

December 7, 1941 Attack

On December 7, 1941 my brother Richard Chun went early to the Schofield Golf Course to deliver the morning newspaper (The Honolulu Advertiser) with Edward "Spud" Murphy, the Club pro. Unfortunately the presses broke down so no newspapers were published. The two of them witnessed the attack.

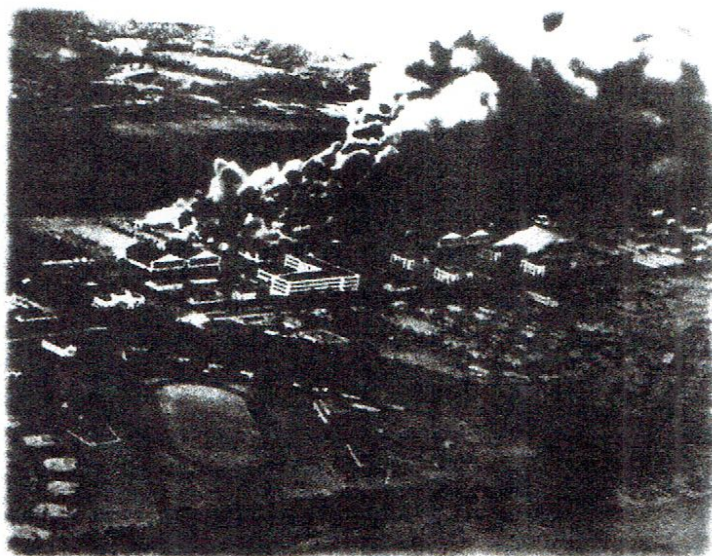
Richard had an oral interview with the Center for Oral History of the Social Science Research Institute of the University of Hawaii at Manoa (April 1994). The interview appeared in the publication, "ERA OF CHANGE: Oral Histories of Civilians in World War II Hawaii). From this interview of Richard H.Y. Chun by Jonylle Sato, an article taken from the transcript was printed in the Spring 1998 issue of "Oral History Recorder", titled, "Richard H. Y. Chun, "Making something out of my life". An excerpt from this article, pp.4-6, is presented here.

Oral History Recorder

Making something

Continued from page 3

Bombing of Wheeler Field, December 7, 1941. This photo was taken from the air by a Japanese pilot. (Photo from the Hawai'i War Records Depository)



Richard Chun. (COH photo)

Japanese attack

On December 7, 1941, I was waiting for this person to pick me up to help him deliver [newspapers] at Wheeler Field. And I waited an hour before he picked me up. I said, "Hey, what happened?" He said, "Press break down last night so there's no papers. So we don't have to deliver papers."

I said, "Well, you might as well take me up the golf course." I got

up to the golf course before 7:00 and people were teeing off already.

We were watching those planes coming over Kolekole Pass. And I mentioned to some of the servicemen that were working at the golf club, I said, "Hey, they making these maneuvers real now. They even painting Japanese insignia on that planes."

The planes were flying where you can actually see the pilot. The planes headed toward Wheeler. And all of a sudden we saw this shadow coming down and, "Boom. Boom." We could see the hangars flying up in the air, and then fire.

So as the attack continued, they were strafing around Schofield and through Wheeler Field. I saw one plane strafing the people on the first fairway. In fact, my cousin was in that group. Nobody knew what was happening, and luckily nobody was injured.

We sent somebody to inform them of the war, "Hey, you guys gotta get off the course." Also, there were two lieutenant commanders that commanded ships. They were playing the back nine and they were notified to report back to their ships.

After the attack subsided, I think after 11:00 [AM], they let us leave Schofield. The pro, Spud Murphy, took me home. But he stopped by a service station in Wahiawā, which was located where Kentucky Fried Chicken is today on California Avenue. But the word had already gotten out, "Don't pump any more gas." So he said, "Well, you gotta walk home."

Well, that was only another good half-mile walk home. When I was walking up the street, they [Chun's family] were happy to see me. They were clapping. They thought I was killed at Wheeler.

My brother was telling me that when the attack was on, they had a dogfight above. And then later on these planes came down and

they were strafing the wireless station in Wahiawā. That wireless station was one that communicate with ships at sea. Our home was in line with that wireless station.

And my brother had asked my three youngest sisters to come back into the house. After they got back to the house, here comes the machine gun bullets all through the yard. So luckily he had called them back, or my three sisters might have been injured or killed.

There was damage to the house. One [bullet] hit the roof, one hit the sidewalk, one hit my brother's car. And the rest of the yard was just full of machine gun bullet holes from the planes.

Well, the first thing when I got home, my mother said, "Oh, you better go down the store and get some flashlight batteries, get some food." I walked down [to] the store, I had to cross [George] Fred Wright Playground, and they were organizing the [Hawai'i] Territorial Guard.

The National Guard were staying in the house back of ours, they [were] guarding the wireless station and Mutual Telephone. And they didn't have any food for supper and were disorganized. They were talking with us, so my mother whipped up something for them so they have something to eat. Nothing fancy, but you know, something for them to keep their stomach filled.

Then that night was blackout. Imagine what blackout is. Try turn off all your lights, just stay in the dark house with nothing else to do. The only thing we do is listen to the radio. And the news was sparse.

Well, the first night was important because nobody knew what was going on and there was so much rumors flying around. Really wasn't too safe to walk around. Somebody might take a potshot at us.

Then this neighbor of mine, across the street, he was in charge

to be a block warden. But he was so afraid to go out. So they asked me to accompany him, so I did. We would go over to the houses with lights on and tell them to put out their lights.

Rationing and air raid shelters

The next morning [December 8], I walked through the Wahiawā town because I had to go down to the store and get some more food. All the people with shortwave radio had to take it to the police station so they could remove that shortwave part of your radio.

There was a long line going to the bank, mostly older people. I don't want to mention, but if you really want to know, most of the majority of the people there were Japanese. They were trying to draw their money out because they didn't know what was going to happen. I guess they felt that if they had the money at home it would be safer.

These guys [i.e., local Japanese] were neighbors, friends, and classmates. Most were second-generation Japanese, and we've been friends for a long time and you can't take that away.

Everything was hard to get. Gasoline, liquor, beer, chicken feed were rationed. Rice was hard to get, but they were sending some from California. Although we did not starve, it was a little inconvenient to get what you want. We were asked not to hoard food.

We were also asked to build air raid shelters at home. My mother said, "If you dig this air raid shelter for [me, I will] give each of [you] a twenty-five dollar bond." My brother George wanted a piece of the action but was too small to work in the trench, so my mom gave him a penny a bucket of dirt that he moved from the top edge of the trench.

We spent about a week digging up this air raid shelter which was

Making something

Continued from page 5

about seven feet deep, four feet wide, and twenty-five feet long. Then my oldest brother, who was working for the Pineapple Research Institute, brought home eucalyptus tree branches and mulch paper. We laid the branches across the top of the trench and covered the branches with a canvas, and the mulch paper over the canvas, then covered it with dirt and planted sweet potato.

We used it once. When the battle at Midway [was fought, June 4-6, 1942], the alarm sounded to take cover. We saw B-17 bombers going to the northwest, so we were saying, "Oh, something's coming up." We stayed in the air raid shelter until we heard the all clear signal.