

7 DECEMBER 1941

THE AIR FORCE STORY



Wheeler AFB



Bellows AFS



Hickam AFB

Leatrice R. Arakaki and John R. Kuborn

**Pacific Air Forces
Office of History
Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii**

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FOREWORD

On 7 December 1941, the "Day of Infamy," the United States and its armed forces were plunged into the most costly war in history.

On this the 50th anniversary of the Japanese attack on Oahu, the Air Force story of 7 December is told in its entirety for the first time. Often times the heroism and anguish of airmen at Wheeler, Hickam, and Bellows have been overshadowed by the main event, the attack on Pearl Harbor itself. *7 December 1941: The Air Force Story* corrects this oversight. The Japanese attack on the airfields of Oahu was an integral part of their overall plan, and their objectives were achieved. The Hawaiian Air Force was dealt a crippling blow, despite often heroic efforts to counter the attack.

But we recovered quickly, and soon air power was to play a major role in winning the war in the Pacific theater. Today 7 December stands as an important symbol in our history. The day of infamy reminds us of the need to maintain the nation's defense at a high state of readiness. It also symbolizes the beginning of nearly four years of war in the Pacific, in a geographical area stretching from the Aleutians to Australia.

Today the men and women of the Pacific Air Forces stand guard for freedom in this vast theater. We who now proudly wear the uniform remember the brave airmen of fifty years ago. We salute those who battled bravely on that December morning in defense of our nation. This book ensures that their valor and their sacrifice will not be forgotten.



JIMMIE V. ADAMS, General, USAF
Commander in Chief
Pacific Air Forces

FOREWORD

December 7, 1941, was by any assessment a devastating day. The Hawaiian Air Force suffered a crippling blow, but the genesis of recovery and final victory over the enemy emerged in the valor of those who weathered the onslaught and fought back with everything they had.

In the 50 years since then, the attack has become a faded memory for some and to many members of the younger generation just another moment in history. It deserves better understanding and commemoration, however, for this sudden, damaging strike on our forces marked the beginning of America's involvement in a terrible global war that was massive in scope and destruction.

At Hickam Air Force Base, reminders of the attack are still visible. The tattered flag that flew over the base that fateful morning is encased and on display in the lobby of the Pacific Air Forces Headquarters building, where bullet-scarred walls serve as a constant reminder to never again be caught unprepared. Memorial tablets surrounding the base flagpole pay tribute to those who sacrificed their lives for our country.

Our predecessors, with their blood and sweat, boldly wrote a major chapter of our military history. We must never forget their story and the legacy of their experience--that the price of freedom is eternal vigilance and readiness.


WILLIAM C. VAN METER, Colonel, USAF
Commander
15th Air Base Wing

PREFACE

Literature on the 7 December 1941 Japanese attack that launched the United States into World War II is extensive. Japan's primary objective that day was to cripple the US Fleet anchored at Pearl Harbor, and the Navy's experience during the attack has been chronicled in detail. Control of the air over the island of Oahu was essential to the success of the attack, but documentation on Army Air Forces involvement has been sparse and often fragmented. Consequently, few people understand why the Hawaiian Air Force was so unprepared to accomplish its air defense mission or realize the extent of the damage and casualties it sustained on that "Day of Infamy."

This book is an attempt to remedy that situation, and the events and actions of the US Army Air Forces on 7 December are told in the following pages. In this writing we have attempted to answer several important questions. Why was the Imperial Japanese Navy able to devastate the Hawaiian Air Force with little to no opposition? Why was the American air arm with over 200 aircraft, including long-range bombers, six radar stations, a trained ground observer unit, and extensive anti-aircraft weapons units unable to perform its primary job of protecting the fleet? Why were all available aircraft unarmed and lined up like sitting ducks on the flight line at each base? Why were the radar stations shut down at 0700 on the morning of the attack? Where was the central fighter control unit, and why was it not activated prior to the attack?

To a large extent this work is based on primary source documentation. We have included numerous anecdotes from firsthand accounts of individuals who were stationed at Hawaiian Air Force installations prior to and during the attack. They provide insight into military life during an assignment in "Paradise" which turned into a "Hell in Paradise" on 7 December 1941. We hope these tales of horror, heroism, fear, and even humor bring to life the events of that day.

Our story begins with a look at the overall position of the Hawaiian Air Force before that fateful morning—its leadership, assigned personnel and aircraft, and air defense system. Next, we examine in detail the three main airfields on Oahu—Hickam, Wheeler, and Bellows—to determine what duty was like at these installations, training activities, the condition of equipment, and morale of the men. We then go into the actual attack, first describing the overall action, then detailing what occurred at each of the major bases, concluding with a discussion of events that took place after the attack.

Throughout the book, all times given are local and in the 24-hour military style; dates are also in the military format. Statistical data has been placed in appendices following the narrative. We believe the casualty lists included there are the most comprehensive compiled to date, and they cover not only Army Air Forces members, but also civilians who were killed or wounded on the three main airfields, and other Army personnel (infantry,

coast artillery, etc.) killed or wounded that day. The Army casualties were added when we discovered that many of the source documents used in compiling the lists did not specify the individuals' unit of assignment, making it impossible to identify only Army Air Forces members. Of significance is the fact that all personnel originally reported as MIA (missing in action) have since been identified as either KIA (killed in action), WIA (wounded in action), or ALW (alive and well).

We have used the term "Hawaiian Air Force" when the narrative specifically talks about Hawaiian Air Force units, and "Army Air Forces" rather than "Army Air Corps" in referring to the air arm of the US Army, which today is the separate and independent US Air Force. When the Army Air Forces (AAF) was created on 20 June 1941, the Army Air Corps was not abolished but continued as one of the three major components of the AAF, along with Headquarters AAF and the Air Force Combat Command. Personnel could have been assigned to any one of the three components and frequently changed from one to another without even realizing it. To avoid confusion we decided to consistently use Army Air Forces when discussing events occurring after 20 June 1941.

Although we endeavored to learn the full names and ranks of all personnel mentioned, we were unable to do so in a few cases where source documents provided only last names or omitted ranks. The term "Jap" is used apologetically and only in direct quotes, recognizing the derogatory connotation of that word, particularly to Americans of Japanese ancestry. Also, one of the illustrations in Chapter II may be considered by some to be sexist and offensive; however, we view it as an accurate representation of artwork in the 1940s and essential to our written narrative.

Our primary source of information for this book was the historical archives of the 15th Air Base Wing at Hickam Air Force Base. Here are located official documents, personal papers and firsthand accounts of survivors, the original handwritten records of Major Charles P. Eckhert (Hickam Field's maintenance officer at the time of the attack), photographs from official sources and private collections, correspondence with various researchers, and an assortment of reference books and other published works. The resources of the National Park Service's USS *Arizona* Memorial, including their copy of the 40-volume report of the joint congressional committee which investigated the attack, were of immeasurable assistance.

We are indebted to many people who generously shared their wealth of knowledge and resources with us. David Aiken of Irving, Texas, in particular, not only took the time to review our manuscript for technical accuracy but also provided valuable information and documents that we had believed were nonexistent. Thanks to him, we were finally able to get a complete listing of the twelve B-17 aircraft and crew members who arrived from Hamilton Field in the middle of the attack. We are also most grateful to Mr. Raymond D. Emory (Pearl Harbor Survivor) and Mr. Robert E. May (Secretary-Treasurer, 11th Bombardment Group Association) for their generosity in providing us with the results of

their years of research to identify those killed in action on 7 December 1941, and for also furnishing numerous other listings of personnel who were wounded in action. A debt of gratitude is owed to Gary Hawn of the National Personnel Record Center at St Louis, Missouri, for painstakingly checking all the names on our list against the records being held at the Center. This task was particularly difficult because of a fire several years ago that destroyed all the records from this particular era. In many cases Mr. Hawn had to locate several supporting documents, such as travel orders or hospital records before he could verify a name. Special thanks to Ted Darcy of Kailua, Oahu, for providing information from his data bank of aircraft crashes and for sharing microfilm from his personal collection; Mrs Betsy Camacho, Bellows Air Force Station Public Affairs Specialist, for sharing her extensive photo and firsthand account collection with us; to Susan Ohara of the graphics section at Hickam AFB for her work on the charts and maps used in this book; TSgt Bryan Lopatic, also from the graphics section for his beautiful painting used on the cover; and to the Base Photo Lab personnel for their help with the many photographs included in this publication.

This project would not have been undertaken without the support and encouragement of Dr. Timothy R. Keck, Pacific Air Forces Command Historian. Over eighteen months ago Dr. Keck came to us with the basic idea for the book and has encouraged and assisted us ever since. Mrs Patricia M. Wilson, historian and editor on the PACAF history staff, has put in more hours and hard work than both the authors combined, editing and designing the layout for the book. Editing assistance was also provided by Mr. Bernard C. Nalty of the HQ USAF History office, several 7 December survivors and Capt Mardi Wilcox, USAF, who read the rough drafts and offered comments and corrections. We are grateful to all.

Last but not least, our sincere thanks to the many individuals who contributed personal accounts and photographs. The names of those who provided us with photographs used in this book are included in parentheses following the photo captions. Names are also given for those whose stories are used directly in the book, but to all others who provided us with the flavor of what it must have been like to be on the island of Oahu on the morning of 7 December 1941, thank you, and may God grant you a special place in heaven for being here that fateful morning.

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CHAPTER I

HAWAIIAN AIR FORCE: BEFORE THE ATTACK

“I think we can meet with confidence all threats of enemy encroachment even that of bombardment from the air.”

Lt Gen Walter C. Short, USA, during a radio speech given on May 20, 1941, to the people of the Territory of Hawaii.

On 7 December 1941, the Japanese caught the Hawaiian Air Force completely by surprise. Although diplomatic relations with Japan were at a standstill, and many people felt war was just around the corner, Hawaii maintained a business-as-usual attitude. Conversely, the Japanese understood the importance of the American Fleet stationed at Pearl Harbor and devised a plan to destroy it. To reach the fleet they would need to destroy the Hawaiian Air Force. To destroy this force they would need surprise and luck. Japan would achieve the surprise, and fate would give them the luck they required. The Hawaiian Department had the forces, leadership, and equipment to stop the attack or at least make it very expensive. But fate, in a series of decisions, events, and personalities, would step in to prevent them from ever being used. The Japanese use of air power on 7 December 1941 resulted in a decisive, if short-lived, one-sided victory—indeed from their perspective as decisive as any air battle that would be fought over the next four years.

