

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW #438-1

with

Paul Tognetti (PT)

February 11, 1992

Waikiki, Oahu

BY: Joe Rossi (JR)

JR: This is an interview with Paul Tognetti on February 11, 1992, at the Elks Club in Waikiki. The interviewer is Joe Rossi.

Mr. Tognetti, maybe we could start by having you tell me a little bit about your family, your parents, where they're from.

PT: Well, my mother and dad both came to California about 1908. And they came from Switzerland, canton Ticino. And the reason for coming to California—they followed a group of pioneers, I guess, because of lack of work in Switzerland. From the Alps there, I think it took 'em about thirty days to go down, caught a ship. And as far I know, they came to New York and then across country [to] San Francisco and down into the Salinas Valley where they settled. And my mother and dad met there, in Salinas Valley.

JR: So they had come separately?

PT: They came separately, yes. But there was apparently quite a group. A colony of people from the same area settled in Salinas Valley during that time. And two brothers got involved and purchased some property, a ranch, about 300 acres. And then one brother wanted to come back to Switzerland, and so he sold out his interest to my dad. And my dad had two other brothers that came over and worked in the dairy business, and the other brother also bought a dairy. And the other brother was involved in—well, he was kind of a merchant. (Pause) I'll just say it. (Chuckles) He peddled wine and would be picked up a few times, too, by the county or the state. It was Prohibition in those days and. . . . He would never go to jail. He always paid his fines. But he liked to peddle a lot of liquor.

JR: Moonshining. (Laughs)

PT: Moonshining, yeah. Then, during the years, my mother and dad had their family. I had three brothers and a sister.

JR: Where do you fit in?

PT: I'm the second youngest. My sister was the youngest. We pretty much lived on the ranch there, four miles south of King City, in the dairy business. Then the depression came along in '32. And Mother, basically she was the business sense of the family. She says, "We got to buy some more land, we got an opportunity here. Kids will have to work after they get out of high school and college and whatever." So they bought another 1,000 acres. Mortgaged one place and purchased the other property. Thousand acres for, I think, \$27,000.

JR: Was that used for dairy land, also?

PT: That was a dairy, and it was used [as] pasture for dairying and eventually went into truck crops. And it was the old Spreckles Company. Of course, they were in the sugar business there, raising sugar beets in the valley. And they collected the water from the Salinas River, and a big ditch went through the property. Of course, it was of no value really. At that time, around '32, they put in wells, and so it kind of eliminated the big canal and we levelled it off. I think we made about fifteen, twenty acres of level land from this great big ditch and planted it. With two boys, Aldo going to college at Cal-Poly [*California Polytechnic State University*] down in San Luis Obispo—and Elmer followed suit. One went into animal husbandry, and Elmer went into dairying, so he came back on the farm and operated the dairy. And Aldo, with his animal husbandry background, came back on the ranch and kind of operated the truck farms, truck crops. Guido graduated from high school and stayed on the farm. And I went to San Jose [*State University*].

JR: If I could get you to stop here. What year were you born? What year did you come along?

PT: Nineteen twenty.

JR: Nineteen twenty. I wanted just to---I meant to ask you earlier, what were the names of your parents? What were their names?

PT: Joe and Beatrice.

JR: Do you remember your mom's maiden name?

PT: Maiden name was Ferrini.

JR: These sound like Italian names.

PT: Swiss-Italian, yes. But Mother said, "Never Italian, you're Swiss." (Laughs) So we're from the Swiss-Italian sector of the southern part of Switzerland. And basically the city there is Locarno. And around Locarno, they have the different canton. They were up in the mountains, and they called it the Hotel Effra. I think the family had some property up there and built a hotel and were in the hotel business later in the years.

JR: So you came along in '20. Were you folks isolated from other families when you were on the property or was there a town that you lived in?

PT: Well, we were four miles south of King City. And then we had an aunt in Soledad, and they were also in the dairy business, Ben Lanini and my mother's twin sister. Every week we would go visit our aunt and vice versa, they would come down the following week. And I remember, I loved my aunt's cooking. She would always bring the desserts.

JR: You had a sweet tooth?

PT: (Laughs) Yeah, wow. Panetonne and fruitcake. I've never had a better fruitcake than what she used to make—moist, delicious. Now, of course, everybody drank their wine. They loved their wine. And my dad, being [*that*] his brother was in moonshining, the wine, my dad did some of that on the ranch. He had friends in town would come out and they'd buy a gallon of wine. They come in, have a little lunch down in the cellar, and before they left, they always bought a gallon of wine. And he would sell it to them for about three dollars and a half [*\$3.50*] a gallon.

JR: Do you remember ever seeing him make . . .

PT: The wine? Oh yes. We'd have a big huge vat—wooden vat made of, I believe, redwood. And every year, he'd make about ten fifty-gallon drums, about 500 gallons of wine, and this would take care of the milkers. Basically, the milkers and family use, about 500 gallons of wine.

