you'd write dots and dashes down. Some people couldn't distinguish between the dot and the dash, so, naturally, they ended up probably doing something else, electricians and motor mechanics and diesel mechanics and things like that. ... I ended up being assigned to radio school.

SI: Before we go to radio school, do you remember who your drill instructor was or anything about him?

ES: No, I'm afraid not, I'm afraid not.

SI: Nothing memorable?

ES: No, I don't think he was overbearing. I think most of my experience was that he was very pleasant. You know, I mean, I wasn't getting guard duty when I didn't want it, but, on the other hand, I think they were very fair and [the] discipline was fair. I never had any problem with that.

SI: There was no, I know in the Army they call it "chicken shit."

ES: Yes. I don't remember any of that, really. I can't say that it was the most enjoyable three months of my career, but I would say I didn't resent it.

SI: Where were you sent to radio school?

ES: After I got out of boot camp, I went to radio school, which is based in the same naval training station in San Diego. So, where some people were allowed to go home if they lived nearby, we didn't have enough time to do that. So, I went right into radio school. The first thing, of course, in radio school is, you have to know how to type and there were people who knew how to type that skipped that part and people who didn't know how to type, which I didn't, ... would sit down at a typewriter with blank keys and learn how to type. They have a screen, slide screen, in front of you where the keys were and you learn, supposed to learn, how to type in four weeks at a moderate speed and that went well. I mean, believe it or not, in practice, you do get your fingers coordinated and they don't give you much of the radio dots and dashes for those four weeks. It's pretty intense on the typewriter, no letters on the keys, so [that] you can't hunt and peck. You have to know. After you have mastered your certain speed in typing, then, they put the earphones on you for dots and dashes, and then, you have to learn what an "A" and "B" and "C" and so on are, and then, they put your earphones on and they put the letters over the earphones and you have to automatically determine if that's an "A," and then, which finger is the "A." The next thing may be an "X" and you know it's an "X," but which finger is the "X?" So, that takes another four weeks, to learn how to do that automatically, and, when you first start, your brain function is this, this and this to your fingers, but, after a while, it's just automatic, like everything else. So, that took about twelve weeks to get through radio school.

SI: What was the washout rate in boot camp or radio school?

ES: There was never a washout in boot camp, that I remember. ... I would say there were some mental washouts, kids that just couldn't take the discipline and you'd hear about so-and-so being discharged and sent home for one reason or another, but that wasn't publicized too much. I mean, it was just that, sometime, you'd miss somebody. Radio school, I don't think you washed out, because they would just give another four week course. In other words, you may not graduate with this class and they'll put you back in again and give you four more weeks and you graduate with the next class. So, I don't think you really ever got washed out, *per se*. My orders were to proceed to the destroyer base in San Diego and I had a nine-day delayed order, which means that I had to go from one ...

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE-----

SI: Please, continue.

ES: Okay, and my orders were to proceed to the destroyer base in San Diego and I had a nine-days delayed orders, which means that I had to go from one place in San Diego to another place in San Diego and I had nine days to do nothing. So, I had saved up all my pay, which was very minimal, and I bought a ticket, a one-way ticket, home to La Guardia Airport and got clearance to get the ticket priority, needed priorities, and I flew home to La Guardia Airport and that took twenty-four hours from San Diego. I stayed home three days, and then, I took the train back and I got back on the ninth day and reported to [the] destroyer base. So, I had three days at home in that first six months in the Navy at that time. So, going back to [the] destroyer base, that's the next part of the Navy career. Would [you] like me to continue with that?

SI: Sure.

ES: Those orders were really to hold you in general detail until they could find a spot for you. Some people were there a month, some people were there three months, some people were there only a week. In the meantime, you peeled potatoes, you peeled shrimp, you worked in the storage, bringing out cans from cold storage. You painted the side of a ship. They would lower you over the side of a ship with a rope on each leg and a rope hanging down and they give you a brush and a bucket and you paint the area between your [legs], but they had thirty of us in a row, so, the whole ship would get painted, but we only had this small area to paint. Then, when you're out of paint or out of time, they hoist you back up. That was one of those. Another was punching tubing in the motors, engines, ship engines. The boilers would become clogged with rust and you would go down, as a team, and you'd have this thing with sort of like a revolving steel brush and you pushed them into the holes and it scraped the rust out of the hole and you pulled them up and put them into the next hole. I remember going down there, two of us, and the fellow says, "Well, one of you goes inside and the other holds the light. What's your rank?" I said, "Apprentice seaman?" "What's yours?" "Seaman first, I went in." The lower rank first goes inside and you're hunched over with somebody holding the light and you're just punching holes for hours at a time, bringing it up, and that was another one of the jobs. So, those types of jobs I did for probably a month. In the meantime, we had liberty probably every other night and it wasn't bad. I mean ... some were dirty jobs and some were jobs I didn't mind at all. From there is where I was finally assigned. Do you want me to continue on that?

SI: Yes.