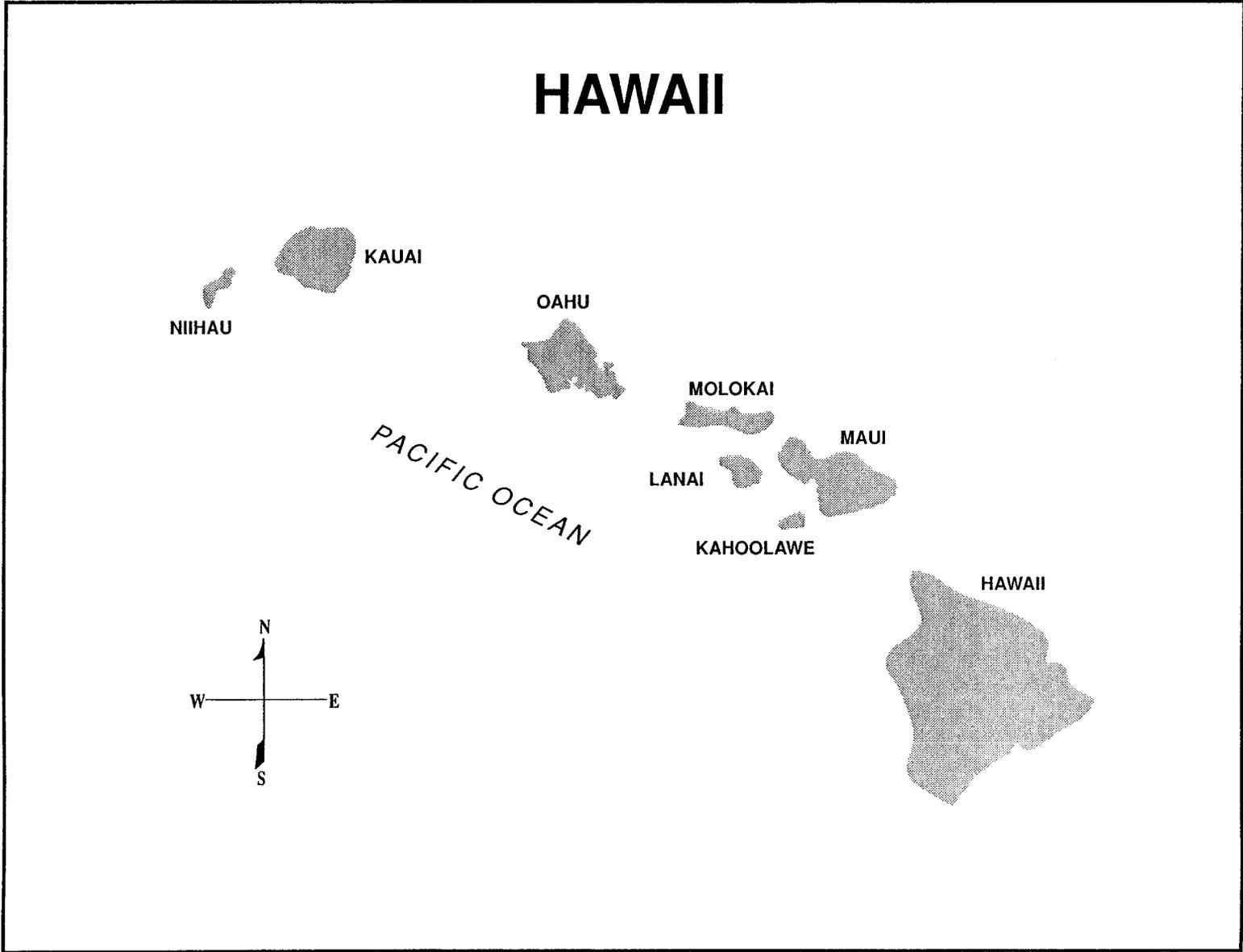
The Commanders

To understand what happened to the Hawaiian Air Force on that fateful

morning, we must try to understand the leadership that brought it to that day. At the time of the attack, the Hawaiian Department, under Lt Gen Walter C. Short, commanded all Army personnel in Hawaii. Maj Gen Frederick L. Martin reported to General Short, both as commander of the Hawaiian Air Force, activated on 1 November 1940 at Fort Shafter, and as the Hawaiian Department Air Officer. In addition, General Martin had direct access on aviation matters to Maj Gen H. H. “Hap” Arnold, chief of the Army Air Forces. The Hawaiian Air Force consisted of the 18th Bombardment Wing and the Hawaiian Air Depot at Hickam Field, the 14th Pursuit Wing at Wheeler Field, and a gunnery training facility at Bellows Field. In addition, several smaller installations were scattered throughout the island chain.* For the Navy, Adm Husband E. Kimmel was Commander in Chief, and Rear Adm P. N. L. Bellinger was Commander, Naval Base Defense Air Force.

General Martin, through the Hawaiian Air Force, was in command of Army Air Forces personnel and functions associated with aviation, while General Short

*See Appendix A for a complete list of units assigned to the Hawaiian Air Force on 7 December 1941.



commanded nonaviation personnel and functions through the Hawaiian Department. Thus, although Martin controlled the airfields, he lacked control over the anti-aircraft units assigned to defend them. General Martin would control the island's Air Defense Center after it became operational, but General Short controlled the radar units that supplied the center with information.

As the Hawaiian Department Commander, General Short was responsible for insuring that General Martin and the Hawaiian Air Force had the capability to accomplish their primary job, defending the Hawaiian Islands and the Navy's Pacific Fleet facilities from air attack. Training was the key to this task, and General Short was well suited for the role. Training assignments made up most of his career. At the time of the attack, he was 61 and had

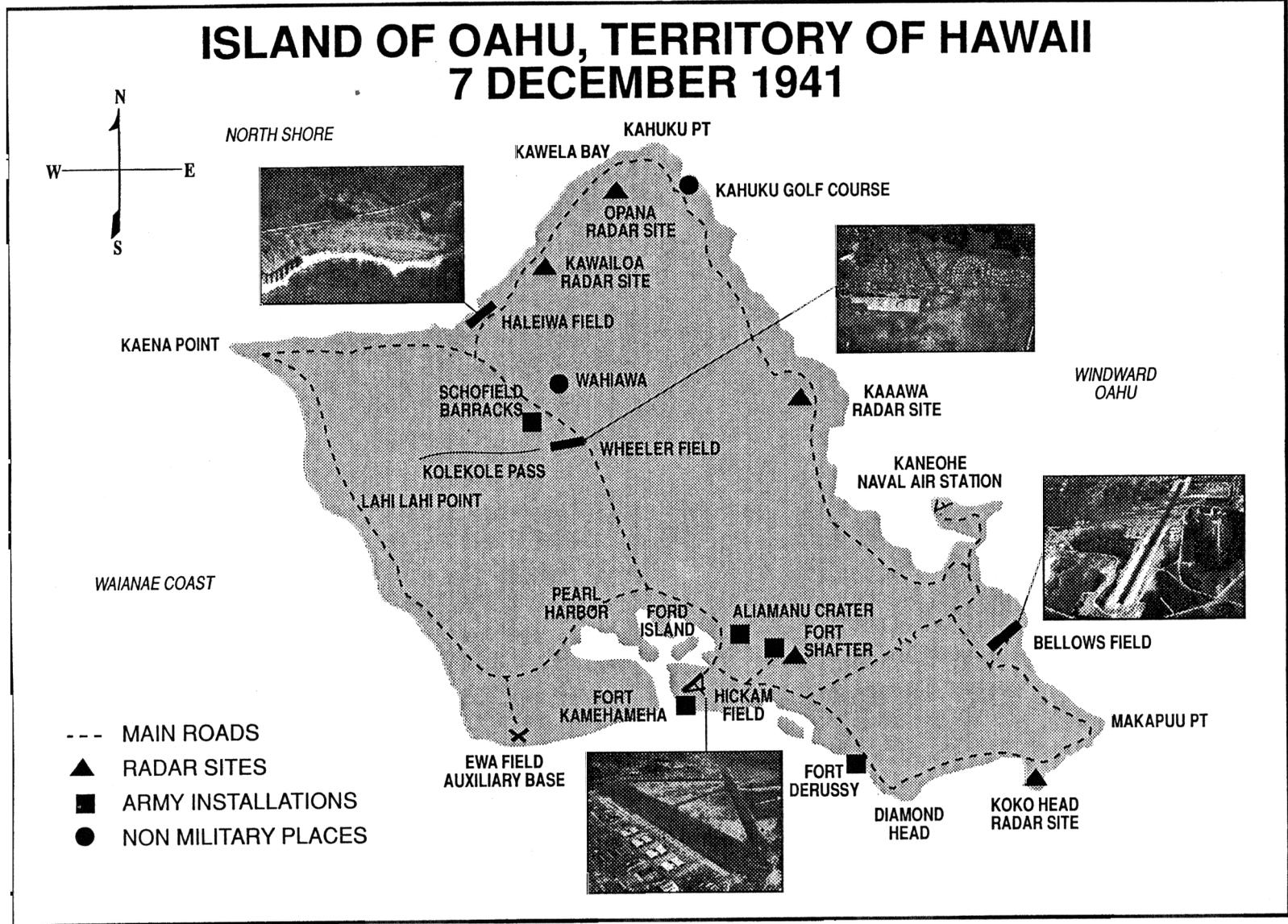
worked his way up through the officer ranks by solid, dependable work. During World War I, he helped organize the First Corps automatic weapons school in France in 1917, and after the war he served as the assistant chief of staff in charge of the Third Army's training program in Germany. He attended both the School of the Line and the Army War College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and later spent two years as a staff officer there. In addition to several other command assignments he worked four years in Washington DC, at the Bureau of Insular Affairs. General Short was an infantryman through and through.¹

With a philosophy that reflected his experience, General Short demanded training in the basic infantry duties and skills for Hawaiian Air Force personnel not involved in flying. To accomplish this, the Hawaiian Department published a standing



Senior military officials at Hawaiian Department Headquarters, circa 1941. Front row (left to right): Lt Gen Walter C. Short, Commanding General, Hawaiian Department; a visiting Capt Louis Mountbatten, RN; and Adm Husband E. Kimmel, Commander in Chief, US Pacific Fleet. Top row: Maj Gen Frederick L. Martin, Commanding General, Hawaiian Air Force; and RAdm Patrick N. L. Bellingher, Commander, Naval Base Defense Air Force.

