

Ellsworth Jung #106  
July 26, 1985

Q: Mr. Jung, let me ask you first, when did you first join the Service?

A: November 1, 1940.

Q: How did you come to be in the Air Corps?

A: Well, actually I enlisted in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and I just saw an ad in the local paper that if you had a high school diploma, you could come down and join the [Army] Air [Corps] and serve in Hawaii. And that's something that was intriguing to me, so I did it!

Q: When did you finally get to Hawaii?

A: Well, it was the first week of December of 1940. I don't remember the exact dates... 6th of December or something like that, in '40.

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

A: Well, our first duties, of course, were some drilling and ground training. We were put in a tent city as soon as we arrived at Hickam Field, before we were assigned to barracks. And shortly after that I was assigned to the 26th [Bombardment] Squadron and put into the main barracks and I guess one of the first duties I had was

Q: After you finished KP, what did they have you doing?

A: Well, I had asked to go to AM school (airplane mechanic school) when I enlisted, and they did. They sent me through airplane mechanic school.

Q: Was that at Hickam there?

A: That was at Hickam, yes.

Q: When did you finish that, roughly?

A: I think I finished it in June of 1940.

Q: Were you assigned to a Squadron then?

A: Yes, I'd been in the 26th Squadron. I'd been in 26th Squadron from the time I arrived. And after finishing AM school, then I went through flight training. I went through flight engineering school.

Q: What types of airplanes did you fly?

A: We were B-18's at that time.

Q: What sort of plane was the B-18?

A: Well, the B-18 was a twin-engine bomber. It was... well, we used it... we did use it to dropping little 100-lb. sand bombs we were bombing tow targets that the Navy took for us, and bombing some of the islands out there that we used for targets. But I was flying before the War broke out, as a crew member, in a B-18. Our Squadron I think at that time had been assigned two of the early Flying Fortresses (the ones without the tail guns.) But I hadn't flown a [B-]17 until right after the War broke out.

Q: Just before the War broke out, what was your daily routine like?

A: Well, the daily routine was on the flight line. As a flight engineer, I worked with the mechanics, I worked with armament, and we flew. We flew our missions where we were training pilots in instrument... I remember one of my duties as a flight engineer was to put the black shroud around the co-pilot so that he was flying in the dark. And we would fly over here and do all types of simulated things, just for the pilot training really.

Q: Where were you when the attack began on December 7th?

A: Well, I was in the main barracks at Hickam Field. Actually, I was taking a shower when I first heard the bombs go off.

Q: What made you first realize something was happening?

A: Well, actually, Fort Kamehameha, which was the entrance to Pearl Harbor, just below Hickam Field, had large coastal guns, and they would fire those once in a while. So when I first heard the first explosions, I thought it was their guns exploding. But then when it continued and started to shake the barracks, well I figured then there's something else going on, and ran out of the shower and went into the wing of our squadron, and we just started to wake up other people that didn't know what was going on.

By that time, I saw one of the Zeroes come over real low, and I could see the insignia on it, and new something was happening that we weren't trained for.

Q: When did you first realize that it was a Japanese attack?

A: Well, about that time, you know. Then everybody else was getting excited and talking about it and saying, "Hey, this has gotta be for real". The Japs are really attacking us, which was kind of unreal to me, because I was a 21 year old kid. I didn't know anything about fighting a war. We were a peace time Air Force and hadn't really been trained for something like that.

Q: What did you do during the attack? Where did you go?

A: Well, the first thing most of us did, as I recall, we just assembled down on the first floor, and we were looking out the

main doors and just watching it, until some old timer, I guess he was a Tech or a Master just came over and said, "You fellows get out of the barracks and just disperse someplace. They're going to hit these barracks!" So luckily, we did, because they didn't hit the barracks on the first bombing. They waited and they dropped bombs which really hit the mess hall on the barracks, after we had all got out of the barracks.

And the group that I was with, most of us just ran out in the ballfield which was adjacent to the main barracks. And about that time or shortly after we got there, I remember, is when they came over without the dive bombing. They came over in a higher level bombing and dropped a bunch of bombs that I suppose were to hit the barracks, but they really did hit the baseball diamond where most of us were laying out there.

Q: Was the baseball diamond adjacent to the barracks?

A: Yes, it was. Yeah, it was just a little bit south of it I would think... or no, that would be, north... that would be south. It was south towards Pearl... towards Pearl Harbor. The diamond is still there. In fact, I saw it when I was there this last trip here.

Q: What did you do when the bombs started falling there?

A: Oh, didn't really know. I guess uh... I'm sure we were all scared. We were just to dumfounded to know what was going on. And when the bombs did drop, we had craters all around us and the dirt and the debris kind of hit me and covered me. And I remember when it was over I just looked myself over and thought I've got to be wounded. But I didn't get a scratch. I came out of it pretty good.

Q: What about any of the other guys that were there with you?

A: There were people in there who had lost their lives and were hurt.

Q: Did you see anybody firing back at the Japanese?

A: No, I didn't at that time. No, not there.

Q: What was the scene like over where the hangars were, and the aircraft were?

A: Well, I didn't get on the hangar line, but I could see it, and I could see the flames and the fire and destruction over there. But shortly after the raid ended, a truck came by (an open 4x4 I guess we called them at that time) and they just grabbed everybody they could find, and I was told to get aboard. And they took me out and took me on the perimeter of Hickam and put myself and another gentleman in a machine gun position and just said, "This is it. Don't you leave." and I tried to tell them at the time I was combat crew, I should report to my Unit, but I was actually stuck out there I think for two nights before they did come and get me.

Q: Do you recall what directions the Japanese planes came from?

A: No, at the time, I really didn't. At first I heard the explosions and I saw the planes flying low enough that you could see the insignia real well, and I guess you could almost make out the pilots. But I realize of course, they came from the north over the mountain passes. But I didn't know it at the time, from what direction they came.

Q: While all this was going on, what were you feeling?

A: Well, I really, you know, don't know what my feelings were at the time except that changing in just a few seconds from a peace time operation as we were, into a War, of course, everybody has some thoughts. What is going to happen? Most of us thought the Japanese were landing, and didn't think it was just an attack and they would leave again. We thought for sure, you know, it was not only a surprise or a sneak attack, but the Japanese had followed it up and were going to land. We didn't know what was going to happen the next couple of days.

Q: Were there a lot of rumors going around?

A: There was, yes. Especially that first night. There was all types of rumors going around, that they had landed, and they landing on various sides of the Island. In fact, that evening, everybody shot I guess what was one or two of our Navy planes, because I was in that machine gun nest and everybody else was filling the skies with tracers and we did too (laughter). That's just... we're not organized. We didn't know exactly what we were doing. We were just kind of following what everybody else did.

Q: What's your single most vivid memory of the attack?

A: Well, I really don't know. One of the things that does stick out in my memory is the parking lot where the enlisted personnel had cars parked, just next to the barracks. And some personnel during the strafing had jumped underneath the cars and when I went by there I did see a couple of the bodies that had been burned very, very bad. They had shrunk and just burned up. That always stuck in my mind. I remember that.

Q: Sounds like a grim experience. I appreciate your taking the time to talk to me.

A: Well, thank you.

Q: Thank you.

A: It's the first time I've ever been interviewed on what happened on Pearl Harbor day.