

Ray Bergmann #31
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Q: Mr. Bergmann, let me start by asking you where you grew up?

A: Chicago, Illinois.

Q: And how did you join the Army?

A: I enlisted in the Army, December 1, 1936, in San Pedro, California.

Q: Where did you do your basic training?

A: I was one the few people who never got basic training.

Q: You never got basic training?

A: No. We went to Angel Island and then we shifted to Hawaiian Department. And when I say basic training - we did get regimental basic training. We were assigned to a battery in the regiment and given six weeks of basic training at the battery level.

Q: Which regiment was that?

A: 64th Coast Artillery. AA.

Q: And where was the 64th stationed?

A: Fort Shafter.

Q: What was your first duty after taking that training?

A: I guess you would say that I was a carrier of a .50-caliber machine gun. That was what our Battery was, was a .50-caliber machine gun battery, and I worked in the arms room, and the motor pool, as all good recruits do.

Q: How long did that duty last?

A: I would say possibly two years. And at that time my Battery Commander looked at my records and found out that I was a golfer. So a job came open; he happened to be president or treasurer of the officers club and golf club. So he came in one night and asked me if I would like to take over. And of course in those days that paid \$20 a month more than your privates pay. So actually I was making more than a sergeant in those days I think I made \$60 a month with my \$20 a month extra pay.

Q: Did you work at the Shafter Golf Course?

A: Fort Shafter Golf Course, yes.

Q: Why don't you tell me a little bit about how things worked there at the Fort Shafter Golf Course.

A: Well, I was called the Club Steward and it was my job to take care of the grounds, the operation of the grounds, and the Club (the parties, etc. etc.)

Q: Sounds like some of your duties were what would be called the Golf Pro today.

A: Yes, one step below that.

Q: Did you often play golf with many of the officers?

A: Quite often, if they didn't have a foursome, or they needed somebody, or wanted company, why they'd arrange for me to go and play with them.

Q: Did you ever play golf with the Commanding General?

A: Quite often.

Q: Why don't you tell us a little bit about what things were like at Fort Shafter - just the general atmosphere just before Pearl Harbor.

A: I would say it was very peaceful and tranquil. Just exactly before Pearl Harbor, we had been out on maneuvers (most of the troops had been out on maneuvers.) I did not go on maneuvers. I was excused to continue my duties at the Club. Did you want me to go into the morning of December 7th?

Q: Yes.

A: Just prior to December 7th, maybe it was the 6th, my superior, Major Ronald Henderson, asked me if I would like to join he, and General Short, and Captain Truman, who is now Lt. Gen. Truman, Louis Truman, who was General Short's aide, to play golf Sunday morning. So naturally I accepted and we proceeded to the golf course at 5 minutes or 10 minutes to 8, on December 7th. This is the whole crux of my story is we're on the first tee. The General is getting ready to shoot and we see these planes coming in. And the General turned around to Major Henderson and he said, "Roland, look at the goddamn Navy! They haven't got sense enough to quit on Sunday." This was our thoughts in everybody's mind. We didn't have any thoughts about what was actually transpiring. So within moments...seconds, we saw the first oil tank, reserve tank, go up. And then General Short turned around and said, "Truman, let's get over to the office right now." And basically, that's the whole story, but it..... Go ahead sir.

Q: Did General Short realize that they were Japanese planes or did he think they were American planes which had had an accident?

A: Uh, by implication, he seemed to know what it was.

Q: Did you play golf with General Short often?

A: Not too often, but well enough to know him very closely. In fact in (I don't know... you're going to cut this anyhow aren't you, where you don't want...), there was an instance where two nights later a brand new Lieutenant was called to active duty and he was put in charge of the place. And he happened to walk down the corridors where myself and six enlisted men were sleeping about a quarter to nine in the evening, and he was slamming some doors. And in the barracks vernacular I said, "I wish some of you 'so and soes' would make a little more 'so and so' noise. Maybe we can get some sleep around here!" And this bright shiny 2nd Lt. walks in the room and he says, "You know you're talking to an officer! Stand at attention!" And stubborn as I was, I says, "Sir, a senior enlisted man does not get out of bed and stand at attention when an officer walks into his private room." I said, "Now, if you want to be treated as an officer, you should have sent a runner down to alert the troops." And his remark to me was, "Get up! You're fired!"

And (laughter) so the next day, coincidentally, the General, mean time, had sent his golf clubs home. He knew he was, you know, being relieved and he had his household goods packed. So he stopped me on the street and said, "Son, could I borrow your clubs today? I've sent mine home." I said, "Yes sir, but you'll have to go down to the orderly room and pick them up." He said, "What in the hell are they doing down there! You're up here!" I said, "I was fired last night." and he laughingly turned to Capt. Truman and he said, "Truman, look into this. Any hiring or firing that'll be done around here, I'll do it or Major Henderson will do it. And conversely, I was put back to work the next day and the Lieutenant left. That's just a side story.

Q: Would you give me your general impressions of General Short? What you thought of him? Just your opinion in other words.