ISLAND OF OAHU, TERRITORY OF HAWAII 7 DECEMBER 1941



operating procedure in July 1941 that set up a six-to-eight week schedule in basic infantry training. When Gen George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff, questioned training Army Air Forces personnel as infantrymen, General Short countered that an enemy would not attack the Hawaiian Islands until after it had destroyed American air power and with the aircraft destroyed, large numbers of Hawaiian Air Force personnel would be available for infantry duty. Furthermore, General Short felt that the Hawaiian Air Force was overstaffed and more than half, or 3,885 out of 7,229 personnel, could be used as infantry after the invasion started.* He stated that the training was necessary to give these people something to do during exercises. General Short did not believe in using the regular infantry to protect Hawaiian Air Force personnel who had nothing to do but sit around.²

After setting up a program to insure all personnel would be trained to defend the island against a possible invasion, General Short began an intensive effort to protect the facilities against possible sabotage from the large Japanese population living on Oahu. To this end he created three alert levels aimed at providing the most appropriate defense response based on the forms of attack he believed the island would receive. Significantly, the first level, Alert One—and the one the department would be in on 7 December—was sabotage alert. During Alert One, ammunition not needed for immediate training would be boxed and stored in central locations difficult for an enemy to reach and destroy. Thus, when the

attack began, most anti-aircraft ammunition was boxed and stored far away from the actual gun locations. At Wheeler Field, maintenance personnel not only removed the machine gun ammunition from the aircraft, they removed it from the belts so it could be boxed and stored in one location. Coincidentally, the Japanese hit this central location (a hangar) during the attack and destroyed most of the ammunition stored there. Aircraft, during Alert One, would be centrally located as close together as possible for ease in guarding them. Hawaiian Air Force personnel would be used to guard not only aircraft and storage facilities on flying fields, but also warehouses and critical facilities throughout the island.

After being notified about an impending air attack against Hawaii, the Hawaiian Department would go to Alert Two. At this level, measures used in Alert One would remain in effect; in addition, personnel would activate the Air Warning Center, arm fighter aircraft and place them on alert, launch long-range reconnaissance, and arm and deploy anti-aircraft units. From this intermediate level, the entire Hawaiian Department would go to Alert Three when invasion seemed imminent. At level three, the command functions would move to underground facilities and available personnel would deploy to prepared beach defenses. General Short immediately decreed Alert Three after the 7 December attack began.³

Maj Gen Frederick L. Martin, Commander of the Hawaiian Air Force, and leader of the air arm of the Hawaiian Department, arrived in Hawaii on 2 November 1940. He was an experienced pilot with over 2,000 hours flying time. His training included the Air Tactical School at

*This was the Hawaiian Air Force strength as of 14 October 1941; by 7 December 1941 personnel had increased to 7,460.

Langley Field, Virginia, Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and the Army War College. He had held several command positions including, as a brigadier general, command of the 3d Bombardment Wing at Barksdale Field, Louisiana. The Hawaiian Air Force received an experienced and well-qualified commander.

General Martin's first problem upon arrival concerned the strained relationship between the Navy and the Army in Hawaii. What had started as friendly rivalry had developed into an almost hostile environment. Aircraft from both branches buzzed and practiced low-level simulated strafing runs on each other's facilities. Only in the most essential matters did the Army and Navy cooperate, and then very reluctantly. General Short and Admiral Kimmel did have some close contact. They played golf together every other weekend, and they directed their staff members to work more closely with their counterparts. But real cooperation did not exist. General Arnold gave General Martin direct orders before leaving Washington for Hawaii to resolve this problem and increase interservice cooperation. To his credit, by 7 December, relationships between the two services had started to improve. Unfortunately, in his role as peacemaker General Martin had a tendency to place cooperation between the Army and the Navy and cooperation within the Army over Hawaiian Air Force needs. As a result, when General Short started his infantry training program, instead of insisting that Hawaiian Air Force personnel could not do both jobs, General Martin sent one protest letter and then chose to support Short and promote harmony. Again, when Short became obsessed with possible sabotage and demanded parking the aircraft close

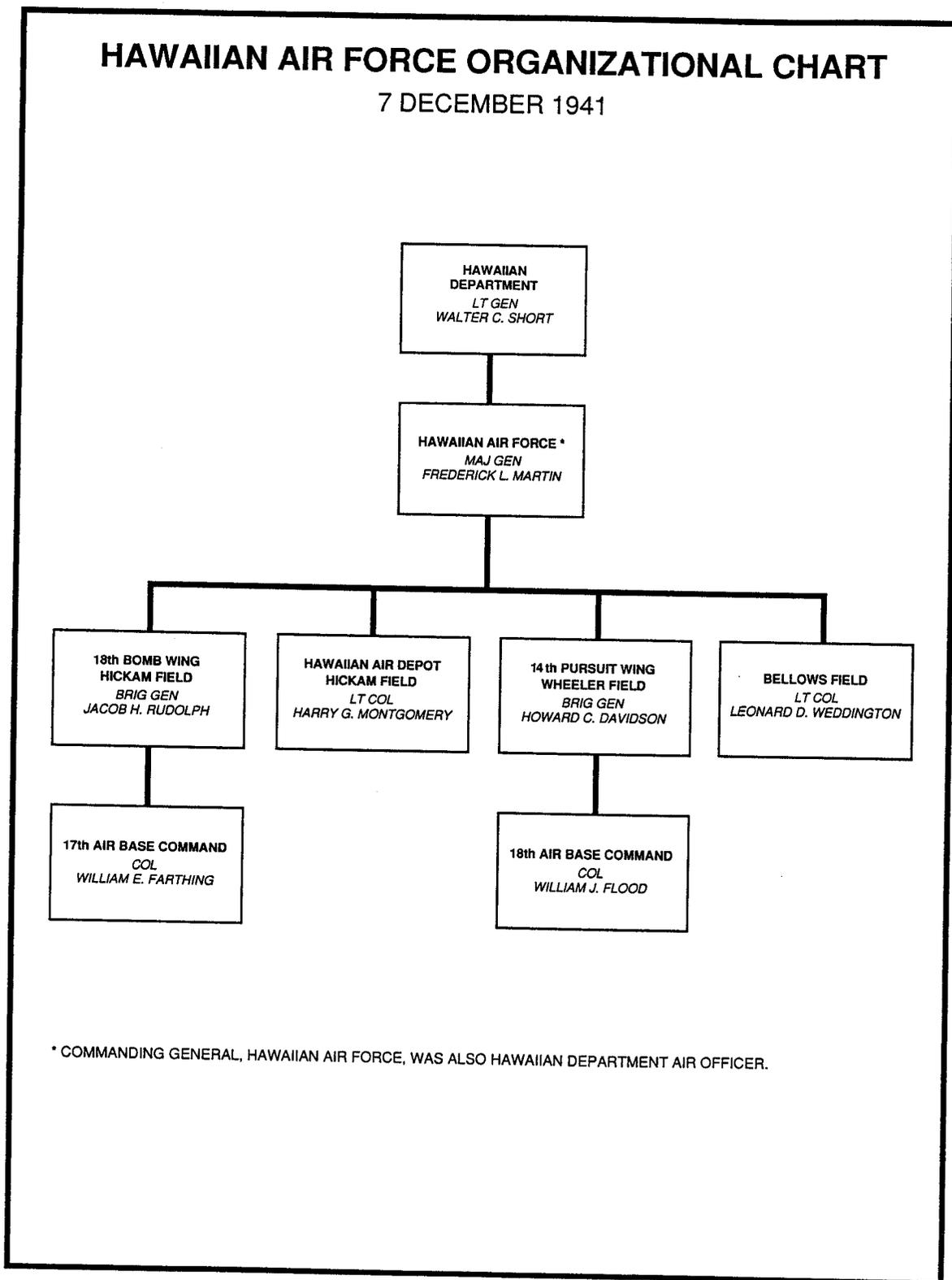
together, Martin agreed that the sabotage danger was real and went along with him, even arguing against his own commanders who wanted to disperse the aircraft.⁴

A second problem confronting Martin was poor health. The general had a severe, chronic ulcer condition, which required surgery and would hospitalize him immediately after the attack. The need to comply with General Arnold's directive to be a peacekeeper added to his poor health. Due to the ulcer, General Martin did not drink and kept his attendance at official functions to a minimum, which tended to give the average airman an impression that the commander was a bit straight-laced and did not appreciate his men.⁵

So in the end, the Hawaiian Air Force had one general who was infantry oriented and obsessed with the possibility of sabotage and another in poor health and trying to keep everyone working together. Events were to prove this was not the best combination of commanders.

The Personnel

By 7 December 1941, the air arm of the Hawaiian Department had been built up to a total strength of 754 officers and 6,706 enlisted men. Personnel were concentrated on the island of Oahu and assigned to bomber units at Hickam Field, pursuit (fighter) units at Wheeler, the 86th Observation Squadron at Bellows, or to one of the air base groups, maintenance companies, service detachments, and other support units comprising the remainder of the Hawaiian Air Force. In addition to the three major flying installations on Oahu, there was a small training field at Haleiwa on the north shore of the island and emergency or auxiliary fields on other



islands of the Hawaiian group, including Kauai, Lanai, Hawaii, Maui, and Molokai.⁶

Personnel of the Hawaiian Air Force came from varied backgrounds. Many were Depression-era youngsters who had never ventured beyond their hometowns or states. Those fortunate enough to go on to college after graduation from high school often joined the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) program to ease their financial situation, then fulfilled their military commitment as commissioned officers. Some were selected for flight training and won their wings as army aviators. Thousands of other young men, however, faced unemployment or worked at jobs paying meager wages and had no funds to finance college educations. Enticed by posters, radio announcements, word-of-mouth, and newspaper advertisements extolling the advantages of Army life (“experience, advancement, travel, and a lifetime pension”), they dropped in at recruiting stations in great numbers to enlist. Some of those who volunteered for duty in Hawaii were not quite sure where it was located. John M. Neuhauser, of Flanagan, Illinois, for example, learned from his friend, Ned Oliver, that the US Army Air Forces recruiter was signing up men to be sent to Hawaii for training as aircraft mechanics. “Where’s Hawaii?” he asked. “It’s an island in the Pacific Ocean, I think,” Ned said.⁷

Officers and enlisted personnel, as well as family members, sailed to Hawaii on US Army transports like the *Republic*, *Grant*, *St. Mihiel*, *Leonard Wood*, *Chateau Thierry*, *Hunter Liggett*, and *Etolin*. Those who embarked from San Francisco spent about a week on the high seas. Russell J. Tener recalled “six days of hectic ocean travel, consisting of seasickness, boredom, card playing and some KP (kitchen police).”