ES: I was assigned, actually, to Camp Pendleton, which is in California, north of San Diego. That's a Marine base and they have what they call a boat basin, ... where the Marines train to land, on landing craft, on to beaches and we were assigned to train with them and I, being a radioman, learned that my radio experience was going to be one that I carried on my back and that was going to be my function when we went into the various islands that were coming up in the Pacific, landing after the Marines had gone in with the radio and establishing communications on land. I spent probably two months in Oceanside, California, learning how to climb up and down ropes, rope netting on the side of a ship. You have seen them, where they climb down from the sides of the ship. We learned how to never put your fingers on the ropes that are horizontal; somebody is going to step on them when they come down. If you're going to hold, hold on to the vertical ropes, and then, you put your foot on the horizontal and that's how you climb down. You learn how to climb down the ropes with a radio on your back into a waiting LCVP [Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel] landing craft. We learned, also, other things about, I should say, handling Teletype and radio communications with the key and learning to receive code and so on. ... I spent that time training in that fashion. ... Finally, we were assigned to our first overseas assignment, which is called an ACORN outfit, and I don't really know, to this day, what the acronym was for, but it was ACORN 16. It's a group that's comprised of Seabees, Marines, Navy radiomen. The Marines would go in and take the island, the Seabees would go in immediately with bulldozers and prepare an airport/airfield with scrapers on coral and the Navy people, myself, would go in and establish radio contact with airplanes that were going to come in as soon as the airfields were built and we worked in trailers. They were really large trucks with radio equipment in it, with a trailer that had a generator that generated the power, and we worked. They scattered us all around the island, so that in case there were any bombs or anything, all of us wouldn't get hit, you know. We were scattered around and we would put [in] eight-hour shifts there, listening for our [planes]. We each had a plane that we're responsible for, listening for messages from the plane and answering them. We had a telephone where we would get information to answer them with and so on. So, that was pretty much our shift on those islands. We went to Hawaii and we assembled everybody there for about four weeks. We stayed at the naval air station called Barbers Point and I was involved in driving trucks, loading the equipment onto the ships, going back and picking up more. ... Anyone who could drive a car was pressed into this service and, for about a month, we loaded the ships and, one day, we got on the ships and we headed toward the Gilbert Islands. ... Those were a group of islands that were formerly controlled by the British, of which Tarawa was the most famous, and, while we were going out there, we crossed the International Dateline and the Equator at exactly the same point and they gave us cards to indicate that we had done that, because the Gilbert Islands are right on the Equator. The island I was on was right on the Equator. So, we came down across the Equator and the International Dateline. We sat out in front of Tarawa with the complete task force and ACORN 15 was destined to go into Tarawa and we were ACORN 16. We were back up, in case something happened to ACORN 15; we were reserved. The Marines took Tarawa at a ... frightful cost, as you well know. It was absolutely terrible and we were out twenty, thirty miles, so, we really never saw all of the action. We were just waiting. We had a battleship and we had cruisers and, apparently, they were able to secure the island in time, so that we didn't need to go in to Tarawa and, when Tarawa was secured, we turned and went eighty miles south to another island called Apamama, which was really lightly

defended. ... There were Japanese forces and the Marines overwhelmed them in a matter of hours and we came in right behind them and, again, they made an airfield on Apamama, bigger than on Tarawa, and we were able to get the airfield working. Within days, the planes started to come in and land and that's, again, what we did in the Gilbert Islands. We were there for probably seven months and, by that time, they were working on [the] Marshall Islands, which was the next group west, and it came a time when [the] Gilbert Islands were useless. The war was so far west that the planes from Gilbert were useless. So, when the Marshalls were secured, they packed us up and sent us up to the Marshalls. We did the same thing there, but only for a month or two and, by that time, they had taken the Marianas, Tinian, Saipan, Guam. They packed us up and we were picked out; myself and probably nine other radiomen were picked to go to Guam and this was about the first time I broke off from my regular group and we got on a plane in Kwajalein, in the Marshall Islands, and we're going to fly to Guam, but, during the time we were in the air, they had received a message that there were a lot of wounded from Iwo Jima and some of the other islands that were there. ... I guess it was not Iwo; it was some of the other islands before and we were bumped off the plane and the plane was supposed to turn around and take the wounded back to the States. So, we were bumped off the plane in Eniwetok. We were put on a truck and we were hauled down to the beach and we got on a landing craft and there's a ship headed out to sea, loaded with Marines, and we drew up alongside of that ship and they lowered the netting and we had our sea bags with us. They picked the sea bags up on a hook and told us to climb up the netting and we eight of us climbed up the netting and we learned, later, that that ship had been sitting in Eniwetok for thirty days and, here we are, finally, when they get to move, we come aboard and, in fact, they were waiting for us for thirty days. So, the Marines weren't too happy with us when we got aboard, but that was our only transportation to the Marianas. They ended up going into Saipan. ... From Saipan, we got a flight down to Guam on one of the shuttle flights and that was our ultimate destination and, when we finally got to Guam, they didn't know what happened to us, because we were supposed to fly to Guam. We should have been there, like, three weeks ago, but they finally found room for us and we were assigned to the naval air station on Orote Peninsula [Orote Field]; ... ultimately, they were naval planes out there for escorts for the new B-29s that were coming. Just about that time is when the B-29s were landing at Guam, coming in, and I stayed in Guam at that airfield. We were in the tower and the base of the tower and we were, so-called, COMAIRPAC, which is Commander of Air Forces in the Pacific, Sub-Forward [Commander, Air Forces, Pacific]. The main station was in Hawaii, but ... Guam was the forward station for COMAIRPAC. So, we were assigned to COMAIRPAC. So, we were involved in sending messages from Guam back to Hawaii. At that time, we didn't have fax machines. The fastest communication [devices] were Teletypes and what we did, most of the time, was type messages into a Teletype machine in code on a large tape, and then, when they're ready to send the messages, they would put the tape in the machine and the tape would rotate maybe ten times normal speed and go back to Hawaii. Of course, they reduced the speed in Hawaii, so that it comes out in code, so that if you Teletype the message from this, it might take an hour for a letter. When you did it at speed, it would take maybe eight minutes and that's basically what I did on Guam for eight months. Guam had been cleared. They did find some Japanese from time-to-time that didn't even know that Guam was taken, but ... I wasn't involved in any danger there in Guam. It was pretty well secured by the time I got to Guam. ... After you're overseas two years, at that time, you were entitled to what they call a rehabilitation leave, survivor leave, thirty days survivor leave. So, when you're overseas two years, they put in, and then, they're supposed to send out replacements. So, ultimately, I did get

a replacement for myself, after about being overseas two years and ultimately, got on a ship at Guam and went back to Hawaii and, ultimately, [the] naval air station at Alameda, California, and that was in June, 1945. Shall I continue?

