

Donald Murray #100
July 16, 1985

Q: When did you first join the Army Mr. Murray?

A: I joined in March, 1940; arrived in Hawaii on July 4th, 1940. And one of the... I was always kidded about fireworks and things like that (telephone rings)... excuse me. I was always kind of a nut about fireworks on July 4th, and when we arrived here and didn't see a thing, it was kind of disappointing to me. But New Years in Hawaii, well, that was when all of the fireworks went off. Because it was still a territory, it was a little bit hard to realize that you were in the United States, but yet it was so different from where you had been brought up at.

Q: What Unit were you assigned to?

A: I was with the 13th Field Artillery at Schofield Barracks.

Q: What kind of weapons did they have?

A: They had the 75mm guns that were... their objective was to protect the fresh water inlets around the Island of Oahu that would allow ships to come in and land there. Because the fresh water killed the coral and made a deep enough passage that a ship could come fairly close in and off-load people. And our Unit sat up in eucalyptus groves on the north side of the Island with their guns all pointing out toward these little fresh water inlets.

Q: What was your particular job?

A: At the time of the attack, I was a clerk in the headquarters unit and basically recorded all the daily history of the Unit as it progressed.

Q: Where was the Unit, the 13th Field Artillery on December 7th, '41?

A: They were right at Schofield Barracks and they had a 11th Field Artillery, and the 13th. And then just a short time prior to the attack, the whole Unit, it had originally been regiments...

Q: Excuse me... go ahead.

A: It had originally been regiments and they'd reorganized into battalions, and it was a new more streamlines type of maneuvers. I'd imagine what the reason was for it, was the 24th and the 25th Divisions at Schofield Barracks, and the 13th was part of the 24th Division.

Q: What were you doing on the morning of the attack?

A: We'd just gotten up and was looking out the window. We saw

planes attacking Wheeler Field and lot of black smoke coming up. These airplanes were diving down numerous times and we saw the red ball on the wings and one fellow says, "Well that's the Japanese airplane." and somebody else says, "Well, how could Japanese airplanes be here. That must be some type of a Navy maneuver or something." So we really didn't realize even after seeing the attacks on Wheeler Field, that we were being attacked by a foreign country.

Q: What direction were those planes coming from?

A: Well, they were... had already arrived over the field. They were just kind of circling around, dive bombing, time after time. And a little bit later there was one that came up over our area, probably 300-500 foot above the terrain, and you could see the gunner sitting in the back with his goggles pushed up on his helmet and the sun reflecting off the goggles as he turned his head back and forth.

And he tried to swing his guns around to a group of people that had lined up for breakfast down below there and his guns were limited so that he could only fire to a certain extent. But he fired his guns and these bullets came across through the quadrangle and these guys were down there waiting for breakfast, split in two different directions and after the airplane passed by they got back in line for their breakfast again. And then as they stood there and got to thinking about it, well one guy went out and dug his bullet out of the quadrangle and looked at it and brought it back to the other fellows and I heard him say, "You know those son of a guns were shooting real bullets at us!" They still... it was hard for anybody to realize that we were being attacked.

And the field artillery personnel was equipped with a .45-caliber pistol (that was their normal weapon they carried for defense) and naturally it was useless to try to fire at an aircraft and besides that, they were all locked up in the gunnery building and we had no access to them anyhow.

Q: So, what did you do?

A: Uh, we were just kind of automatically been trained enough so that we realized that we were going to be called shortly out into the field, and everybody just started gathering up their field gear and putting it all together. And pretty soon the bugle sounded for the alert call and we were all notified to get to the motor pool. And so we all loaded up just like we'd practiced many, many times before and went out to an area that had been assigned to us and that's where we took up our bivouac area.

Q: Do you recall where that was?

A: Just that it was on the north side of the Island. I don't recall any specific name for it or just how... I remember it was probably about oh, four or five miles from the beach itself.

Q: Did they tell you to expect any kind of invasion or...

A: Uh, I don't think anybody gave us any formal briefing I can

remember of. There was a lot of expectations of what could possible happen.

Q: Were there a lot of rumors going around?

A: Oh yes, there's always rumors in situations like that.

Q: What kind of rumors were in circulation?

A: Well, there was rumors that the Japanese were going to land on the beach and that we had to be prepared to defend it. And the first night or two of guard duty, people were pretty trigger happy. They did have some BAR [*Browning Automatic Rifles*] rifles that were one per about a squad I think it was, and so they used those on sentry duty and several times during the night they'd let forward bursts of gunfire that weren't anything in particular, but maybe a shadow moved or something like that. They were all pretty jittery.

Q: I can imagine. What's the single most vivid memory you have of December 7th in the attack?

A: Well, that airplane flying so close to us and the pilots and the gunners sitting up there so unconcerned about what was going on. They just.... just like they was on a training mission themselves. That sticks in my mind real vivid.

Q: Let me ask you, what rank were you at the time?

A: I was Corporal at the time and later on I had put in for flying training. I was sent back to the states. I took my flying training and became an aircraft commander and eventually ended up with the 11th Bomb Group and got there about January of 1944, and stayed through until I'd flown 40 missions in the Pacific. And so I'd felt that I kind of retaliated a little bit against the Japanese. I think that took a lot of the animosity out of my system to be able to do that. I had no hard feelings against them anymore.

Q: O.K., thank you.

A: O.K.