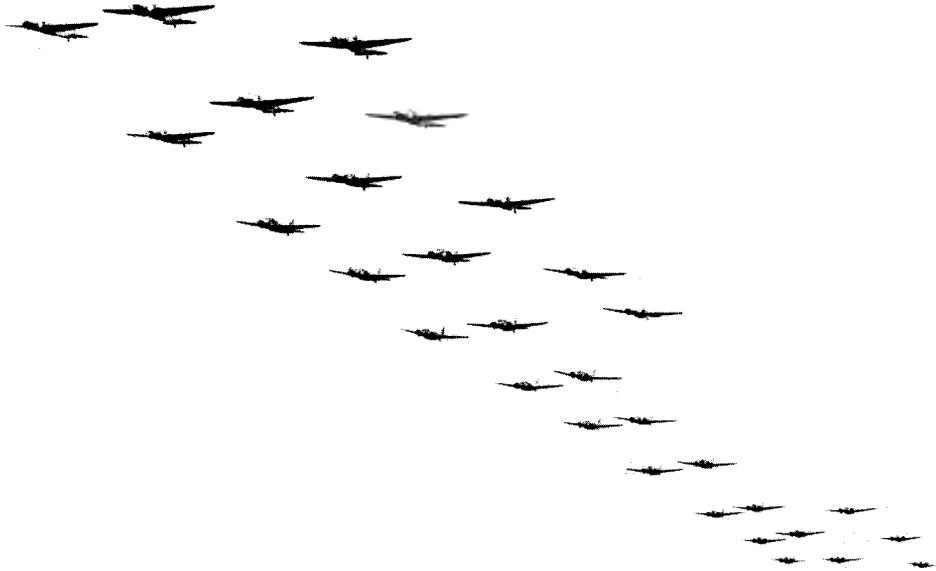
Others like John W. Wilson, who had enlisted in Philadelphia, spent 21 days on the Army transport that carried them from New York via the Panama Canal. When the ships rounded Diamond Head and docked at Honolulu harbor near the Aloha Tower, the new arrivals received a typical Hawaiian welcome. The Royal Hawaiian Band serenaded them as they walked down the gangplank, pretty Hawaiian girls greeted them with fragrant flower leis, and dozens of native boys jumped into the water and dove for coins tossed by the soldiers. The newest members of the Hawaiian Air Force then proceeded to one of the three major airfields on the island.⁸

The Aircraft

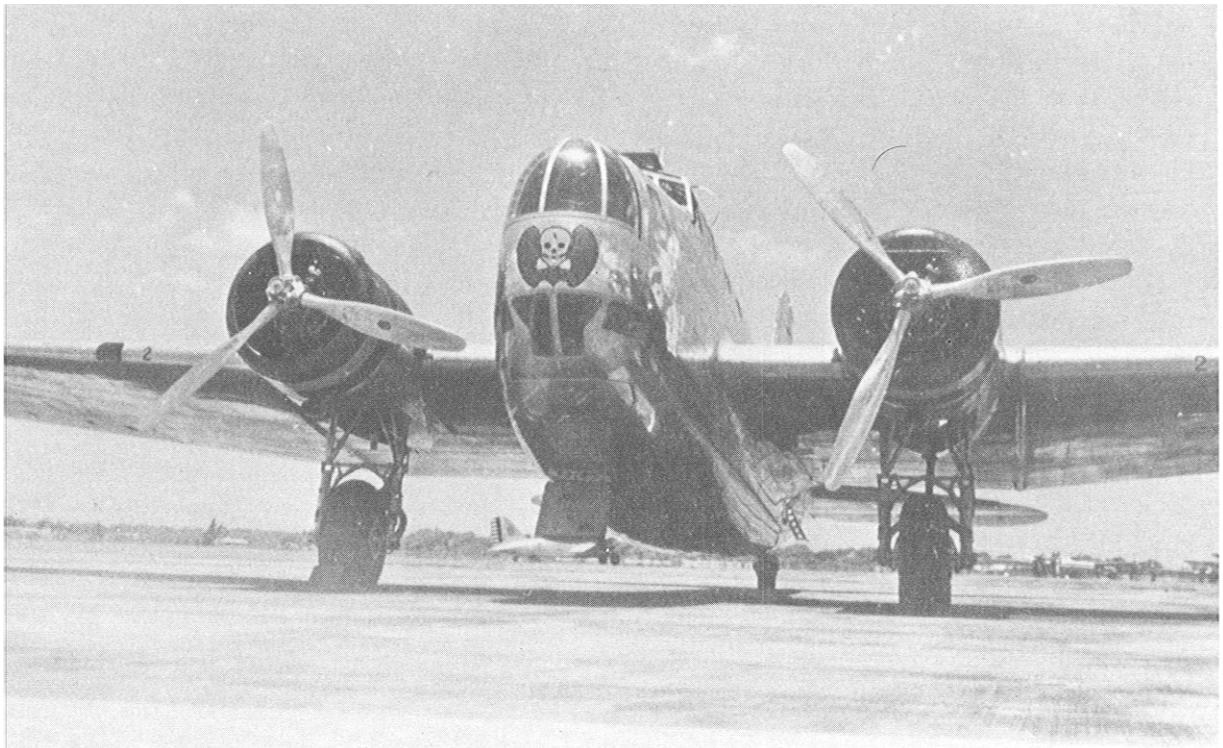
Both Generals Short and Martin bombarded Washington with requests for newer and more aircraft. The Air Force’s inability to provide the long-range reconnaissance necessary to protect the Hawaiian Islands from a sneak attack especially worried General Martin. In early 1941, he and his Navy counterpart, Rear Admiral Bellinger, wrote the now famous Martin-Bellinger report, which not only

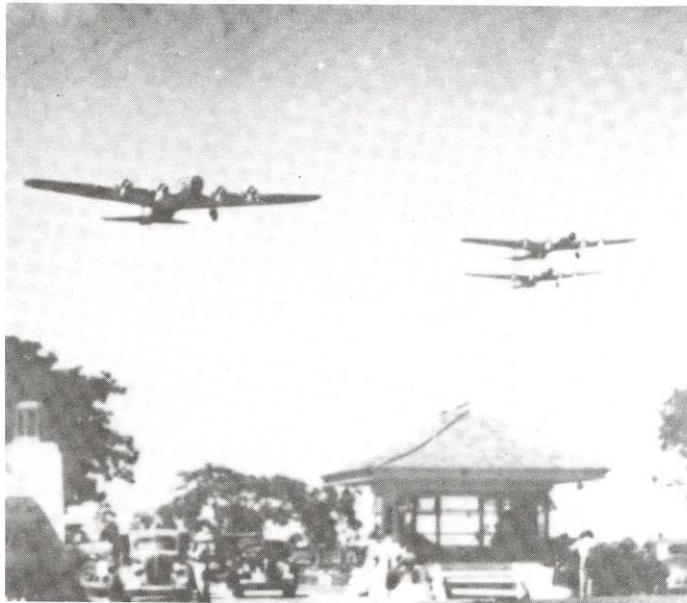


“Hawaiian Paradise” recruiting cartoon. (Edward J. White)



Above, B-18s in formation over Oahu, 6 April 1940. (W. Bruce Harlow). Below, B-18 at Hickam Field with winged death's head insignia of the 5th Bombardment Group on its nose.





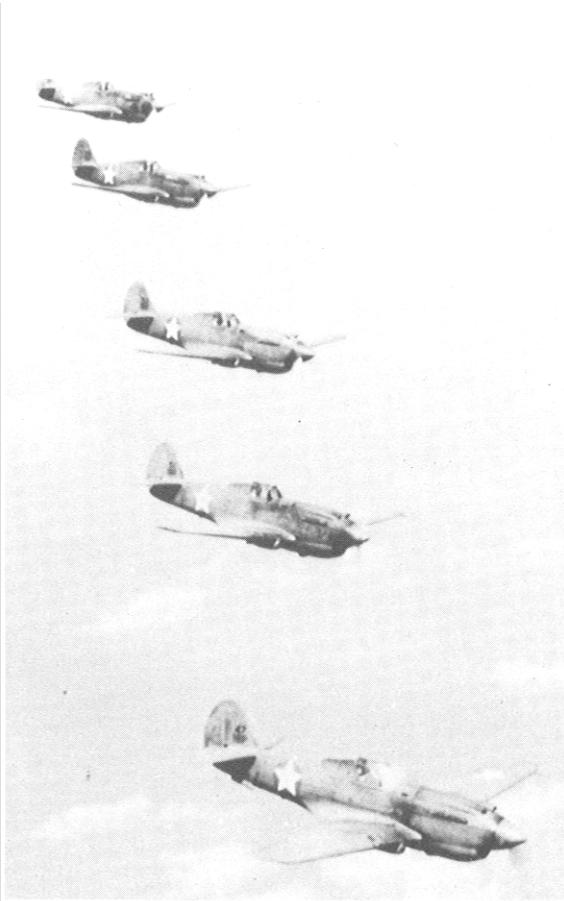
B-17 aircraft flying over the main gate at Hickam Field, circa 1941

detailed how a possible attack could occur, but also outlined what steps would be necessary to prevent its success. The report stated that the primary defense against a sneak attack would be long-range reconnaissance. To be effective, reconnaissance would have to be conducted in a 360-degree arc around the island and extend out at least a thousand miles. Both officers realized that with the equipment available this could not be carried out for long, so they did not recommend its implementation until war was imminent.⁹

The Hawaiian Air Force had 33 B-18 and 12 B-17D aircraft assigned, but the B-18s were old and their range was so short they would be of little value for patrol duty. As a result the Navy (which had over 60 long-range PBV Flying Boats) accepted the responsibility for long-range reconnaissance in the Hawaii area, with the Hawaiian Air

Force providing short-range (20 miles out) coverage. On paper this sounded like a workable arrangement. Unfortunately Admiral Kimmel had decided that he needed the flying boats to provide long-range coverage in the areas where he planned to operate the fleet during war.* If used to patrol the Hawaiian area, he reasoned, they would deteriorate and not be available when the actual war began. In addition, there were insufficient replacement crews to keep all the aircraft manned. Admiral Kimmel then took a calculated risk, based on the belief that the nearest Japanese possessions capable of supporting a full-scale attack on Hawaii were located south

*For a complete description of how Admiral Kimmel planned to use the Pacific Fleet during the war see: Samuel Eliot Morison, History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, Vol III, The Rising Sun in the Pacific 1931-April 1942, (Little, Brown and Company: Boston, 1965), pp 48-56.



P-40 formation over Oahu. August 1941
(Gene Taylor)

of the islands, and began using a minimum number of flying boats for anti-submarine patrol in that direction. So, the morning of the attack, which came from the north, the flying boats were patrolling the opposite area. The belief that an attack could only come from the south was so strong that after the attack began, the first Air Force reconnaissance aircraft to get airborne also patrolled the southern area trying to locate the enemy carriers.