SI: Beginning with your first amphibious operation in the Gilberts, how did it actually unfold, as opposed to how you were trained at Pendleton? Did everything go according to plan?

ES: Good question. I would say yes. Everything that I trained for, we did. We climbed down into the landing craft. We had radios on our backs. ... These were atolls where the coral at low tide was exposed and it ran for maybe a half a mile, sometimes three-quarters of a mile. At the end of the coral was deep ocean. So, the big landing craft ships could only go in up to ... where the coral was, and then, everything had to be brought in over the coral by trucks and, when we went in, we went in at high tide on the landing craft, the smaller ships, so, we really didn't have to walk all that time. I would say, maybe, a hundred feet after we got off the landing craft, we went in and there was no opposing fire. So, that was one thing we had trained for, rifles and things like that and what to do in case of that, which we had none of that. Thank God I was not involved in that. ... When we got into our organization, with our tents and mess hall and everything, everything pretty well went the way I was trained to do and we set up the radios, got into communication and no real surprises. About the only surprise that I learned was, I never dealt with Teletype before in Guam and that was something new, but, really, all of this is typing. So, there's nothing much to learn.

SI: You did not do any work with ciphers, actually writing things into code.

ES: No, that was a special group. That was all done in a guarded CIC [Combat Information Center] room, intelligence. They had machines that would take plain English and translate it into code. Everything was five letters. Every group of letters was five and the first ten letters were the key to solving the [code]. So, you had to get the first ten letters correct, because that's how they would undo or decipher the code on the receiving end of it. So, when I was sending messages out, I never knew what I was sending. It was all groups of five and we would chat back and forth with some shorthand kinds of letters and things. "See you," meant, "See you later," or something like that, and, "OM," was, "Old man," you know, but, basically, we never got involved in the coding or decoding. That was a special group.

SI: When you were working with the planes, what kind of messages were you sending?

ES: I think we were sending them locations, but we didn't know it. I think we were sending them, probably, information about where ships were or where they should be heading or, in some cases, come back, because there would be flights going out and we'd find that they ... were back, like, in an hour, which was very, very unusual, but some other information would come out that told us to contact them to come back. ... We really never knew what we were sending out. It was very, very rare that I'd have a plain language message. If it was, it was something that was probably common knowledge to the Japanese. [laughter]

SI: What was your impression of how well combined operations worked between the Navy, Marines and the Air Force?

ES: I think we did wonderfully out there. We had such a rapport with the Seabees. The Seabees were a wild bunch, you know. They were older men who were steelworkers, ironworkers, carpenters. They knew their business and they were in a class by themselves. They were in the Navy, but they were the least regulated of anybody in the Navy. They had a lot of freedom that we didn't have and they would take metal, aluminum from shot down Japanese planes, and make watchbands out of them and sell them. ... They would take bags and make flight bags out of cloth and they would take cat eyes, which were shells, which look like a cat's eye, and make bracelets out of them. They worked hard, but this is what they did on the side and they would trade these things with us. We would buy them, and so, we had a very good rapport with the Seabees and the Marines. Of course, once they took the island, they set up positions around the perimeter. They had gun positions. ... So, we ate with them. They were in our chow lines and we all dressed the same. Nobody really much knew whether you're in the Navy or the Marines, because we all had greens; our outfits were all greens. I don't think I ever wore, you know, a Navy outfit the whole time I was overseas. It was always an overseas thing. In fact, when I got back to the States, I had to get a new issue of Navy clothes, because I didn't have any. So, we really worked together. We all knew we had a job to do and we all did it.

SI: What was it like to be on all of these different islands?

ES: Interesting. Each one of them were different. In the Gilbert Islands, as I said, the coral reef extended out quite far and, at low tide, there was no water on the coral, but, as the tide came in, you could see it gradually coming in over the coral, which was mad, mad hot, and the Seabees blasted out a swimming pool out of the coral and made a pool probably as big as this room out of the coral, where, when the water did come in, it would go into this hole and we would swim in it like a pool and it would be hot water, real hot water, and about the only dangerous thing were the sharp edges of the coral. If you didn't just get in and get out right, you could scratch yourself and a lot of infections occurred from that. Those were the Gilbert Islands. The ones in the Marshalls were similar, but I wasn't on those islands long enough to really get into any recreational things. By recreation, we did play softball a lot on our off time. We had teams between the Seabees and us and between the Marines and us. ... On our off hours, we played a lot of softball, and then, of course, I being a Ping-Pong player, I played Ping-Pong a lot. I actually won the enlisted men's tournament on Guam and the officers had their own tournament and I played the winner of the officers and I beat the officer, so, I was the favorite of the enlisted men. I actually got a couple of cases of beer as a prize and I didn't drink beer, so, everybody drank, you know, but ... that was the kind of recreation we had and, of course, we had movies whenever anybody was off duty. There are always movies at night, every night.

SI: Were supplies ever a problem?