JR: So was this all done in a barn or something?

PT: This was all done in a garage. We had a garage, and the tank was there. And of course, we'd love when the big truck came along with the grapes and crushed it all there. And you'd get good, sweet juice out of that huge vat for about three weeks, and then it would ferment and you get the hot, sour wine. But the first three weeks, we loved the juice. Zinfandel, they'd come down with Zinfandel.

JR: These were grapes that he purchased from someone else?

PT: From on the outside. They're grown up the valley, down in Gilroy, Modesto—about 100 miles from there. So every year, they'd make their own wine. And of course, in the early days they made their own cheese, and then they discontinued that. But they would make their own cheese, and we would make our own head sausage, plain sausage, and salami. We'd kill two pigs and a cow and then we'd have somebody come in that were expert at making the sausage and the head sausage. And that was always good, homemade sausages. And they'd kill this one cow and two pigs and that would be the supply for the whole year. They'd hang it up in one of the rooms and dry it. You just couldn't buy sausage today that tasted like that. These guys knew how to make it. They'd add some wine to it and—real good. So we had our own milk and plenty of that at home. And of course, it wasn't TB [*tubercle bacillus*] tested or anything, but it was apparently good milk. We all survived. (Laughs) But during the depression, the federal government came along and all cows had to be tested for tuberculosis. Out of possibly 150 cows, they left about thirty of our cows. The others had to all be sold, and I think they were sold, maybe, at \$100 a head. And there were some dairies in the valley, they didn't leave one cow left. They just about went out of business. They took 'em all.

JR: Was the meat edible?

PT: The meat was edible. They could sell the cows. I think they got about \$100 per head, which wasn't very much.

JR: No, it doesn't sound like it was.

PT: No. Today a replacement is up around \$1,500. In those days, I suppose maybe they paid you half interest. Probably \$200 to buy a replacement, and they probably gave you \$100. It wiped out quite a few dairies, that tuberculosis program. Well, okay, tuberculosis and then maybe they had too much milk at the same time. (Laughs) But you go to Switzerland and you wonder why they don't have a surplus. It's coffee and milk, they call it café au lait. It's half milk and half coffee, but the coffee is so strong, about half of that cup of coffee has to be milk. No wonder these people don't have a surplus of milk, they pour it into their cups of coffee. It's half-and-half really.

JR: How far was the school that you had to go to?

PT: Four miles. All of us would catch a bus. A bus would come along the road, and through grade school and high school, we would catch the bus. And if we missed the bus, we would have to walk home four miles. So we didn't miss the bus very often. But we were all kind of athletes. My brother was a good athlete. He went to Cal-Poly and played football, and I kind of followed suit. I had a scholarship going to San Jose [*State University*] for basketball, and I ended up playing football. That gave you the board and room all year round if you made the football team. Basketball was just for the season. So I got started in football and got my board and room all year round and that helped.

JR: What were you supposed to study at college?

PT: I started out in architecture, and then I found out after the first semester that I have—I only had two years at San Jose that transferred to [*University of California*], Berkeley. So I decided against it and changed my major to industrial arts. If I went through four years, I'd become a teacher in industrial arts.

JR: So you were the only one of the boys that wasn't going to go back to the farming?

PT: That's right, yeah.

JR: Was that okay with your folks?

PT: Yeah. My mother had, I guess, a nephew, and he was an architect in Switzerland. And she wanted somebody in the family to be an architect. Well, I didn't make it, but I have a nephew that's an architect now. He designed this---well, I told him what I wanted down on Sunset Beach and he designed it for me. He's supposed to get about 10 percent of the cost of the house, about \$15,000. He didn't take a cent. So I told him I'd remember him in my will, and I do have him in my will. And I'm starting to give away the ranch there in King City now. One

percent to him, to my sister, and my two daughters. If I can do that for ten years, it will take care of the inheritance tax. About \$400,000, and our government gives us about \$600,000 deferment on inheritance, so it would be about a \$1 million dollars deferment. When my folks passed away, we had a bill of about \$200,000 inheritance tax. We had to sell about 200 acres in order to pay for that inheritance tax. And hopefully this program of gifts back the next ten years will take care of that. Plus, what the federal government gives you, we don't have to pay more inheritance tax. And then today, you've got to get into a trust program, too. In a trust, you say who the property goes to and you bypass all the courts. It immediately becomes the property of the people that you signed it to, and they take over. There's a term there, you avoid. . . . You avoid the courts, anyway, by going through a trust.

JR: Yeah, you mean what they call probate.

PT: Probate. You avoid your probate, right.