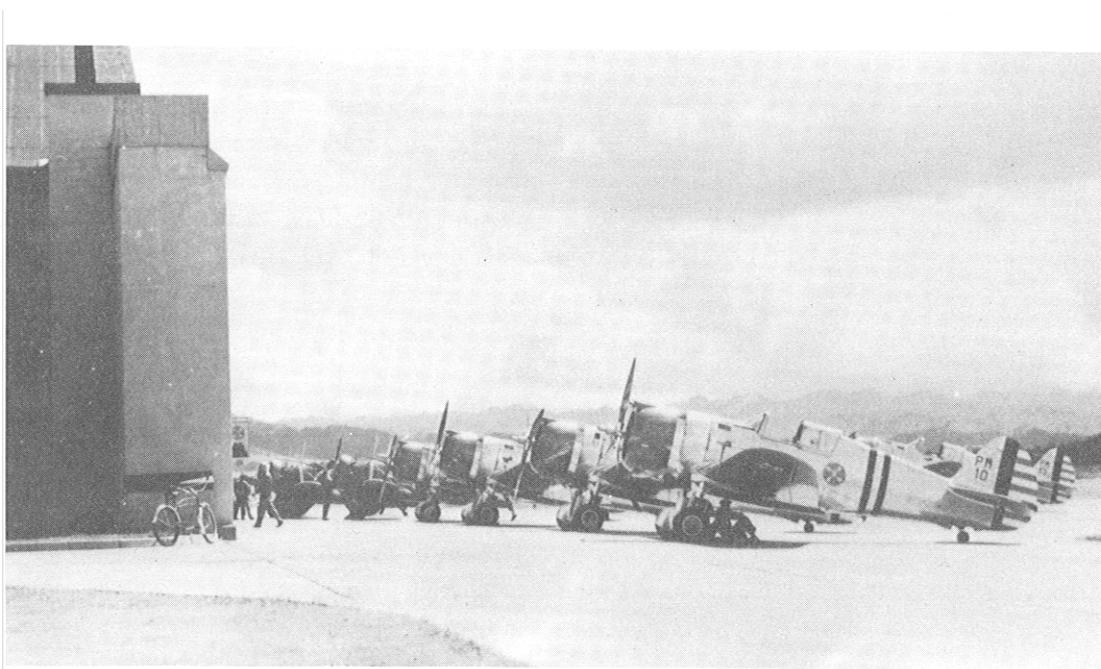
A proviso in the Martin-Bellinger report called for the Navy to go to the Air Force for assistance if the Navy was unable to provide the reconnaissance coverage

necessary. The Navy never exercised this option, since it believed that an attack on Hawaii could not occur without some warning. Besides, with only 12 aircraft, Martin could lend only limited assistance.¹⁰

The fighter aircraft status on Oahu was somewhat better than the bomber picture. The command had 87 P-40B and 12 P-40C aircraft, with 55 in commission on 7 December. In addition, there were 39 P-36A aircraft with 20 in commission. Although Washington considered the P-36 outmoded compared to European aircraft, and even the P-40 was not considered the most modern plane, they were the best the United States had at the time. Washington had received information about the Japanese fighter, A6M2 Zero, and its superb flying qualities from Gen Claire Chennault, Commander of the Flying Tigers volunteer force in China, but senior military officials discounted this information and never sent it to the field. New fighter pilots had been arriving on the island in increasing numbers, and General Arnold had promised Martin additional aircraft as they became available. The consensus in Washington held that the fighter force defending Oahu, if somewhat small, was at least adequate for use against anything the Japanese might have. The major limiting factor for the fighters stationed in Hawaii was their short combat range, and they needed a strong ground control system to maximize their combat efficiency.¹¹

The Air Defense System

The key to the Hawaiian Islands air defense was the air warning system (AWS), consisting of radar units, an air warning center, and the 14th Pursuit Wing at Wheeler. As the heart of the AWS, the air warning center contained an information



P-36 aircraft lined up at Wheeler Field.

center, fighter director, and an aircraft/antiaircraft weapon control system. The information center needed to receive data about incoming aircraft, either from long-range reconnaissance, units stationed on the outer islands, surface ship contact, or radar in order to operate. Aircraft plotters marked the flight paths on a table map where the director, with liaison officers from the bomber and fighter commands, the Navy, and civilian aviation, identified them as either friendly or unknown. If marked unknown, the director ordered fighter interceptors launched, under the aircraft controller's direction, to investigate. This was how the British operated their aircraft warning system, and in theory this was what the Hawaiian Department had in place at Fort Shafter. In actuality the system used in Hawaii bore little resemblance to the British system.¹²

The whole AWS idea was so new to the Army that no one was sure how to make

it work or who should control it. The cooperation needed among various military units and government agencies was far greater than anything anybody realized at the time. Because the mobile radar systems were the first units developed for the AWS, the Army Signal Corps took initial control. After the Signal Corps had set up the system and trained the personnel, control would pass to the Air Force. Contrary to popular belief, the air warning system as used in Hawaii on 7 December 1941 was under the Army Signal Corps, not the Hawaiian Air Force.¹³

Lt Col Carroll A. Powell, Army Signal Corps, was in charge of the Hawaiian air warning system that morning. To help Powell in setting up the system and to take operational control upon its completion, Brig Gen Howard C. Davidson, 14th Pursuit Wing Commander, selected the 44th Pursuit Squadron Commander, Capt Kenneth P. Bergquist. Although Bergquist was known

as a troubleshooter and had a reputation for getting the job done, the task of making the air warning system work before 7 December would prove to be too much for even his abilities.¹⁴

Everyone wanted to get into the act. Even the simplest job took months of coordination and frustration before it could be completed. Oahu abounded with US Government-owned locations suitable for the mobile radar units; but before a site could be used, approval had to be obtained from the National Park Service and the Department of Interior. More than once, General Short had to intervene to get the approval process moving. Cooperation within the Army was no better. Captain Bergquist placed a requisition for headsets to be used by personnel operating the control center, only to have it disapproved by the Quartermaster Corps because the latter thought the Signal Corps was the organization in charge and, therefore, authorized to request items.¹⁵

After completing the air warning center construction at Fort Shafter, personnel needed to be trained to operate it. The Signal Corps handled training for the personnel required to operate the radar units and those at the air warning center involved in tracking the reports on incoming aircraft. Captain Bergquist, with Capt Wilfred H. Tetley, Army Signal Corps, and Lt Cmdr William Taylor, USN, managed training of directors, controllers, and those personnel who would be temporarily assigned to the system during exercises and wartime operations. Tetley and Taylor were detached from their respective units and in no way represented the Signal Corps or the Navy during this training phase. In other words, the Signal Corps trained part of the personnel and the Hawaiian Air Force the rest, with no one in command of the complete training.¹⁶

During the two main exercises held with the Navy in 1941 and during several smaller exercises conducted by the center



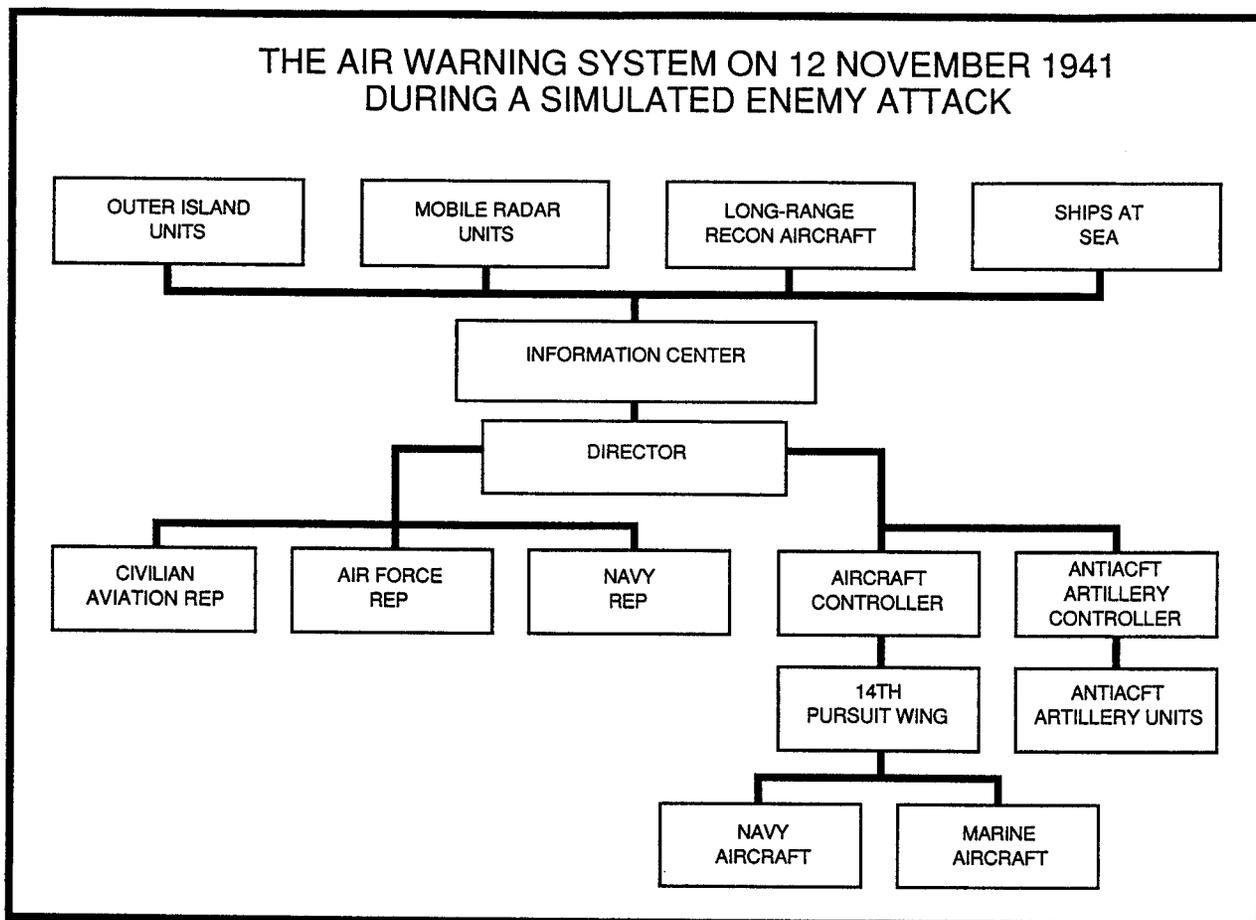
Capt Wilfred H. Tetley (left) of the Army Signal Corps and Capt Kenneth P. Bergquist of the 14th Pursuit Wing, pictured with members of the radar site survey team, in 1941. (US Army Museum of Hawaii)

itself, either the director knew the direction of the attacking aircraft or personnel from the other branches would report for the exercise as liaisons so the incoming aircraft could be identified. On 12 November 1941, after the center was manned, the Navy launched a simulated strike from a carrier 80 miles out to sea. The radar stations easily picked up the attackers, the center quickly identified them as enemy aircraft, and within six minutes interceptor aircraft were airborne and met the attacking force 30 miles from the island.¹⁷

These exercises demonstrated that the Hawaiian air warning system would work if it had operational radar units, a fully staffed information center, and armed and ready-to-fly interceptor aircraft. On 7 December, the AWS met none of these requirements. The following charts show

how the system operated during the 12 November exercise and on the morning of 7 December. The solid lines between each block represent the lines of communications that were operational during each period.