ES: No. I never went hungry. At first, I had C rations, K rations, for, you know, a couple of days. Your water was awful, because you took it out of Lister bags, which were rubberized bags with a spigot on the bottom and the thing tasted rubbery, and then, you had to put iodine in your water to, whatever, sterilize it. So, the water was terrible, but they gave you packets of lemon in your K rations. So, you dump some of those crystals in the canteen and shook it up and it would taste like rubberized lemon. No, I never really went short of food. I think, for that fact, the Navy

really kept us very well supplied. Cokes and beers were given out when they got them. Every once in a while, we would get a steak even, but very rarely. I think it was when the officers had too much which might spoil, they'd send them down to us. ... The biggest problem was ice. The only people that were allowed to have ice were the officers' club. ... They used to make barrels of iced tea in a regular barrel and they would pour a helmet full of ice in the barrel. Well, in about three minutes, that would dissolve and, if you happen to be there when the ice was there at the top, you got a cold iced tea, but, if you came later, your iced tea was hot, but you would be glad to get anything at that point. ... Your food was, what can I say, you know; you go through the chow line and, when you're all finished, they pour a spoon of peaches all over your potatoes or whatever you had, but nobody argued you know that was the way it was. After you got through your chow line, they had fires underneath the barrels full of water that was boiling and you dipped your tray in and out of that barrel to sterilize it, clean it, and that was your tray. You brought that back with you and that was your personal tray. No, I would say, unlike, probably, the Army or the Marines, I never really went hungry.

SI: Did you mostly associate with the garrison or were there troops coming in and out?

ES: We only really associated with our own group. On every island, of course, our group was it. I mean, ACORN 16 was the group. ... When we got on to Guam, which is a very, very large island, you had Army and Marines and Navy personnel in various stations across the island, but we never intermixed. I remember going up to the airfield, the main airfield in Guam, where the B-29s took off one time and sitting at an Army mess hall, actually, it was and seeing some famous, well, band leaders and things like that, that I remember, that were in the Army, that were there entertaining the troops, but, for the most part, we all stuck together and we all pretty much stayed together until Guam. That's when we sort of split up and the eight of us stayed on Guam together, so, that was our unit.

SI: Had you been with any of these guys since boot camp?

ES: No. None of my boot camp buddies, actually, ended up going overseas with me. Most of them went to other schools or ... some of them went right to sea, right out of boot camp. I don't know, you know, if they weren't suited for a school or weren't qualified for schools. Some of them went right to sea, but others, they felt that maybe they could educate them a little bit and get them qualified for petty officers and things like that, but, ... once I got out of boot camp, I pretty much lost touch with almost everybody.

SI: As you mentioned before, you still see some of the men from your unit.

ES: Yes. Out of the group that was on Guam with me, I'm still in correspondence [with] probably five people. As a matter-of-fact, about a month ago, September, right after Labor Day, we flew out to Kansas City, rented a car and drove around Iowa and I visited one of my buddies that lives in Iowa and stayed with him one day, went down to another town in Iowa and visited with the widow of a fellow that I was with for a couple of hours, and then, there's another one in Connecticut that we talked on the phone with and correspond with and, also, there's one out in Texas. So, the list is dwindling. It used to be larger years ago.

SI: To focus on Guam for a minute, how did you see the island change during your seven months there?

ES: Yes.

SI: From what I understand, between the Army Corps of Engineers and the Seabees, the island itself was transformed.

ES: Yes. When we got there, of course, it had actually just been taken months earlier and the roads weren't too good. You'd go and have water, ruts and everything like that, but all for the period of seven months we were [there] I remember one day specifically, ... being allowed to use a jeep and I went with one of our officers and three other guys in a jeep and we circumnavigated the whole island of Guam. ... You could see the fortifications and the town of Agana, Guam, which is now the capital. It was the capital then, but, at that time, it was really local. They were really Indian people, I guess you might say, but that was pretty well demolished. People were living out in the open, palm things. ... By the time I left, it had become a naval base. We had big ships in the harbor. We had some; a floating dry dock came in to repair ships, so that they wouldn't have to go all the way back to Hawaii. So in seven months, Guam became a large airfield and forward naval base and the jumping point [for] all of the B-29s, Guam and Saipan, basically, and Tinian, bombing Japan. Until they took Iwo [Iwo Jima], a lot of the planes had to ditch in the Pacific if they were badly hit and that was one of the main reasons for taking Iwo, to give them a chance to land safely, ... coming back from after being hit over Japan. So, we saved an awful lot of [pilots'] lives by taking Iwo.

SI: Did you ever see any B-29s coming back, struggling back?

ES: Yes. I have seen them coming in and you wonder how they got back, because they didn't land at our airfield. Our airfield was a naval airfield with smaller planes, but they would go over our airfield in preparation for landing on the main field at Guam, Army air field, Army Air Force at that time, and you wondered how they got back. You could see holes and things.

SI: What about the Navy airplanes?

ES: They were fighters and they only escorted them for a certain distance. At that time, we had bypassed some of the islands in the Marianas, so, there were Japanese on the island of Rota, which was between Guam and Saipan, and we just sort of isolated them there. So, the fighter planes from the Navy would escort the bombers until they were far enough away from those islands that they felt free. Then, also, the aircraft carriers that came in would discharge their aircraft before they came in and they would land at our airfield and refuel and do everything like that, until the aircraft carrier was ready to move out again. Then, they would fly back to the aircraft carrier and go out. As a matter-of-fact, I tried to get flight pay, if you had so many hours in the air, but I wasn't an aviation radioman, although I was assigned to the Navy Air Force. So, you would go down and register your name and, the next flight out, if you wanted to, they would take you on a training flight or, if they were going up to Saipan or whatever, if you had time, you could hitch a ride and I remember being on a carrier-based plane with a young man that had just come out from the States and he was practicing carrier take-offs and landings and I guess I was

nuts, but I went on and that's what I did for about four hours, is land on a carrier, take-off, circle around, take-off, and so on. Harrowing experience, because, when you're coming in to those carriers, it probably looks smaller than that box of tape there, but it was an experience.

SI: What sort of duty did you have in the plane?

ES: Nothing, just a passenger. It was just that he had an extra seat and anybody that wanted to take advantage of it could, because he wasn't going out on patrol or anything like that. It was just really local and the same way if you wanted to go to Saipan for an hour or two. You'd fly up, they had a shuttle going back and forth every day and you'd sign up and, if they had room on it, you'd go up, spend an hour at the airfield there, then, go back with the plane. ... You had no duties on the plane.