JR: Sounds like you're planning ahead there. (Chuckles)

PT: Yeah, so it's all set up for my daughters, my sister. I thought she got shortchanged. She got all the cash. It was \$100,000, and the federal government took half of that. And so she didn't get very much. So I said, "I'll give you 10 percent and your [son] 10 percent," eventually. And my daughters get 40 percent each, plus these properties down here. They'll go to both my daughters.

JR: So you went to San Jose State on a scholarship. If I could just get you to jump back a few years, when did you first get involved in your sports activities?

PT: Well, through high school. I went from '36 through '39, four years of high school there. (Pause) Maybe I started in '35. Thirty-five, '36, '37, '38. No, it was '36, '37, '38, '39. Graduated, started San Jose in '39. I was in sports. I lettered in four letters—track, basketball, baseball, and football—just like my brother did. And I guess. . . . Ike Hables, who came from King City, had a brother, Abe. They were both on the 1932 Stanford Track Team, and they went to the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles (with Ben Eastman and broke the world record in the mile relay). And he was, of course, from my hometown, so he knew the coach at San Jose State, Bill Hubbard, basketball coach, through his friendship. And I played a little bit of ball for Ike Hables. He got me to continue education. He said, "I don't care what you do in the sport, let's go to school." And so, with his interest—and he knew the coach at San Jose—he got me up there and gave me a scholarship, got me going.

JR: Were you looking at basketball first?

PT: Yeah, basketball first. And then I got up there—I was working on training table as a freshmen. I served the varsity players, and I got my board. You're able to eat during—well, yeah, it was all year. Yeah, just got my board. But then if you made the football team, you got your board and room, and that was it for the whole year.

JR: There was an added incentive.

PT: Yeah, to go make the team. And basketball, irregardless of whether you made the team or not, you only had it for one semester actually, out of the three semesters at San Jose, just during the basketball season.

JR: Did they have a strong football program?

PT: Yeah, they had quite a record. I think a couple years undefeated at San Jose. They were very liked out here in the islands. We made two or three trips here. And of course, Ben Winkelman was the coach there at the time, and Pop Warner was the assistant coach. And between Pop Warner, fifty years of coaching, and Amos Alonzo Stagg, fifty years of coaching at University of Pacific—was then the College of Pacific—we played our centennial year, hundred years of coaching.

JR: That was a special game?

PT: Yeah, it was kind of a special game in Stockton. Fresno and Stockton were kind of our big games there in those days.

JR: Who won the century of coaching?

PT: We won the game, seven to nothing, in a big controversial play. The papers in San Francisco said there wasn't a touchdown, the guy never got over the goal line, but the official called it a touchdown.

JR: What position were you playing?

PT: I was playing quarterback on the Warner system, which is the blocking back. Then you back up the line on defense. So I was basically a blocking back.

JR: What kind of gear did you guys wear back then?

PT: Wasn't very much, compared to what they have today. I always put extra padding in, on my shoulder pads, and I remember Pop Warner says, "At least you look like a football player," big, bulging shoulder pads. And you had your knee pads and thigh pads. And they always tape your ankles. I thought it was pretty good. Of course, the helmet was—there was no guard, no face guard in those days, just a plain leather helmet. It was leather type. It was okay, cushioned. But today's equipment is so much improved.

JR: What was the reputation that Hawai`i's team had at this time? Were you in for a rough game when you came over here, or was it going to be a cakewalk or what?

PT: No, it was going to be a close game. University of Hawai`i had their star, Nolle Smith. He was their star halfback. We heard that they had a good team. I would say very similar caliber to our club, so it was going to be a close ball game. They beat Willamette [*University*] that afternoon on December 6, 1941. And we watched them, and it looked like we had our hands full if we

were to play 'em.

JR: Had the team done much traveling, outside California?

PT: We went to San Diego. We went Nevada, played University of Nevada. Texas A & I [University] came to town. Hardin-Simmons [University] from Texas came to San Jose. And I know when we played [College of] Pacific in Stockton, we all went down by train in those days. And we flew down to San Diego, played University of San Diego. We played USF, University of San Francisco. And there was too much rivalry between San Jose and [University of] Santa Clara, and they broke off the relationship. (Chuckles) They couldn't control student bodies.

JR: Were these road trips—was there much time for recreation or anything like that?

PT: No. You'd travel the day of the game. Like most of them were on a Friday night—night games—and you'd travel on Friday to play ball. Never go a day before. You fly down and you flew back that evening. You went by train, you came back that same night. The train ride to Stockton, that was a lot of fun. We had a lot of fun on the train.

JR: Were you a rowdy bunch?

PT: Not too rowdy. (Laughs) Went to Nevada [in 1940], we got a little rowdy over there with those houses [*i.e.*, *brothels*] they have there. We thought someone said, “The coach went in there. I don't see why we can't go in?” And sure enough, we selected one kid and. . . . I don't know if you want to hear about this.