The best General Davidson could do was to insure at least one pilot from the 14th Pursuit Wing was on duty every day in the air warning center to learn firsthand how the whole system operated and to offer assistance to the controller in handling pursuit aircraft. On the morning of 7 December, the system was further degraded when, although five of the six radar systems were operational and the enlisted plotters were on hand from 0400 to 0700 under Signal Corps direction, no director or aircraft controller was on duty. The only officer present was Lt Kermit Tyler, a 14th Pursuit Wing pilot. Lieutenant

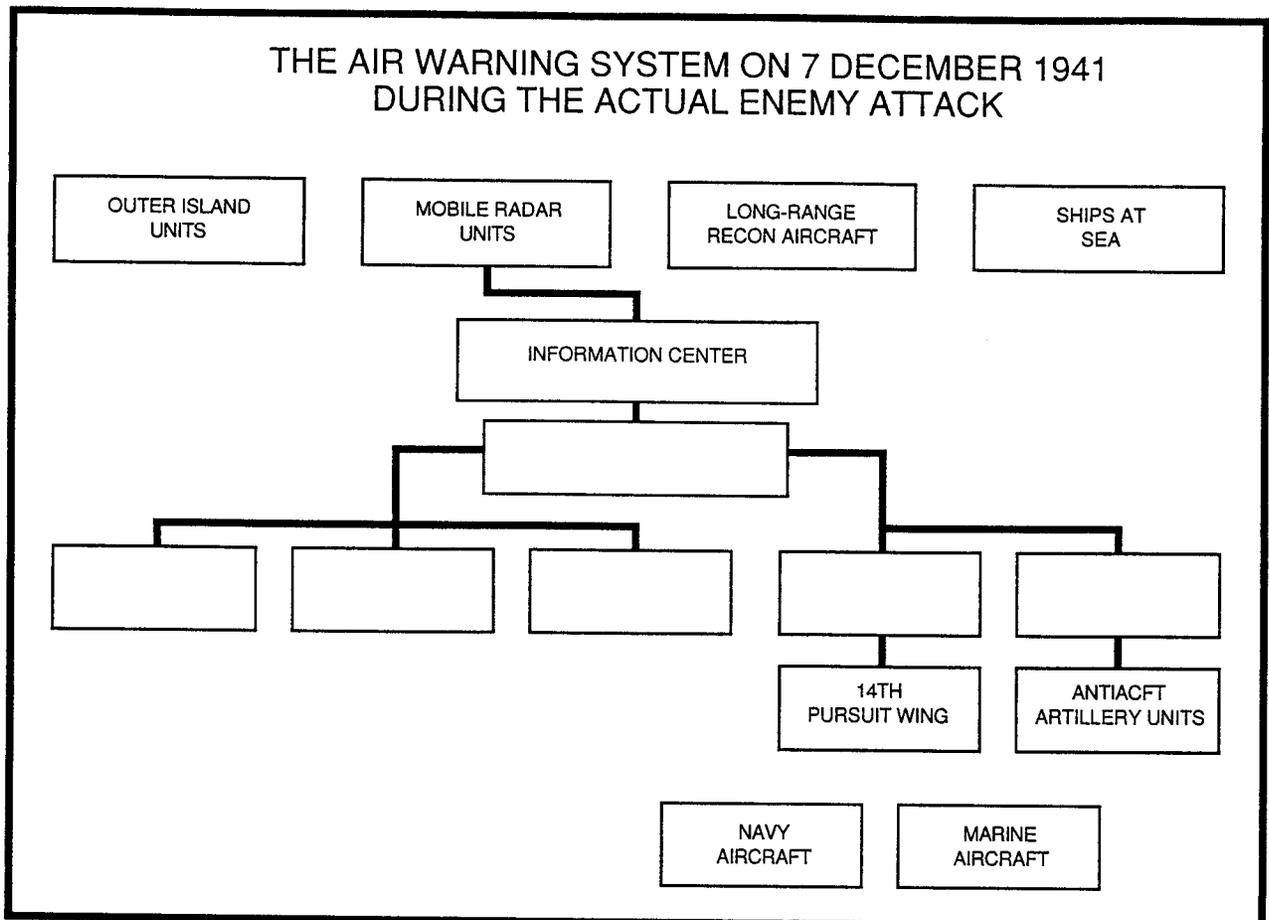


Tyler was there to observe how the system worked and assist the controller with the pursuit aircraft after they had launched. In no way was he responsible for, or for that matter expected to know how to activate, the air warning system. The most he could have done was call Bergquist (now a major) and let him know what was going on. It is unlikely that such a call would have helped the Hawaiian air defense that fateful morning, because the third and final part of the air warning system, aircraft ready to launch, was not set up at all.¹⁸

answer to this question is the basic reason the Japanese attack on Oahu was so successful. Few, if anyone, in the Hawaiian Department felt the Japanese would attack Hawaii despite many indications that an attack on Hawaii was possible. Rather, most people considered the Hawaiian Islands a staging area from which the US Navy would sortie against predetermined targets. It was also commonly believed the Imperial Japanese fleet would attack Singapore or Malaysia, or possibly even the Philippines.

The whole purpose of the air warning system was to launch interceptor aircraft against would-be aggressors; yet, no aircraft were ready to launch and attack the enemy that morning. If the Hawaiian Air Force was expected to defend the islands, why were no aircraft on alert? Within the

Although some Hawaiian Air Force units held exercise and full alerts on Oahu, and others deployed under field conditions, there was an air of make-believe to the deployments. When they were over, people would carefully clean and put away the equipment and ammunition for the next



exercise. During the week preceding 7 December, the entire Hawaiian Department, by order of General Short, engaged in a full scale exercise for seven consecutive days. Army units from Schofield Barracks deployed, antiaircraft units drew ammunition and set up stations all over the island, and the Hawaiian Air Force armed aircraft and dispersed them to protective revetments. The warning center was fully operational and launched aircraft against simulated attacking targets.

General Short considered this exercise a great success. After its cancellation on 6 December, personnel returned to the barracks, carefully cleaned and repaired the guns and equipment, removed the

ammunition and repacked it in storage containers, and returned the aircraft to their main bases to be reparked close together because Alert One was still in effect. After doing this, each command gave the troops the rest of the day off and told them to report to work Monday. When and if war began, General Short and the other senior commanders in Hawaii felt they would be given plenty of warning to begin long-range reconnaissance, set up communications between the Army and Navy, staff the aircraft warning center, and arm and disperse available aircraft ready for deployment against the enemy. The fleet would sortie, and the Japanese would find a sky full of American aircraft, piloted by well-trained personnel eager to defend the island.¹⁹

CHAPTER II

ASSIGNMENT PARADISE: BOMBER COMMAND

“Hickam Field . . . this magnificent air base, which is destined to be, when completed, not only the most important unit of aerial defense within the Hawaiian Department, but the largest airdrome in this broad land of ours.”

Capt H. B. Nurse, Quartermaster Corps
(Air Corps News Letter, 1 July 1938)

During the 1930s, the thousands of young men who joined the military service and sailed to the Hawaiian Islands for duty considered themselves fortunate indeed to receive such a choice assignment. They enjoyed the beautiful beaches, lush foliage, and year-round pleasant climate that characterized “the Paradise of the Pacific” but, at the same time, they also served as the first line of defense for the United States. Because of its strategic geographical location, Hawaii played a key role in defense plans for the Pacific; and Army Air Forces personnel stationed on the island of Oahu supported those plans as members of either the bomber command or fighter command in the Hawaiian Air Force.¹

Hickam Field

Hickam Field, the bomber base, was named in honor of Lt Col Horace Meek Hickam, a distinguished and highly esteemed Army Air Corps officer who died at Fort Crockett, Texas, in an aircraft accident on 5 November 1934. It was the nation’s largest air base at the time and the showplace of the Hawaiian Department. Army officials, congressmen, and ordinary taxpayers who visited this modern

installation were impressed with its potential power and beauty, and left with the feeling that their money had been well spent.²

Before Hickam’s construction, Army flying activities operated from Luke Field on Ford Island in Pearl Harbor. Constructed in 1918, Luke Field, because of its isolation, soon had one of the most complete post exchanges in the territory, a



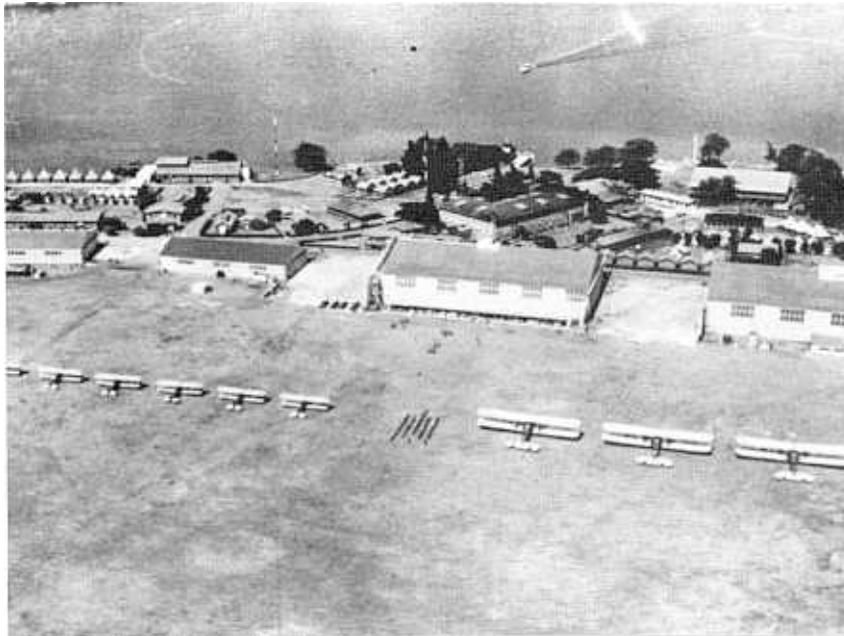
Lt Col Horace Meek Hickam (1885-1934)

large and well equipped officers' club, one of the best gymnasiums on Oahu, several hangars, a theater, tennis and handball courts, family quarters, and many other buildings. Shared by Army and Navy installations, Ford Island became overcrowded in the mid-1930s; to solve the problem, the Navy took over the entire island, including Luke Field, and the War Department found a nearby tract for Army aviation.³

The site selected to become Hickam Field consisted of 2,200 acres of ancient coral reef, covered by a thin layer of soil, located between Oahu's Waianae and Koolau mountain ranges. The Pearl Harbor channel marked its western boundary, with Pearl Harbor naval reservation stretching along its northern perimeter, John Rodgers Airport to the east, and Fort Kamehameha on the south. A tangled jungle of algaroba (kiawe) and sugar cane covered the area, providing a haven for mongooses and mynah

birds. Along the shore of the Pearl Harbor channel, the plantation village of Watertown spread its shacks among scattered palm and royal poinciana trees.⁴

Capt Howard B. Nurse of the Quartermaster Corps planned, designed, and supervised the construction of Hickam Field, which was to be the home station of not only a bombardment wing but also an air depot capable of accomplishing all the major overhaul work required by Army Air Forces units in Hawaii. The first task confronting him was clearing the land and demolishing the decrepit shanties of Watertown. Next, contracts were let for hangars and other buildings, tons of construction material began pouring in by land and sea, and the air soon filled with the noise of riveting hammers and the rhythmic thud of pile drivers. This mammoth construction project extended over several years and gave employment to many people.⁵



Luke Field on Ford Island, 30 October 1930, with Keystone LB-5 bombers on the right and Thomas Morse O-19 observation planes to the left.