SI: Did you ever face any threats from the Japanese Air Force or submarines, that sort of thing?

ES: When we were on the ship from Eniwetok to Saipan, we were passing a group of islands (Truk) that had been bypassed and ... everything was, naturally, lights out and we took precautionary [measures], no noise for probably eight hours, while we were passing those islands, no lights. We tried to get by them without them showing, because that ship was loaded with Marines, loaded with Marines, but I have never been fired upon while I was on the ship. While I was on the Gilbert Islands, we did have a couple of Japanese that came into camp and were captured by the Marines before we got there, so, I was really under no threat really during the whole war, I would say. I might have been and I didn't know it.

SI: When you were on these islands, were you warned not to wander off, because there were still Japanese there?

ES: Yes. On Guam, particularly, there had been a couple of Marines and Navy men that were picked off by Japanese that were living in caves long after the island had been taken. So, our warnings were, "Never go out alone." Always go in groups of four or five if you go, because there were paths down to the water where you could go in and take a swim and we would go down those, but there were caves there and there was a threat that somebody could come out and take a shot at you. We carried our rifles with us all the time and I had to admit, ... as a Navy man, I don't think I was so great with a rifle, because our training really wasn't in shooting. ... I did get firing range practice, but we never really got intense.

SI: How did you view the Japanese as an enemy?

ES: I hated them. I just hated them. I guess because of the sneak attack, really, and the inhumanness of hearing about the way they treated prisoners in the Philippines, when they forced them to march for days and forced them on ships, ... taking them back to Japan. We heard about that when we were over there, and so, I don't think there was anybody in the services that didn't hate the Japanese at that time. ... I had some Japanese boys in my high school class; I respect them very well, but this was another view of the race.

SI: During your time overseas, did you ever run into any other Allied soldiers?

ES: Yes. On the ship going from Hawaii to the Gilberts, it was a merchant ship and we had a lot of Australian people onboard and they had ... come from Australia to Hawaii to pick us up and all the food that we ate was from Australia, cereals and everything like that. ... So, we did have a group of Australians on our ship. I don't remember any other Allied people, but, basically, the Australians and the ANZACs, [Australian and New Zealand Army Corps] I put those in one category, were about our only allies out there in the Pacific.

SI: What do you remember about your officers?

ES: Boot camp, I thought some of the officers were very stodgy. I thought they were the old Navy and I didn't think that they were, and maybe this is what they're supposed to be, I didn't think they were the friendly type. ... Once you got overseas, the officers were one of the group, part of the group, officers that came to me and said, "Would you play Ping-Pong with me?" and at the officers' club, because he wanted to get a good game, you know. I wasn't theoretically allowed to even go in the officers' club, but I went over there and, there, the officers are all having their drinks and I got along very well with most of our officers. Really, I had nothing to say against them. Most of them all treated us very fairly. Every one of them screened our letters.

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO-----

SI: This continues an interview with Mr. Earl Schneider on November 18, 2002, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth. Please, continue. You were talking about the censorship of your letters.

ES: Yes. All of our letters were censored and I think all of our officers knew our personal lives better than anybody else, because, if we were writing letters to our wives or girlfriends, there were some personal things in there and we were writing letters to our parents. They knew what kind of people we were, you know. So, they never let on that they knew this, but they knew everything about our personal lives. ... I have nothing against any of my officers. They ... all treated me with respect.

SI: It is interesting that, every once in a while you would be invited to the officers' club to play Ping-Pong. I have heard stories like that about the Air Force, but I always had this impression that the Navy was the service that most retained its class system.

ES: And I think you're right. In the States, I think that would never happen, but you're out on Guam someplace, you know, and the officers' club is really just a Quonset hut, you know. It's not some superb place, it's a Quonset hut with a bar and a Ping-Pong table, you know. So, the class distinction, although they tried to keep it that way, but, if they needed something, they could make a buddy out of an enlisted man.

SI: Could you tell who was a reservist who had just enlisted for the war and who was an Annapolis man?

ES: I think so. Most of our officers were reservists. They were probably all college graduates that had graduated in the '40s and had joined the Navy and got an ensign [rank]. ... In my outfit, I don't remember really too many Annapolis men. I think they were all ordinary people, like myself, who just happened to go to college, because I had not gone to college while I was in the service.

SI: How often were you able to communicate with your wife-to-be and your parents?

ES: I wrote letters, pretty much, three or four days a week. I probably wrote one letter to my parents and one letter to my bride-to-be every day, alternating. So, I wrote a lot of letters. They're one page long, because you only had, like, most of them were like a V-mail kind of thing. You fold it up and they Photostat [them]. So, they were short, but it's just enough to keep them [abreast]. Of course, while we're traveling and they didn't know where we were, because they didn't hear from [us] for sometimes weeks at a time, but we were free to write and I got letters on a regular basis. I got packages of cookies and things like that, but, when the packages would come in, if I was on watch, I'd come back and they'd say, "Earl, you got a package from home today." I said, "Oh, really, what's in it?" "Well, it's all gone now," ... so, it was communal property. It happened to everybody. If cookies came in, everybody got the cookies.

SI: Was there any trading? I usually hear this from the Army side. They would trade a helmet for a bottle of booze or something. Did you ever see that?

ES: Yes, I think so, probably not from people coming in, but trading among us. For instance, I didn't drink beer and I didn't smoke, so, if I ever got cigarettes in my packet, I would trade those for lemon extract for the water things like that and I would trade beer for Coke, but that was not with outside forces. That was pretty much within our group.

SI: In June of 1945, you were reassigned stateside.