JR: No, I'd like to. (Laughs)

PT: This kid, I mean, he was kind of a, well, happy-go-lucky kid from San Luis Obispo. And we had to select somebody to—well, there was this gal in the whorehouse, and all of us, about ten of us in there, and we select one person to. . . . I don't know what you want to call it. And sure enough, we selected [*him to*] put on a performance. And we all laughed and giggled. (Laughs) What a sight.

JR: What was the prospect, then, of going to Hawai`i? That must have been something completely different.

PT: Yeah, then the year after was Hawai`i. We planned a year ahead, I think, when we schedule.

JR: Had you heard anything about Hawai`i?

PT: No, we didn't even know what Hawai`i was. And when we got down here, during December 7, O`ahu was being bombed, and we asked each other, “What's O`ahu?”

(Laughter)

PT: “Where is O`ahu?”

JR: You're sitting on it!

PT: Yeah, really. Everything was---I didn't think it was this large, really. I was impressed with the size of it, the mountains. And the people were so friendly.

JR: Can you remember anything you had heard or thought, even before you actually arrived?

PT: No. Well, the only thing---well, our ship was held up one day in Los Angeles, because [*Saburo*] Kuruu was going to Washington to negotiate peace. So the ship was held up one day. We didn't think we were going to make the trip. The tension was so mounted between Washington and Tokyo. And then, it took off. Okay, so we came to Hawai`i. It was about a seven-day trip in those days. And the P-40 and the Grumman planes dove down on the ship here as we approached Honolulu Harbor, and all of a sudden I thought, man, this is some fortress of the Pacific. Lot of planes, lot of activity. Of course, when they had a ball game, like Saturday, December 6, everybody in town was at the ball game it seemed, and it was only a 12,000 seat capacity stadium. I remember being Downtown Honolulu, Fort Street, I never saw so many drunk sailors and GIs, midnight. And we broke training rules, came in the back door of the Moana Hotel about one o'clock in the morning. We were just getting over our sea legs and enjoying it. We did our practicing.

JR: Okay, let me get you to give me, if you can, a day-by-day kind of---what day did you guys come in? Do you remember?

PT: We came in on December 3. December 3, about the middle of the day. We were supposed to play the police benefit game, so they took us right straight up to the Pali, on Nu`uanu Avenue up to the Pali. It was the old two-lane highway. Then they had pineapple and pineapple juice and bananas up there. Just a beautiful sight.

JR: They had a bus load of you guys?

PT: Yeah, took us in the bus and took us up to the Pali. Then we came down the Pali. Then we came down to the Moana Hotel, where we were quartered, here on Waik

He says, “Oh, the army and navy practice shooting sharks and whales. Nothing to be concerned about.” Till we walked out the front of the hotel and see these cars speeding down the road about sixty miles an hour.

And then we heard the first radio broadcast that morning about eight o'clock. “This is the real McCoy. The rising sun has been seen on the wings. Japanese planes are bombing Pearl Harbor.” So it was really kind of unbelievable that we come out here and all of a sudden we're attacked. And it was kind of a drizzly day. I really didn't think too much about what was going on, except as darkness set in that night then it became kind of serious.

And they asked us who wanted to go to work at the police station. And we all decided yes,

instead of sitting around the hotel doing nothing, wondering what to expect next. So we all went down to the police station, where they gave us MP [*military police*] arm bands, 1918 steel helmets, riot guns, and put us out on patrol guarding areas. My first assignment was `A`ala Park. Said to me, "We expect paratroopers in here tonight." So I was there with my little riot gun and hoped nothing would come in. And martial law was declared. Everybody had to be off the streets. And the marines were on the waterfront, and anything that moved, their machine guns went all night. So this kept up, kind of a routine, different places where we guarded. And I guarded the Honolulu Iron Works, I think, the second night, and then I was guarding up in Nu`uanu the Japanese Consulate for several days and nights. Kept them into the yard. In fact, they weren't even allowed outside of the building. They had to stay indoors all the time.

JR: So, what exactly was your training or instructions at this point, after they took you down to the police station?

PT: There really weren't any instructions or training at all. "Here's a gun. Use it if you need it." And then after about thirty days—or before then. Heck, after about a week, the word got around, "Hey, any of you guys want to stay here? The ship is going back on the eighteenth. It's going to take all wounded personnel aboard the ship, and you'll all be first aiders. But if some of you guys want to stay here, okay."

And some of us got together and said, "Hey, let's stay here." And we all joined the police force, and the rest of the team went back. So for three-and-a-half years we were on the Honolulu police force. And then we got our training, went through training, police-work training and the whole bit. And from guard duty, we were assigned different departments. Some got into detective work, some got in as a dispatcher. I went into investigating accidents, highway patrol. So it was enjoyable. Three-and-a-half years on the police force. Good experience, but never to make it a permanent job.