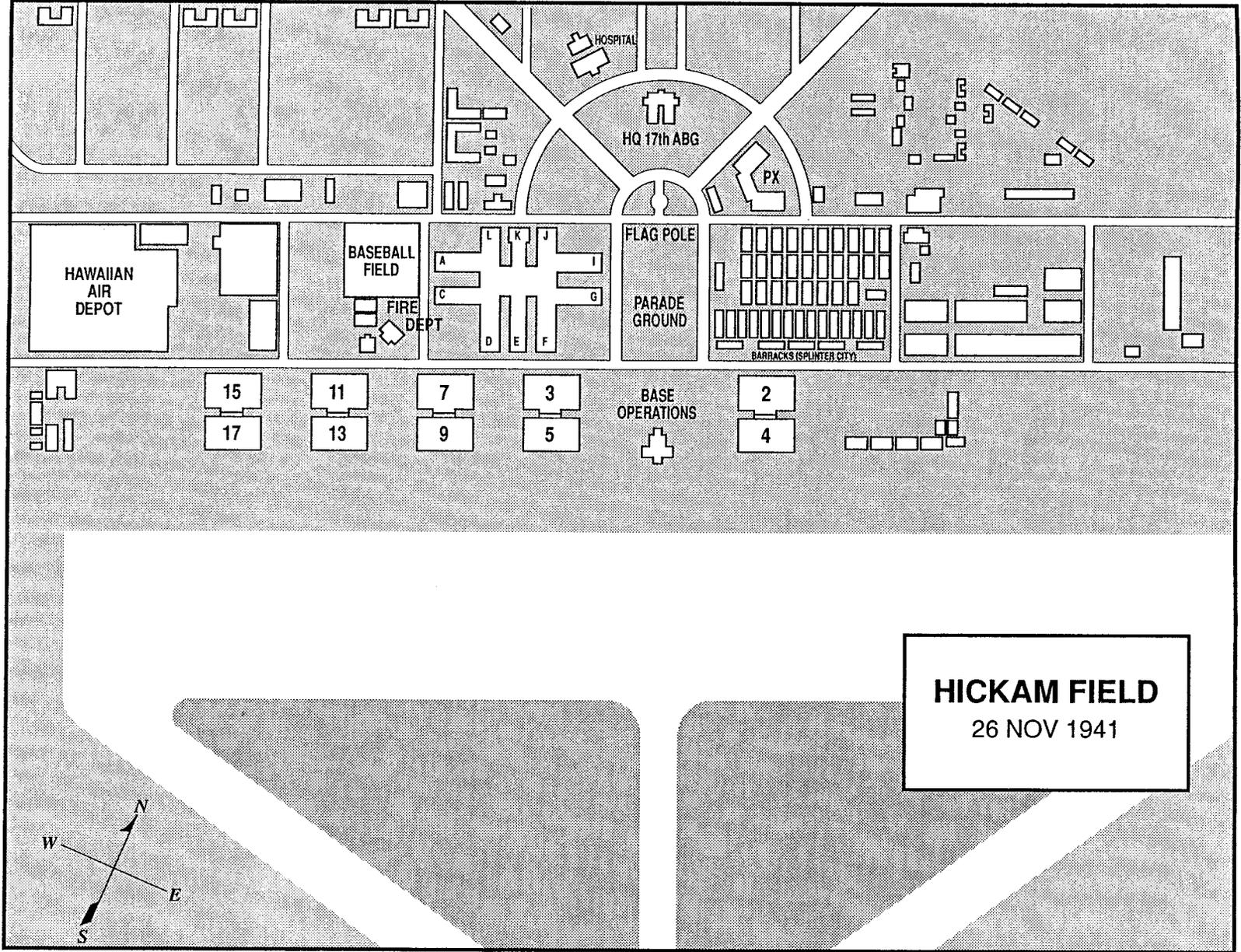
Aerial view of what was originally known as Tracts A and B, acquired on 3 April 1935 at a cost of \$1,095,543.78 for the construction of Hickam Field.

While construction was still in progress, an initial cadre of 12 enlisted men, commanded by 1st Lt Robert Warren, moved from Luke Field to Hickam with four airplanes on 1 September 1937. Lieutenant Warren became Hickam's first commanding officer, forming with his men the nucleus of what was later designated as the 17th Air Base Group, the unit responsible for furnishing base services and support.⁶

The 18th Wing, Air Corps (former 18th Composite Wing), at Fort Shafter was the first to relocate to Hickam. Then the exodus of people and aircraft began from Luke Field. Initial plans called for personnel to move as new buildings were completed for them at Hickam; however, the sudden transfer of part of the Pacific Fleet to Hawaii and approval of a \$2,800,000

expansion program for the Navy's air station on Ford Island forced Army Air Corps units to leave on short notice. By 31 October 1939, the last troops had departed Luke Field except for the Hawaiian Air Depot, which remained until October 1940 when the new air depot was completed at Hickam.⁷

All of the Luke Field facilities that could possibly be moved were transported to Hickam. Even the gym and basketball court were dismantled and transferred in sections, as were supply huts, the noncommissioned officers' club, chapel, theater, and housing units for enlisted personnel. They were loaded on the ferry *Manuwai*, carried across the Pearl Harbor channel, and turned over to crews at Hickam Field for reconstruction.⁸



On 1 November 1940, with activation of the Hawaiian Air Force at Fort Shafter, bombardment and pursuit units became organized into separate wings—the 18th Bombardment Wing (Heavy) at Hickam Field and the 14th Pursuit Wing at Wheeler. The next day, on 2 November 1940, Maj Gen Frederick L. Martin assumed command of the new Hawaiian Air Force, which later became known as the “Pineapple Air Force.” The headquarters subsequently relocated from Fort Shafter to Hickam Field in July 1941. Units of the bombardment wing at Hickam were the 5th and 11th Bombardment Groups (Heavy), with the 23d, 31st, and 72d Bomb Squadrons and 4th Reconnaissance Squadron assigned to the 5th Bomb Group and the 26th and 42d Bomb Squadrons and 50th Reconnaissance Squadron assigned to the 11th. Other organizations at Hickam Field included the



“Pineapple Soldier” at Hickam Field, June 1942. (Allan Gunn)

17th Air Base Group, Hawaiian Air Depot, 19th Transport Squadron, and 58th Bombardment Squadron (Light), as well as maintenance companies and various service detachments.⁹

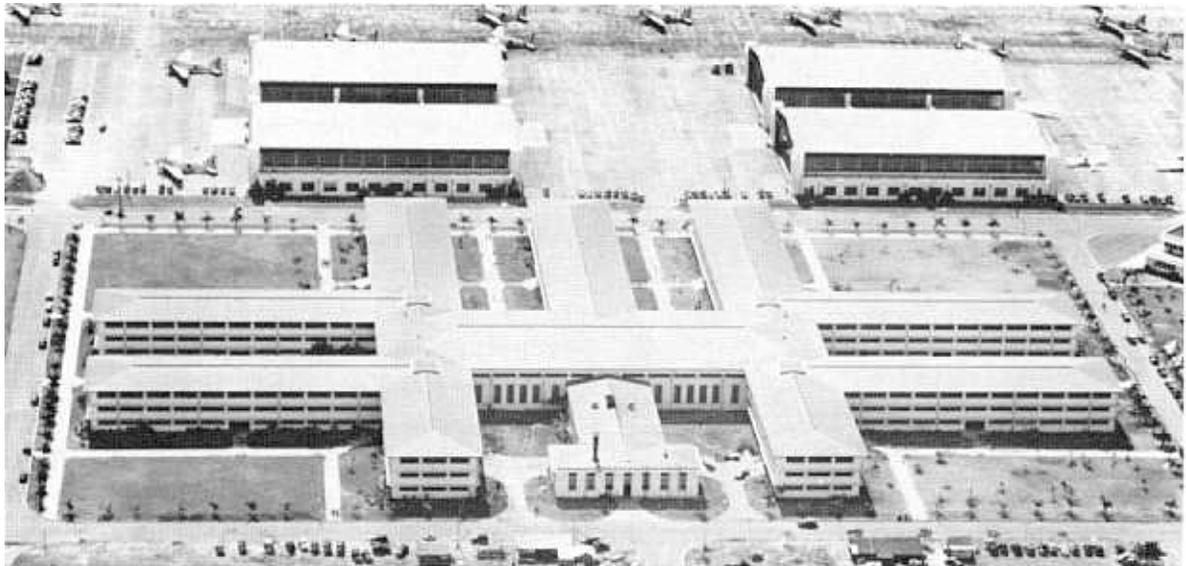
Pending the completion of barracks under construction at Hickam Field, enlisted personnel lived in 50-man tents in a temporary “Tent City” erected near the hangar line. The large tents had wooden sides and floors under the canvas roofs and were equipped with steel lockers and showers. In addition, there were separate kitchen, mess hall, and dayroom tents, the last of these replete with radios, easy chairs, and modernistic smoking stands. The men were relatively comfortable in these temporary accommodations but looked forward to moving into permanent buildings. A dispute in 1938, however, between the Air Corps and the Hawaiian Department’s Quartermaster Construction Division over design of Hickam Field’s barracks delayed work on the urgently needed troop housing. The Air Corps wanted individual barracks spread throughout the area, while the Quartermaster Corps, to save construction costs, wished to build one huge structure. In the end, the Quartermaster Corps won, and construction finally began early in 1939.¹⁰

The Robert E. McKee Company submitted a low bid of \$1,039,000 to build the massive new multi-winged barracks that faced the parade ground. The three-story reinforced concrete structure was designed to house 3,200 men, and Hickam personnel began moving in to their new home in January 1940 while construction was still in progress. By the time the last coat of white paint had been applied and the project announced as completed on 30 September that same year, the barracks was fully occupied. It was the largest single structure



Above, Tent City as seen from the control tower at Hickam Field in 1939. Here the troops lived until permanent barracks could be constructed for them. (Clifford E. Hotchkiss)

Below, Hickam Field's huge new million-dollar barracks, with Hangars 3-5 and 7-9 in the background, 22 October 1940.





Above, an interior view of the new barracks (sometimes referred to as the “Hickam Hotel—under management of Uncle Sam”). Open bay sleeping quarters contained long lines of neat, orderly bunks made up with “white collars” for inspection.