ES: Yes, I arrived in June in Alameda and I spent about four days there, getting new uniforms, and I was given a thirty-day leave and went back on the train from Alameda to Newark, met my mother and my wife-to-be in Newark Penn Station. ... We had been engaged before I went away. So, when I came back, I asked Gloria if she still wanted to get married and I don't know whether; obviously, she did, because we got married the following week, but it was very, very, very difficult, more for her, because I had been gone for two years or more, probably closer to three years and, you know, you're not really sure of how people changed during that time, but we did get married. We were able to go on a short honeymoon. My father provided us with a car. My brother was unable to get up, so, we went down to Greensboro, North Carolina, where he was stationed, spent a couple of days with him and that was our honeymoon, actually, and we spent thirty days, and then, I had to go home, ... go back to Treasure Island. That's where I had to report, in California, and there, again, I stayed there, awaiting reassignment, because the war was still on. This was around the middle of July and I had odd jobs there and spent pretty much every other night going downtown into San Francisco and being pretty free and finally, oh, an interesting story. I was waiting in line to be reassigned and there were, like, four offices with men in these offices that you, "When you got first in line, take office number three," you know, and so on and, when I got first in line, they said, "Take office number three," and I walked in and

who's behind the desk but a fellow that I worked at Chase Bank with as a page boy. It was unthinkable that we would be [reunited]. I could have walked into any office, but he was there. So, we talked about where he had been and what I had been doing and he says, "Well, where do you want to go?" like I had a choice and I said, "Well, I don't want to go anywhere." He said, "Well, there's a whole group going to the Philippines." So, he says, "Since your initials are 'S,' you're at the bottom of the list." So, he says, "You're only going to have a couple days before you're assigned to that," but he said, "They're forming a unit to invade Japan," at that time," because we're talking about July of '45. So, I said, "Okay, keep me here as long as you can," and I finally did get assigned to a ship, on August the 15th, to go to the Philippines, fellows with the letters "M" to "Z." Fellows from "A" to "L" were going on the 14th. So, half of my group went on the 14th. They left. We said good-bye. Next day, we were supposed to go on the ship, V-J Day occurred. They canceled [the] "M" to "Z" ship, and so, I never did get to go to the Philippines. So, I hung around San Francisco for another couple of weeks, and then, they sent me back to San Diego to be an instructor, Teletype instructor in San Diego, and I spent several months there, and by being married, I got a lot of extra points. You had so many points for each month you were in the service, so many points for each month you're overseas and ten points more for being married. So, I had enough to be discharged in November of '45. So, I went back to Brooklyn Navy Yard, stayed there about a week and got sent to Lido Beach, New York, and I was discharged at Lido Beach in New York in November of '45. ... That was the end of my Navy career. We didn't have any place to live, so, we moved in with my mother. We were married then, and then, we moved in with Gloria's mother and Gloria's mother had to get out of their apartment. ... So, we were bouncing back and forth in places and I didn't really know what to do, so, I went back to Chase Bank. Shall I continue?

SI: You were in San Francisco for V-J Day.

ES: Yes.

SI: How did San Francisco react to V-J Day?

ES: Oh, that was overwhelming. That was overwhelming. We went in the morning, which was going to be a routine day. It was the last day that we were going to be in San Francisco, theoretically, but we heard rumors that this may happen and there were about four or five of us that always rented a hotel room. We would go into San Francisco, stay in a hotel room and used that as our headquarters and, all of a sudden, we heard the sirens and we were in the room and everybody told us it was Japan had surrendered and people were throwing papers out the windows, ripping up telephone books and throwing those out the window and we all went downstairs and went to Market Street, which is the main street in San Francisco, which, at that time, was just solid with sailors, soldiers, Marines and people. Trolley cars were going up and down, but they could barely move and I remember being on a trolley car, stepping on a bell, making it ring and we just were ecstatic. All I can say is that there wasn't anybody ... that was unhappy that day. It was a very exciting day, and then, I had to report back to the base that night, and so, I had never really stayed overnight, but it was soon after that that I got reassigned to San Diego.

SI: How did you find out about the atomic bombs and what was your reaction? Did you realize what they were at first?

ES: Yes. My reaction was, "Thank you, President Truman." If President Truman hadn't ordered those atomic bombs, I wouldn't be here with you today, because all of us that were headed for the Philippines were destined to invade Japan proper, either the Marines going on land or us being out in the harbor waiting to go. Every one of us would have been, I'm sure, because Japan, ... they fought to the last man, you know. They didn't care about their lives and I honestly didn't feel any sadness, I'm ashamed to say, for the civilians in Japan, because of what they did to our boys in Hawaii. They did it and we weren't at war, and when we did it, we were at war, so, they should have expected something, but I thank President Truman for that decision. I just visited his library and his home in Independence, Missouri, just about a month ago and I wrote in the book there in his library, "Thank you for sending me home early."

SI: Do you remember when President Roosevelt died?

ES: Yes, with sadness. I don't think there was a dry eye. I think we all loved him. We all felt that he did the right thing and, of course, naturally, he had no alternative, but I think everybody in the service was behind the President and we were very sad to think that he hadn't been able to see the end of the war, really. I admired him very much.

SI: Many people think that the country went directly from the war to the prosperity of the 1940s and 1950s, but there were many housing shortages and people could not get jobs right away. It seems like you had some of those problems.