JR: Let me get this straight. That morning you heard the radio after you had seen the splashes and seen the cars racing down the road. You knew the Japanese were attacking the islands. You figured out where O`ahu was. (Chuckles)

PT: Yeah. And we saw some planes flying over. I think they were observation planes, about eleven o'clock that morning. And then some shrapnel, from either artillery or from bombs dropped in the Waik

JR: So you were sort of walking around.

PT: Walking around, yeah. We saw that, and we saw the planes, and we could see the anti-aircraft guns going after those planes. My gosh, the planes are out here and the puffs were so far away from the planes. A real poor display of shooting anti-aircraft guns.

JR: You weren't---I mean, what was the feeling at this point?

PT: At this point, like, hey, this can't be so. And we didn't know how much damage was done to Pearl Harbor—we were pretty much around the hotel there—till we heard more about it. And

the rumors were circulating, there was an invasion on the island. For three or four days, right at the beginning, there were rumors there was an invasion on the other side of the island. And of course, everybody wanted to leave. And there was no planes in those days and they had to go by ship. The *Lurline* was here, it was tied up. And really, there were no ships. But people wanted to get off the island. You could have bought this island or parts of it. Really, take it.

JR: So for the rest of the day, you spent most of your time near the Moana?

PT: Near the Moana Hotel, and walked around the Waik

JR: Did you get a chance to talk to many people? I'm trying to figure out whether people were fearing that something was going to happen at that time or pretty calm.

PT: I could see things were pretty calm in the daytime. But when nightfall set in—and it was martial law, where people were told to be indoors—there just seemed to be a lot of excitement. And you hear an awful lot of shooting, and flares were going up in different areas. You were wondering what was happening, if there really was an invasion going on. And with the rumors that people were spreading, it didn't sound very good. You just kind of hope that there wasn't an invasion, and if there was an invasion. . . . And then you heard a lot of rumors about the armed forces. They had an alert. They were alerted about possible attack. And then you hear talk like the ammunition is at this end of the island, the weapons are at the other end. And around Hickam Field and Pearl Harbor, the relationship between the air force and the navy and the armed forces—there was a strange feeling, and you heard this, that they never worked together. The air force was in one area, and Pearl Harbor is in another area, and the army was different places, and there was no combined efforts, really. Lot of dissention in the ranks. You heard a lot about this, as you heard people talking. And I know B-17s were coming in there the next morning. We saw our own flares—they said our own people were shooting them down. Nobody believed anybody that this is a friendly aircraft up there. The tracers going up after our own planes. It was mass confusion among, it seemed to me, the military people. That was really what was going on. So with all this, you wondered what was going to happen from day to day.

JR: How many of the football players do you think they had down at the station?

PT: Well, they had all of us.

JR: All of you. So how many would that be?

PT: About thirty.

JR: About thirty. And each man got a helmet and a gun.

PT: Yes, an assignment. They got their equipment and assignment and went out in different directions. There was quite a group that were guarding Punahou School. And of course, the U.S. Engineers [*Department*] immediately took the entire school and used it for engineering throughout the whole war. I don't know where the kids went to school after that. But the Royal

Hawaiian was submarine—navy submarine personnel took over the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. It was kind of a sub-base for personnel from the submarines.

JR: Were you allowed to stay at the Moana?

PT: We were allowed to stay at the Moana for about two weeks, then we had to get out. So we went up to Kaimuk

Now they're a bunch of high rises. And there's quite a talk now—oh, just about a year ago. There's still some of the old houses around Tusitala, and I guess Japanese bought the houses and they're going to put up condos. And the people that are in these old houses say, “They haven't given us notice to move out and they want to come in here and bulldoze these houses.” And there was a little bit of discussion in the papers here recently. I went over there and I noticed the place where we were in is all high rise now. But there's still some of the houses there around Tusitala that haven't been knocked down and are supposed to go up with condos.

JR: Were you living with some of the San Jose State . . .

PT: Yeah, players. Three of us players were staying in one house. And another fellow was next door, and he had his girlfriend come over. She apparently made the trip over here, and they got married here. And we would---I mean, everything was blacked out for about four years. And cars' headlights were all dim. You had a shield over them. Kind of a total blackout here for the islands for about four years. So in the evenings, for any entertainment, we always had our poker games. We wouldn't even get out of our police uniform. Go at the poker tables at some friend's house and stay there for the night. And when we come on duty, we'd still be in our uniforms. Sometimes we didn't even sleep.

JR: I'm going to stop the tape. I got to turn it over.

PT: Oh, okay.

PT: They paid us \$164 a month, and we thought it was pretty good pay, in those days.

JR: Was there a certain point that you had to decide whether you were staying?

PT: Yeah. And for my sake, I remember hearing about ships being torpedoed between here and the Mainland. I wasn't too happy going across this ocean right at that time. I felt safer back here, and the rest of the guys did, too. I said, “Heck, let's stay here.”

