

George Correa #43
January 15, 1985

Q: Mr. Correa, would you tell me about your experiences on December 7th, 1941, when you were a member of the Honolulu Fire Dept.?

A: Well Mike, it was like this, at 6:00 AM the bell rings. I need to get up. And so we get up and do our little chores and whatever we have to do, and then we go for breakfast or whatever. And the Captain, Captain Nikora??? asked me to climb up the tower to see what was all that black smoke down at Pearl Harbor. So I climbed up the tower and I looked down there and when I came back down I said, "Captain, I think it's the oil tanks down at Pearl!" And he said, "No, it can't be... it's impossible.... no way.... it can't be." I said, "Well, that's all I can see." And I don't know, we fooled around a little bit, cleaned up our Engine, and pretty soon... BANG... the alarm comes in.

So here we go. We headed right down to, I guess it was Pearl, and we didn't worry going. When we got down almost to Hickam, there was machine guns all over in the middle of the street and the guy was telling us, "Go to Hickam... Go to Hickam!" So here we go. We go to Hickam. Then we get down to the big hangar(*Hangar 7*), the cafeteria was on fire! Therefore, I had to bring in the leads?? through the side door (the front doors were closed then) So I had to come into the side door with my leads and all that. I'm what they call a "nozzle man." So I got in there all right and then my Engineer (*Engineer Larry Kanou??*) was giving us water. But then uh, we didn't know what was going on until I met some of the little soldiers around there, and I said, "Hey, what's going on around here?" and he said, "Don't you know?" and I said "No way man! What is it?" He said, "Well, the Japs are bombing us!" Oh my that was something then!

So we were keep fighting in the planes, and we could hear the bombs coming up as far down, well I guess.... coming all the way up, we could hear the planes and we could hear the bombs bursting over there. It was really terrible. And pretty soon I know, BANG, that was it. I was up against a couple of them steel cases over there. I don't know the rest of it. I don't know what happened. I don't know how they got me out of there or what! When I finally got up, I was up at Tripler General Hospital; up in Shafter at the Old Tripler General Hospital. And here I was again... only me, and I was wondering hey, what's with all the rest of my friends, you know, my firemen? They I found Moses Kliirane Then I found Solomon Naauao and so I... the only thing they gave us up there, Mike, was uh, technicians, I don't know, different types of shots. That's all they did was they had all kind of shots that they gave us. And I said, "Hey, by the way, you know, we are civilian firemen." I said, "we... you know.... we" They said, "No, no, no, you have to stay..." We stayed out on the deck there; not only me, I mean, there were not thousands of us, but a few hundred. They was all out there, lying on the deck there.

Well, I don't know how many days before they ever found out that we were, you know, from the local fire department. Then I

asked for transfer to Queens. That was it. Then I came home. I stayed home for a couple of months. I mean I was kind of bad Mike. Then one of my good friends, my roommate, Solomon Naauao , (he's a big man, he's about 250 pounds, he's a big man, he's my roommate), he got the worst of the whole deal. He got half of his back all wiped out with shrapnel wounds. And Moses Kliikane from Kauai, he had his legs all in terrible shape. And then there was myself and Pat McCabe. Old poor Pat, he got busted up too. So we finally all met. Mike, I don't know, after so long, we finally all met and started talking about the old days. I mean what it was all like. It sure was a hectic day man. I never forget that day boy.

Q: What station were you at?

A: I was at Central, #1 Station, Central... on the corner of Fort and Beretania.

Q: What Company were you in there?

A: Number One.

Q: Number One. Was that an Engine Company?

A: Yeah, that's both engine and hose wagon, you know. See, we have two Companies over there; one to take care of this side, and one to take care of this side. You see you have two Companies, one goes to Kailua too. So that's where we went unfortunate, or whatever you would call it, to go down to Hickam. But then, all in all, it's line of duty. You go where they tell you to go, not where you want to go.

Q: When they were running out the hose for you, where were they getting the water from?

A: We got it, Mike, where the hydrant was, they blew up the bloody hydrant right next to the cafeteria if I can recall. But there was a big hole there and we had to draft from that hole. See where that water was just shooting up, and the fire department thing was two doors down from us. We could see the edges all outside, but no man to man it.

Q: What kind of shape were the engines in?

A: Oh, that couldn't tell. We couldn't tell. I couldn't tell nothing really because right there I had to bring in the leads to get into the firemen. And that day Mike, I can't tell the difference between the planes, but I thought that the planes were bigger than the hangar, or the hangar was smaller, one of the two. I don't know. It was a big difference in there. I think there was about, let me see, I think three big planes if I can recall clearly, three big planes in there. I don't mean those small ones. I mean the big ones. I always thought they was the big mamas you know, the B#1 bombers, but they didn't have them then. So that was the whole situation.

Q: How bad was the fire in hangar #7?

A: How bad was it? Oh, it was pretty bad. It was pretty hot... it was pretty hot Mike, it was pretty hot. I tell you it was really hot... and what? Well you have to do your work, I mean. Yep, I didn't see my Captain. I didn't see nobody after that till we got up to Tripler Hospital. Then I finally located some of the boys.

Q: Sounds like it was a pretty confused type of situation.

A: What Mike?(dog barking)

Q: It sounds like it was a confused situation.

A: It was. It was Mike... it was. I mean uh, I don't know, some say that the Captain says, "Oh, you're on your own now." something like that. I don't remember that... I mean uh, I don't... he never told me that, because he was not very far away from me when the hangar collapsed (dogs barking loudly... difficult to understand) Hey!! I don't know, to me, it looked like it was all repaired, I mean reconditioned or something, because I couldn't tell that (dogs barking) oh gosh there was all the bullet box and so forth and so on all over the wall. But then, to me it didn't seem the same hangar. I don't know why, unless my memory went back on me... so long. But then I knew when I got there, I mean I could never find it. I mean otherwise I used to go down there and see if I could locate that hangar. I could never, I could never. So the only time I did was on this when we were down at the airport on an interview and I said, "Oh, now I know where I'm at." Course it's all changed now. It's not like it used to be. It was something Mike; it was really something... yep. We had one Chief down there, Chief while he was there and he left and that was all... that was all I know. I didn't know about the rest of the guys. I don't know when they got out of there or what. When we all got up to Tripler in the evening, I think it was about 6:00... 6:00 that evening I think and I kept telling them, "Hey, I'm a civilian fireman." So that's how I go get in touch with the Chief. That was it Mike; that was it all in a nutshell.

Q: Thanks. Appreciate your taking the time to talk to me.

A: What? (dogs barking)

Q: I appreciate your taking the time to talk to me.

A: Oh, thank you Mike... my privilege. But of course Mike, I'm getting up in age. I'm 74; be 74 next month and I can't remember. There's a lot of little things I would like to remember but I can't seem to focus on it, you know what I mean. I wish I could be a little help to you Mike. See, there's only two of us living now that actually got hurt, besides Kaliikane and myself, the rest is all passed away. They're all deceased already... four other men.