ES: Yes. The problems that we had in adjusting to civilian life were, it was hard for, I think, Gloria and I, when I finally did come home and go to work, to adjust to married life. I guess it was difficult. We didn't have a home to ourselves for that period and she was working and she had her friends that she worked with who, ... during my time away, she was involved with and, of course, I felt strange in front of those people, because I didn't have any contact with them, and so, I think it was a period of adjustment. We both had to adjust to starting a married life together and I went back to the bank, as I said, and they gave me a job at Chase Bank, which I felt was very menial. Girls had replaced what I had been doing before I went in. The salary they gave me was just a few dollars a week more than I was making three years before and sitting at a desk, counting the number of checks in the deposit and putting a number down and turning a page and it was so boring. I finally, when I went home a couple of times, I said to Gloria, "There's no way that I can continue this as a career." I said, ... "Just, there's no way that I can see that I can go [on]," and she said, "Well, you're entitled to the GI Bill." She said, "Why don't you think about going to college?" and I said, "Well," I said, "How do I do that?" you know. We not only were married, but, in 1947, we had our first child. So, I said, "Well, that would be very, very difficult for you," I said. She said, "Well, I don't mind at all." She said, "Whatever we have to do, we'll do." So, with her support, I started thinking about going to college and I didn't want to go nights, because I didn't really want to stay at Chase and work. ... At that time, the GI Bill gave you ninety dollars a month, an allowance for being married. So, while we were thinking about it, we bought a house, a two-family house, where the rent for the upstairs paid the entire mortgage. So, we were able to live in that house rent free. So, with that, and this house wasn't

the greatest house in the world, you know, to ask your bride to move into this place, but Gloria said, "We'll fix it up," and we did, but she encouraged me all the way to start college and I went down and I enrolled. At that time, believe it or not, it was called the University of Newark and I don't think I was a week into it when it changed over to Rutgers. ... I signed up, ... quit my job at Chase and started to go to college, and as you know, the GI Bill paid for all the books, all the tuition, all the incidentals and ninety dollars a month allowance and, when you have a child, that increased to 120 dollars a month. So, four, five months after I'd started, we had the baby, so, it increased to 120 dollars a month and I went to Rutgers on the bus from Rutherford to Newark every day and went through summers and completed the bachelor's degree in thirty-nine months, graduating in 1949 from '46. ... During that time, it was very difficult. Her parents helped us a little bit with food and my parents helped us a little bit with food, but, other than that, we managed to pay our expenses and keep going, didn't buy anything, no clothing, nothing, but, in 1949, I graduated, down here in New Brunswick, actually, with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. ... I majored in accounting and I didn't enjoy public accounting. CPA [Certified Public Accountant] problems seemed to give me a problem. So, I enjoyed accounting, but I felt that I wanted to do management accounting, be a controller or treasurer or something like that, not work for a CPA firm. That's what I majored in and got pretty good marks, considering that we had a child and I was commuting back and forth. So, in 1949, that was the end of my first chapter with Rutgers.

SI: It seems that your whole life was consumed by studying, going to classes, and then, raising your family.

ES: Yes, for that three years, right. I didn't belong to any fraternities. We went to some football games, you know, because we got tickets for them, but there wasn't really what you would call the college spirit. Most of the children, I can't say children, most of the kids in our class were like eight years younger than I. When I started college, I was twenty-four and a lot of these were eighteen years old, you know, just out of high school. So, some of them were wizards and it had been eight years since I did any studying at all, so, it became hard to get yourself involved, you know, and do all the things you needed to, write essays and things like that, but it was really three years of concentrated work.

SI: What was the ratio between kids that were straight out of high school and veterans?

ES: Probably I would say sixty percent veterans, forty percent high school. There were more veterans than high school.

SI: It was an entirely commuter school then, correct?

ES: Yes, it was, it was. Everybody lived at home. Most of them were from ... Newark, East Orange and Rutherford, Lyndhurst and that area. ... There really weren't any dormitories in Newark to speak of, so, if you did go, you'd have to have an apartment. I don't know of anybody that did that. Everybody went from home.

SI: How did the veterans and the kids get along?

ES: I would say pretty good. I had a couple of younger kids that asked me lots of questions, you know, things like that, I mean, I can't say looked up to me, but they asked me for advice on things like that. So, I don't think veterans had any problem with the younger kids. We both were concentrating on getting good marks, you know, and it wasn't that kind of a thing where, at the end of the class, you went and had a drink together, you know. We all scattered. So, I don't think there was time for any friction.

SI: That was your first degree at Rutgers. When did you get involved in the MBA program?

ES: Okay. My first job out of Rutgers was for an insurance company based in Newark. [The] head office was in Greensburg, Pennsylvania. It was a casualty company, specializing in workmen's compensation insurance, and I think I got it, actually, through [the] Rutgers Placement Office. They called me and told me that this job was available. They were looking for someone who was mature, because they were going to give that person a company car, because you were going to be the payroll auditor for the State of New Jersey and they wanted somebody with a degree, but they didn't want somebody that was nineteen or twenty years old and they felt myself, married with a child and being, at that time, probably twenty-five, twenty-six years old, that I was mature. So, I got the job without any problem and it paid something like not much more than Chase is paying, probably twenty-five hundred dollars a year, which is ridiculous nowadays, but, at that time, that wasn't too bad, plus a car. What you did was to get a list of people whose policies were going to mature in the next month or two and you had to visit these people and examine their payroll records and decide ... what their employees' category was, carpenters, secretarial, clerk, plumbers, painting and you categorized all their employees with a number and, of course, the rate of insurance varied with the danger of the job. Now, a painter or a carpenter would have a higher rate than a secretarial worker. So, all you did, really, was look at the payroll book, verify from their Social Security forms that the payroll book they gave you tied in with what they were reporting to the government, and then, deciding who is what. ... Then, you make a spreadsheet and you bring that back to the office on Friday and you send them in to the head office and, the first week, I had, ... let's say, thirty-five of these audits that I had done during the week and I was filling out the form and my boss came over to me and he says, "What's this?" and I said, "These are my audits." He says, "That's too many." He says, "We don't do any more than sixteen or seventeen a week." He says, "You're going to ruin it for everybody if you keep turning thirty-four [like] the first week." So, I said, "Okay." So, he says, "Hold these for next week." Well, it came to the point where I could do this job in a matter of four days in the mornings, you know, and I'd be back home [at] two or three o'clock in the afternoon. I said to Gloria, "What a waste. You know, what a waste of time. I should go for my Masters degree and take some of that time for a useful purpose," and she said, "Why don't you?" At that time, I had twelve months entitlement left on the GI Bill. So, I signed up for the Masters degree and I timed my appointments so that the nights I went to school, I would be around the Newark area in the afternoons, ready for class, and, if I got there early, I would study, you know, do some studying. So, for almost three years, I did three years on nights. I was with the insurance company and it wasn't a good paying job, but, at the same time, I was able to get my MBA. ... I completed that at 1953, in three years at night. All of that tuition and books were completely paid for, also, by the GI Bill. When I got finished, I think I had like one month entitlement. I had used it all up, but, then, knew that the insurance company job was a dead end and I started looking around and I ended up working for Flintkote, a roofing company in the next