JR: How many of you guys stayed?

PT: Seven of us.

JR: And did your family have any idea what was going on? I mean, were you able to communicate with them in any way?

PT: Well, just correspondence. My mother didn't think I'd ever get back, especially going in the service over here after three-and-a-half years. So in July of '44, I went into the service. Instead of going back to my draft board, I had to go in here with the local boys and trained over here, took my basic training here. And then I ended up in Leyte in the Philippines, and then the invasion of Okinawa, the occupation forces in Korea, and I got back home five years later. Got out of the service, stayed home for about thirty days, and then I met someone here in the islands and came back over here and got married.

JR: And you've been here.

PT: Yeah, been here pretty much ever since. Got a job at Dole's [*i.e.*, *Hawaiian Pineapple Company*] cannery. Worked in the cannery department for about two years and didn't like the work, so I went back to King City in '48, '49. My dad passed away in '50, December '50. And we were about to have our twin girls, so my wife said, "Let's go back to Hawai`i." Kind of a break there.

And I says, "Okay, let's go back to Hawai`i." Didn't know what I was going to do out here, but I went into the feed and grain business over here. And that's what I was doing over there for Ralston Purina, a company there in King City. So I've been in the feed and grain business ever since. Still in it.

JR: I hope you bear with me. I'm just going to keep dragging you back to the Pearl Harbor days.

PT: Some of the incidents there—I know one night there were flares up around Tantalus. And we were assigned—of course, right at the onset of the war, we heard that the FBI [*Federal Bureau of Investigation*] picked up all the Japanese agents. And the agents that Japan used were all German agents, and they were all picked up that first day of war, that morning. They had them all spotted and picked them up. And there were a lot of flares going up in the city here. So we spotted this flare, and we kind of figured there were Japanese submarines out at sea and they were flashing lights and signals out there. So we crawled up to this place where this flashing was going on, and there was a short in a garage, a bulb was flickering. So that ended our big attack on that flare. (Chuckles)

JR: You mentioned that thing at the consulate. They had you there for a period—the Japanese Consulate.

PT: Mm hmm [*yes*].

JR: You were supposed to prevent . . .

PT: Just guard duty, prevent them from leaving the premises. They had to stay indoors all the time. And it seemed to me, I had an assignment there for a couple weeks. We were on about eight-hour duty. There were three shifts. Somebody else would replace us. We worked eight hours and sixteen off.

JR: Did anything happen when you were up there for those few weeks?

PT: No, not at the consulate. We couldn't communicate with them, but apparently they knew that, look, you're here and you're not to go outside. You're supposed to stay indoors.

JR: Were people allowed to come in? Do you remember?

PT: Into the consulate?

JR: Yeah.

PT: No, nobody was to trespass. We never did see anybody coming or going.

JR: So as far you knew, someone was in there and . . .

PT: Yeah, we saw the Japanese. They would come to the door and that's as far as they would come. But yeah, our orders were to not allow anybody in or anybody out.

JR: Had you handled a gun prior to that night that they gave you a riot gun?

PT: Oh yeah. Well, as a kid on the farm we always fired shotguns and rifles, and deer hunting, quail hunting, ducks. So I knew how to handle a gun if I had to use it.

JR: Were you given a uniform and that kind of thing?

PT: Not right at the beginning. Just a MP arm band and your helmet. And they gave you a gas mask. That was kind of our uniform for the first, oh, I'd say, first thirty days. Wore civilian clothes really. And then once we decided to stay here, join the police force, then we eventually got into police training and went through the school and got all the training that was necessary as a police officer.

JR: Where was the police station?

PT: On Bethel Street and I believe it's Houghtailing [*Street*]. Not Houghtailing, is it Halekauwila [*Street*]? The street that goes down to Hawaiian Electric plant. Maybe Queen Street and Bethel. Down there on the waterfront. [*The police station was at the corner of Bethel and Merchant streets.*] And since, they've moved from there to the old Sears building on Beretania [*Street*]. And I understand there'll be a new one down near the palace grounds.

JR: Yeah, they're building that on—I think it was the old bus depot or something.

PT: Yeah, it was the bus depot there. They're working on the parking lot now. I guess their station is pretty well completed. I thought the Sears building was a big building for the police department, but apparently they've outgrown it.

JR: Did you have much---did you have an office or anything when you finally were part of the force?

PT: No, we'd use one of their cars to go out on highway patrol. And that's just strictly on highway patrol duty. And then we'd have to catch a bus and come home, and then go on the bus to work. And we all had coupons—rations. And gasoline, too. If you had a car, you had to—well, everything was rationed. Alcohol—they made a Five Islands over here, called Five Islands.

JR: Was that a beer or vodka or gin?