A: My opinion was based on the opinion of career soldiers who had much more time in the service. I'm talking about sergeants who had maybe ten or fifteen years service. General Short had a reputation of being a field soldier, meaning he believed in training. I had an awful lot of respect for General Short. He seemed to be an honest but firm individual. I can't say any more than I did have a lot of respect for him.

Q: After the Pearl Harbor attack, how long did you continue on at the golf club at Fort Shafter?

A: I stayed there for two years.

Q: Two years? What was the immediate aftermath of the raid? In other words, how did the attack affect you personally, your duties and your activities?

A: Uh, it increased my duties, because naturally they weren't putting a lot of people on that duty and they kept those who had this duty on if they possibly could, because they couldn't just get replacements for us. In fact we increased the size of the Club tremendously. You're from Hawaii aren't you?

Q: Yes.

A: Well, the Round House was the whole Club at the time I was initially there.

Q: Oh really.

A: That little round block building. Then we built the big building that Joe tells me that it burned down. I haven't been back there since '44.

Q: What was the general atmosphere there? Were there a lot of rumors floating around? speculation?

A: Oh I guess I would say... I have a little saying that any body gives you a story that's over 30 minutes long about Pearl Harbor, they're lying to you! Because any person in any particular position didn't see any more than 30 minutes, and the rest, emotion, yes emotion was rampant. I guess we had 20 attacks if you listen to the rumor mill. We were down on King St., down where the (What the hell did they call it?) the Fish Ponds, where they raised fish?

Q: Oh yeah.

A: And uh, my immediate week after Pearl Harbor, I was put in charge of a communications post that ran from Middle St. to Tripler Hospital (the old Tripler [General] Hospital.) And our troops up on the mountains would open up on us at night, thinking they'd see shadows and so forth. And there was a railroad track that we had to walk back and forth there on.

I would say that we thought there were all sorts of Japs landing and this and that. My own personal feeling is if they had landed two battalions, they'd have taken the whole 'dang' Island, because we didn't even get a weapon until 5:00 that afternoon. Then I got a six shooter, that you had adapter clips to adapt to automatic ammunition. You'd be able to get six rounds off and then after that, (laughter) I can visualize losing these little adapters, you know, because your revolvers used rim cartridges, you know, so they could flick them out. Whereas the automatics were rimless and these adapters actually placed a rim on the shells.

But, I think that people just really didn't know what was happening. I remember running into the barracks, maybe an hour after our experience on the first tee at the golf course, trying to wake some of the fellas up. And I said, "We're at war!" Frankly as a young, young man, I didn't even know what the definition of war was...what I mean is ACTUALLY. It didn't penetrate. It was just something that.... well it was just another foreign word. You talked about it on your maneuvers but I don't think the young fellas knew what it really was.

Q: Is there any one incident or any one memory that stays with you all these years connected with that event?

A: No, it's a.... remember the one man that was killed when...I've heard two stories and they seem to believe that it was one of our shells that came down, I think it was in A Battery...came right through the roof.

Q: Is that A Battery of the 64th?

A: Of the 64th... and hit this man who was sitting in his bunk and killed him. But I have no personal verification of this. I did go to Hickam Field and at Tripler... let me back up. We went to Hickam. We didn't see too much there and we came back to Tripler. And they had a morgue laid out there, and we saw the people that were killed that they brought in there. But I have no strong remembrances of anything combative.

I remember that the Honolulu Police had to have a GI with them whenever they investigated anything. And because of my proximity on this communications post, they would come over to me if they were investigating something in that area, and either take myself or one of our men with them to Like they'd get a call that somebody was sending signals to the Japanese, and when we investigated we found out that it was just a bunch of people listening to Tokyo Rose trying to hear what they could hear over the radio. And these signals were them sneaking the light of this cigarette and it would hit a glass pane and somebody would think they were signaling. But uh...nothing...what would I say that... is exciting.

Q: Well, thank you. I appreciate you taking the time to come up.

A: Well if... add a little humor to the... either way you want to look at it.

Q: Well, it's a valuable contribution.

A: Teasingly, I was up in Milwaukee last year at our Convention that we had in the 5th District, and we all went into Millers brewery. And there were some college kids there and one of them happened to sit down with us and I explained to him that everybody with a white hat on was a Pearl Harbor survivor. And he mentioned that his history prof. was an advisor on "Tora! Tora! [Tora!]" And I said, "Well, you tell him that I'm going to sue him." Because did you see "Tora! Tora! [Tora!]"?

Q: Yeah, I did.

A: Where General Short walked out of his house? Kiddingly, I said, "Well, you should have got a picture of me along with that because I was going to play golf with him (laughter.) But he said that he was very pleased to hear... he didn't realize how many people were there at Pearl Harbor. I guess we've got 10,000 members here...just short of 10,000.

Q: 10,000 members of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association?

A: Right. 9,750 or...

Q: That's quite a group.

A: It is, and considering 43 years...

Q: Sure.

A: I know I could never have believed 40 years ago that I'd be sitting here today. Think a lot of water's passed over the dam.

Q: Well, sounds like a full life. Thank you.

A: Well, thank you for your courtesy.