town, East Rutherford, in their accounting department, property accounting, accounting for their machinery and inventory and things like that. So, that would be around 1950, '51. Shall I continue? I stayed with Flintkote about roughly two years and their increases were modest and I got an offer from Congoleum, probably went to an employment agency, and Congoleum, down in Kearny, offered me a job, pretty much the same thing as I was doing in Flintkote, only with about fifteen dollars more a week in pay. So, I joined Congoleum and I had always said, "When I come out of the Navy and I do get a job, I want to work in New Jersey," because I didn't like the idea of going into New York for a job to work. So, Congoleum was fine. I enjoyed that job and they then started a new line of floor coverings ... called gravure, where the floor covering is a photograph with a vinyl coating on top. So, what you walked on was the vinyl coating, but what you saw was really a print, four cylinders with different colored inks printing out slates or bricks or whatever. They formed a company to produce the cylinders that would be used to print the colors on their floor covering and that happened to be in Long Island City, New York, and they asked me if I would go over and set up the accounting for it, and so, basically, I joined a subsidiary of Congoleum, then, as their vice-president and comptroller, very small company, and that went quite well for several years, until competition forced them to cut out that line of product. So, they actually started disbanding that, but I made a lot of contacts in the gravure industry during that time and I was able to get a job in New York with a gravure company. ... I don't want to dwell too long on it, but I stayed with them and, one day, I got a card in the mail from an employment agency in New York that said they had just bought the records of such and such employment agency and were clearing out the dead wood. "Would I check a box? I'm not interested in looking for work anymore or I am interested." So, I check, "I am interested," sent the card back and, in a matter of a couple of months, I got a phone call saying that they were looking for a controller at the American Bible Society in New York. Would I be interested? ... I was anxious to get out of that particular field, a small company which depended only on the man in charge. If anything happened to the man in charge the company, I think would go down the drain. So, I was accepted at the American Bible Society as a controller and I stayed there for twenty-six years and I retired there from American Bible Society at age sixty-six. I did have one final year where the United Bible Societies, it's based in Stuttgart, Germany, and they were transferring to London and their Treasurer retired and they were looking for somebody to handle the transition and they asked me if I would stay an extra year to handle that and I did. It was really a part-time job kind of [thing], but mostly traveling between New York, Stuttgart, London and New York and seeing that everything went smoothly, but, the last year, I enjoyed it, because it was sort of semi-retired and at full pay and I ended up as acting treasurer of the United Bible Societies. They asked me if I would stay in London for a five-year period and I said, "No," I said, "I'm ready to retire." So, in 1988, I retired and I've been traveling and active pretty much since 1988, thank goodness.

SI: How do you think your experiences in World War II shaped your life? How did it make you the man you are today?

ES: I think it gave me a view of the world which I don't think I would ever have had if I just stayed in New Jersey. It gave me the desire to travel. I wanted to see more of the world and, fortunately, Gloria and I have been able to do that. We have traveled extensively, many, many countries and I do think it was those experiences that made me want to see what the rest of the world is and, of course, without World War II, I wouldn't have gone to college. So, without

college, I don't think I would have had the means to do what I did and we've lived very comfortably and our retirement is very comfortable. So, I hate to say it, but, if it wasn't for the war, I'm sure our life would have been entirely different. ... I thank Rutgers University for everything that I have today, because, without that education, I don't think I would have been able to do as well financially, so, I do thank Rutgers for that.

SI: Do you think the University was proactive in helping veterans get enrolled and adjust, as far as the University could?

ES: No, I don't think so. ... I don't remember them reaching out. I think if anybody went, it was because they wanted to, but I don't remember any big campaign where they sent letters, you know, "Now is the time to take advantage of the GI Bill." I didn't see that.

SI: I know, in some colleges, people had trouble with their records.

ES: ... To my way of thinking, everything they handled, they handled well and there wasn't anything that I asked [for] that I didn't get, but I don't think they were proactive in seeking out people to go to Rutgers. I consider proactive as being sending a letter to all the GIs and say, "Why don't you come to Rutgers and get a degree." I didn't see that.

SI: Is there anything else? Any questions that I missed?

ES: I think you covered a lot.

SI: Is there anything else you would like to add for the record?

ES: Pretty much, I think I've spilled out almost everything that I probably [could]. Gloria heard more things today than she ever knew before, too. ... I appreciate the opportunity of coming down here and talking about it. For some reason or other, it makes me feel good. It really does. ... I thank all the people who are involved in this project, because it must be boring, sometimes, for you guys to listen to us.

SI: No.

ES: Well, ... in my opinion, I think it's a wonderful project and I thank all who are involved in it for their patience.

SI: I think this is a good place to stop the interview.

ES: I do, too.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

Reviewed by Ronald J. Butkiewicz 10/27/04

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 11/4/04

Reviewed by Earl F. Schneider 1/16/05