PT: You know, I think it was a gin, Five Islands gin. But man, we used it for [*rubbing*] alcohol. Burned like a son of a gun. We played volleyball out in the yard in the lot and get bruised up, and we used that bloody Five Islands gin as alcohol to rub ourselves. And it burned. We'd buy liquor on a ration program. Everything was rationed—food, liquor, gasoline.

JR: Were you able to manage?

PT: We were able to manage, yeah.

JR: Can you remember any things you were always short of?

PT: Right at the beginning, meat was kind of short. We were short of meat. I remember, we took a trip to the Big Island, went up to Kuka`iau Ranch, and we brought back our suitcases full of steaks. It was rare to find here in town, so we brought. And this was where they had all the cattle up there. They had an abundance of beef on that island, so we brought back our suitcases full of beef.

(Laughter)

PT: But overall, there was always sufficient staples here.

JR: I talked to someone, and they had a hard time cooking at home 'cause of the gas, lights, and so forth, and I think they ended up staying in a place where they didn't have to cook. It was just too much trouble with the lines [*to buy groceries*] and all that stuff.

PT: We had electricity, I guess, and gas. We didn't have too much problems. And being a police officer, you go in the country, you get bananas, you get pineapples. I mean, people being so friendly. And police officers got a little priority. I mean, you go to a restaurant, you didn't pay for anything. They give you lunch.

JR: (Chuckles) Why do you think that was?

PT: To this day, I've gotten—oh, I just went to court, just on Monday. I got hooked for speeding—twenty-one miles [over the speed limit] in a thirty-five mile zone—and this judge hooked me for eighty-nine dollars. But that is one of the few tickets. I've been stopped many, many times, and I just give them the story—“I'm an ex-Honolulu police officer, and I know you're doing your duty”—before they start writing. Generally, they start writing tickets so fast now, because they go through the courts. In the old days, they'd write a ticket and they'd tear it up. You tell them

the story and. . . .

Now, everything goes through the courts. Every citation, every tag has got to be recorded somewhere. “Where is this ticket?” And once they start writing, they can't stop.

And they don't want you to get out of your cars nowadays, either. They tell you, “No, we don't want you—stay in the car for safety.”

“I want to talk to you.” You go out and talk to them, tell 'em who you are and this and that. It always works. Except this one Hawaiian, over in Waimanalo, he wouldn't listen to me. He wrote his citation, and boy, eighty-nine bucks.

And I listen to Judge Watanabe over there, he gave some leniency. “Okay, you got a good record. [*f*] you were ten, fifteen miles over the speed limit . . . ” But I was twenty-one miles. I guess it was too damn much, and he says, “You're going too fast, you pay the fine.” No leniency at all.

JR: What was it like when you were doing it?

PT: Oh, I issued a lot of citations, a lot of tags. But if they had a good story, I wouldn't write 'em, I'd give 'em a warning.

JR: A good story, meaning an excuse or . . .

PT: I mean, there was some good reason why they were breaking the law.

(Pause)

But it was down on Hotel Street, you get involved down in that area. First you start out as a policeman, you walk a beat. And you had to be a fighter. Those service people would always drink, overdrink, and a lot of drunks raise hell. And when you're a damn draft dodger, you're not in uniform, you get called all kinds of names.

JR: But you were a football player, you must have been pretty . . . (Chuckles)

PT: Oh hell, we had a damn riot down there, I remember. We were on PA [*public address*] system, and one of our fellows up in dispatch station. And I said, “Call for replacements or help down here. These guys are up on the hood of the car, raising hell.” And of course, we had two-way radios, and in little while we got reinforcements. But boy, it looked like. . . .

We had tried to put a guy—put handcuffs on him and everything. We had him there and were waiting for the meat wagon to come along, and before you know it there was thirty, forty, fifty people all around you. “Let the guy go!” You wonder what's going to happen next.

JR: So when things got ruckus was it the military fighting with their own kind or were they—I mean, was there any interaction between civilians?

PT: Well, it was civilians and military. But mostly, it seemed to me it was military people that would get out of hand. And of course, they would get stiff sentences during the war if you were out under the influence of alcohol, drunk. Two- or three-hundred-dollar fines. But these service people come back from duty, some of these guys just go beyond control, and they were tough to handle.

JR: You were walking a beat Downtown?

PT: Walking a beat, yeah.

JR: How long did you do that for?

PT: I did that for about sixty days.

JR: That was part of your . . .

PT: Part of the training, yeah. You got to walk a beat to start out with.

JR: And that was down, you said, in the Hotel Street area?

PT: In that Hotel Street area.

JR: From what I've read, that was a pretty interesting part of town back then.

PT: Yeah. Oh yeah. The whorehouses down there throughout the war—I mean, I've seen sailors and GIs. . . . The lines were completely around the block, waiting to go up to the whorehouse. I mean, just long lines. But it was all under control, as far as the gals being clean. And they had matrons that were head of these units. Strict control.

JR: What kinds of businesses were on your beat back then, do you remember?

PT: Just a bunch of bars and little stores. Chinatown hasn't changed very much down there. Little places, a lot of bars. Hotel Street hasn't changed too much.

JR: And these brothels, as they're called—the front of a brothel, did that look any different than the front of a bank?

PT: They were generally all upstairs. They were little two-story buildings, and they were upstairs. And they all had their little rooms, a series of them. Lot of the units on River Street, I think, are still there. If there's a two-story building down there, everything upstairs was the whorehouse. And I don't know---Chief [William] Gabrielson, the chief of police, a lot of people said he had an interest in those houses, made a fortune on it. But I don't know. And one of our fellows was in charge of those houses, one of the San Jose kids. He was made in charge. He talked to a lot of those matrons, the head of these houses. And seems to me, his wife got some pretty nice gifts from these heads of these departments—jewelry and stuff like that.

JR: Did you walk a daytime beat or a nighttime beat?

PT: Daytime beat. Yeah, mostly daytime beat. Yeah, as far as I can remember, it was daytime beat. Well, I walked some nighttime. I remember being down there, but nobody's on the streets at nighttime. Everything was closed up. So there wasn't too much activity at nighttime. Real strict control. The lights---all the windows had to be blacked out. I mean, this place was a ghost island for four years. And then little by little, curfews went six o'clock, seven o'clock, eight o'clock, and went up as the war went along. And then you go out on the battlefield, everything is lit up with flares. I mean the front lines, they're shooting flares all night long. It's all daylight. There's as much light as the daylight. The flares that the troops up in the front lines—there's flares up all night long, to see what's going on. Because the Japanese fought everything. Their campaigns were to fight at night and go underground in the daytime. All those islands in the South Pacific are just loaded with caves, all underground. All their headquarters are all underground. And they go underground in the daytime and you wouldn't see anything, and then they'd come out at night. And of course, we would use flares and light it up. They would come through the lines, so I would shoot at 'em. And they wore kimonos, so you didn't know whether they were civilians or Japanese soldiers. Our orders were to shoot anybody, so there was a lot of slaughter of civilians on Okinawa.

(Pause)

JR: I'm still hammering away at this Pearl Harbor-type information, so you'll have to, again, bear with me.

PT: Yeah. As far as the community of Honolulu, it was a very peaceful little city in those days. They had trolley cars, a few taxis, a few automobiles. It was a real backward community, being a territory here. Seemed like everybody knew everybody.

JR: How did it feel to a guy like yourself from California?

PT: Well, it seemed like you're kind of in another world with the people here. So few *Haoles*. We thought there were so few White people here in the islands—all mixed, or Orientals, Hawaiians. But very easy people to get along with, very friendly. They really had the aloha spirit. And you went to parties, a lot of parties. Just a lot of fun with these people.

JR: Did you make many friends on the force when you working for the police department?

PT: On the force, yeah, we made quite a few friends. But everyone's gone that we had. Last sergeant I know left the police force about, oh, I think seven or eight years ago. Sergeant Jones. I think he was one of the last of the police officers.

JR: Do you remember his first name at all?

PT: Joe Jones.

JR: Joe Jones.

PT: Yeah, and he was Sergeant Joe Jones. He finally became a detective. He was highway patrol with us. I think he was the last of the police officers that left Honolulu.

JR: Did you choose to go into the traffic investigation arm of the department?

PT: No, they select us.

JR: What would you have chosen if you had a say in the matter?

PT: I thought that was okay. They gave you a car to work with. Certainly walking a beat was no fun, guard duty and stuff like that.

JR: What were the other options?

PT: The other option was motor patrolman. Had your own car and you became a motor patrolman. They assign you an area. Or work in dispatch or go into detective work. But it didn't seem to me like they gave you much opportunity. Once you got into an area, they kept you there.

JR: What was the makeup of the force back then?

PT: I'd say about 300 police officers. They had chief of police, and I think right at the start of the war, maybe one assistant chief. And then right away they made a bunch of assistant chiefs. About a half a dozen of them were promoted to assistant chief. Our governor, John Burns, he was a captain there at the police station. And his brother [*Edward*] became assistant chief at the police department. He's still living. Yeah, he's still living.

JR: What was the racial makeup of the force?

PT: I'd say the majority was Oriental. The majority was Oriental. Quite a few Japanese were on there, and you kind of looked at 'em (chuckles) and wondered how they felt about this bloody war. If there was an invasion right there and then, if they would be part of us or part of them. But after a while, you got to know all of them. They're just like any of the rest of us. But the first time, you would begin to wonder. You look at these guys, hey, that guy's Japanese, that guy's Japanese.

END OF INTERVIEW