Below, this huge mess hall, located in the center of the consolidated barracks, fed thousands of hungry enlisted men daily.



of its kind on any American military post and included within its walls every possible convenience—two barber shops, a medical dispensary manned by a trained staff 24 hours a day, a tailor shop and laundry, a branch post exchange where small items could be purchased, and a dayroom for every squadron occupying the barracks. The sleeping bays each contained neatly made beds for about 50 men, with foot lockers for toilet articles and larger wall lockers where uniforms and civilian clothing were kept. Famous movie star Dorothy Lamour, taken on a tour of the barracks during a visit to Hickam Field, remarked, "Why I never dreamed that *men* could keep things so neat!"¹¹

The entire barracks centered around a huge consolidated mess hall, with all nine wings connected to it by a series of hallways. Resembling a gigantic hangar, the mess hall could easily accommodate six regulation-size basketball courts. It had the capability of seating and feeding 2,000 at one time. With trays in hand, the tan-clad enlisted men moved along the cafeteria-style line, which included four 40-foot steam tables to keep the food warm. White-uniformed food handlers dished out ample portions of everything on the menu, and personnel ate at the 104 ten-man tables which occupied most of the 26,741 square feet of floor space. Palm trees brightened up the interior of the mess hall, with potted ferns adorning the pillars and paintings of various squadron insignia hanging on the walls. The amount of groceries required daily to feed the hungry troops was staggering—a ton of meat, half a ton of potatoes, 800 pounds of bread, 15 cases of eggs, 100 pounds of butter, and an average of 400 pies. A crew of nearly 200 men working in shifts around the clock was required to operate the facility.¹²

Enlisted men who could not be accommodated in the big barracks made their home in "Splinter City," a group of newly constructed temporary wooden barracks located across the street on the other side of the parade ground. Unmarried officers lived near the Officers' Club in bachelor officer quarters (BOQs) furnished with steel cots. One of the BOQ residents was 2d Lt Denver D. Gray of the 17th Air Base Group. "In a tropical climate it was thought necessary only to screen windows and protect them by overhanging eaves to keep out the rain," he said. "New construction on the base kept the red dust stirred, and my bed had a dusty covering each evening. I bought a roll-down wicker shade from Sears Roebuck for the windows, which partially solved the problem."¹³

Married officers and senior noncommissioned officers enjoyed the luxury of living with their families in spacious stucco houses with red tiled roofs and wide overhanging eaves surrounded by attractively landscaped grounds. Rising above the residential area was the base's landmark—a beautiful concrete tower of Moorish design enclosing a 500,000-gallon steel tank holding an emergency reserve of water. It was a considerable improvement over the familiar ugly tank of bare black steel usually seen on other military posts. Between the water tower and the hangar line was the business and shopping center, which included the hospital, administration building, exchange, and post office. Recreational facilities scattered throughout the area included the gym, theater, tennis courts, swimming pools, and baseball fields. With its broad tree-lined boulevards, street lighting and telephone systems, fire department, public school, and other community facilities, Hickam Field resembled an attractive little city.¹⁴



Above, the wooden barracks of “Splinter City” at Hickam Field, 1940-1941. (Bernard C. Tysen)

Below, family quarters at Hickam Field, 1940-1941. (Bernard C. Tysen)



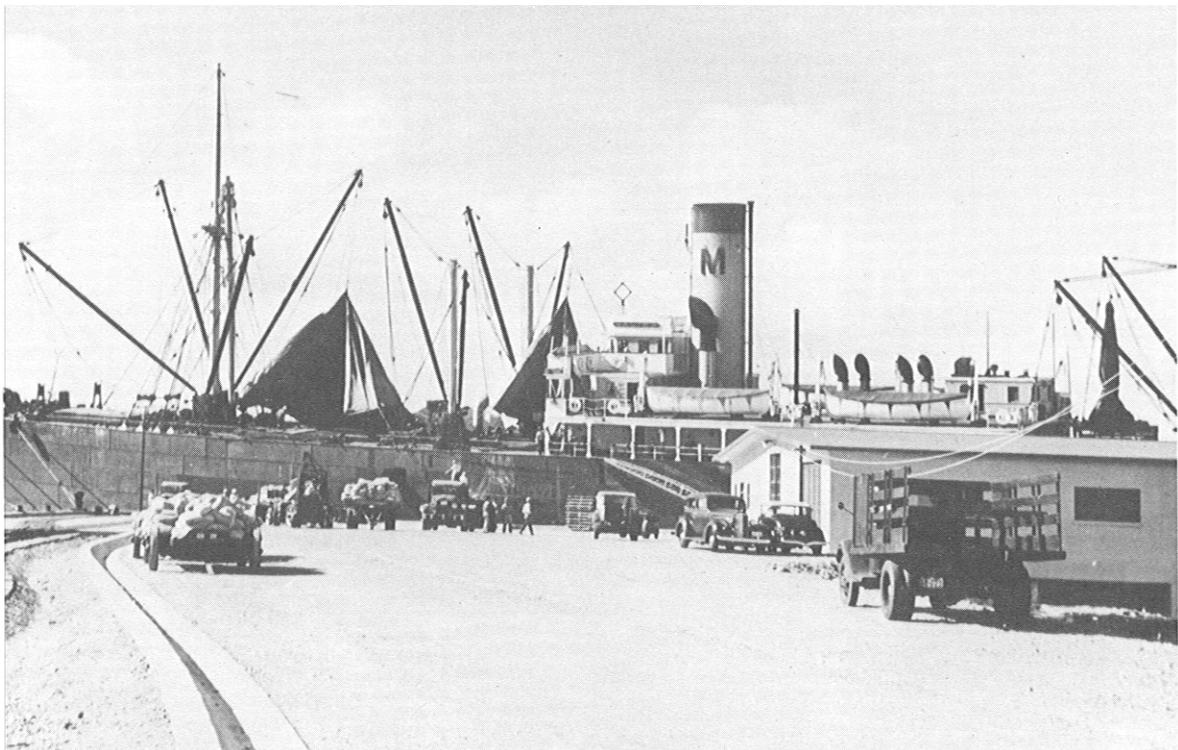


Hickam's beautiful moorish-style water tower, at the base of which was a nursery where thousands of tree seedlings and shrubs were propagated to beautify the post.

In the operational center of the base, five immense double hangars lined up along a paved landing mat that looked like a modified letter "A" stretching its length for nearly a mile. Along the street by the hangars was a railroad track which connected Hickam Field with the busy port of Honolulu nine miles away. The railway and street extended past the huge air depot building and shops, continuing beyond rows of warehouses and ending abruptly on a concrete dock where large oceangoing freighters discharged their cargo of supplies. On one side of the dock, a boathouse sheltered high-speed power boats used on rescue missions that included anything from Army or Navy planes forced down in the ocean to capsized commercial or private fishing boats. "The Biggest Little

Navy in This Man's Army" was the term applied to Hickam's fleet of five crash boats and the 28 enlisted men who operated them. Although they were all Army personnel, the men resembled sailors because of their duty uniforms (light blue shirts and blue bell-bottom dungarees) which were very similar to the Navy's but looked like a strange hybrid with their Army stripes and insignia. Nautical experience was a requirement for these Army sailors, who trained until they could board their vessels and get under way within three minutes after the boathouse siren sounded an alarm.¹⁵

More conventional jobs at Hickam Field ran the gamut from those of the Commanding General, Hawaiian Air Force, and his senior staff, to pilots, engineers, medical



Bishop Point dock at Hickam Field, which not only handled supplies off-loaded by oceangoing freighters but also had a pipeline through which deep-laden tank ships pumped fuel to distant underground storage tanks. Railroad tracks are visible at left, with a boathouse for rescue vessels on the right.

personnel, firemen, mechanics, photographers, clerks, drivers, strikers (enlisted aides), and many others. Assigned personnel reported to the various headquarters and support units which carried out the detailed work of operating a complicated bomber base like Hickam. The bomber command headquarters (18th Bombardment Wing) had the tactical responsibility of launching aircraft on patrol and alert missions, while the post headquarters of the 17th Air Base Group commander handled administrative requirements and provided supervision for the mechanics, shop workers, and other personnel who insured the safe and efficient flying of the big bombers.¹⁶

Because technical schools on the mainland were unable to provide sufficient skilled specialists to meet the needs of the greatly expanding Hawaiian Air Force, military officials established schools at both

Hickam and Wheeler Fields in 1939. The school at Hickam specialized in training aviation mechanics and armorers, while the Wheeler school provided radio instruction and clerical studies. Hickam later set up a clerical school of its own to meet the mounting demand for "white-collar" personnel to handle the Army's vastly increased paperwork. For the hundreds of young men who received technological education at these schools, it was an opportunity to "earn while you learn." School standards were high and the courses difficult, with a failure rate of about 25 percent. For those completing all course requirements, graduation day was a big event, with each man anxiously waiting to receive the parchment diploma certifying that he had attained "the proficiency required by the United States Army standards of achievement."¹⁷



Post headquarters at Hickam Field, 1940-1941. (Bernard C. Tysen)

U.S. ARMY AIR CORPS

HICKAM FIELD TERRITORY OF HAWAII
17TH AIR BASE TECHNICAL SCHOOL

DIPLOMA



This is to Certify, that Private First Class Herbert J. Kelly, 6931788,
*has completed the educational course enumerated hereon and has
 attained in this the proficiency required by the United States
 Army standards of achievement.*
In testimony whereof this Diploma is conferred upon him.
 Given at Hickam Field this 5th day of June
 in the year 1940.

W. A. Schulger
 O.I.C. BASE SCHOOLS
 W. A. SCHULGER
 Captain, Air Corps.

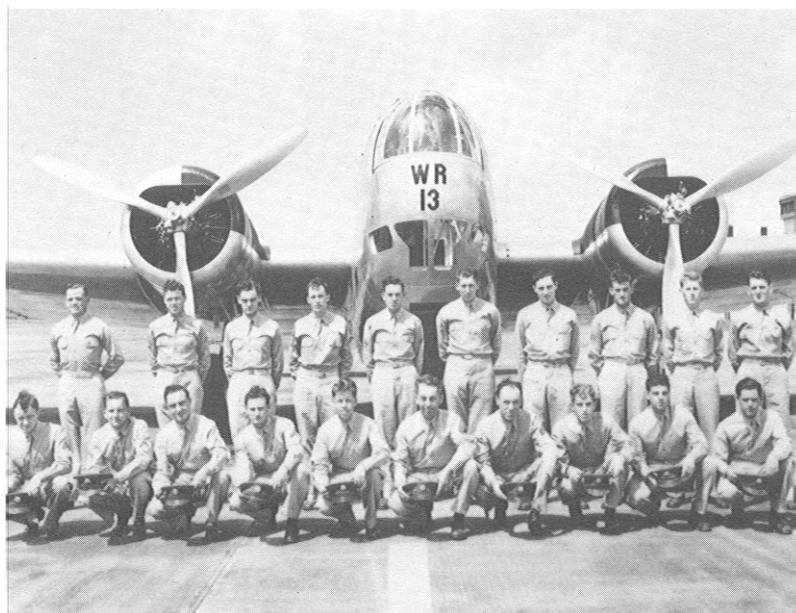
Diploma awarded to PFC Herbert J. Kelly for successful completion
 of the Aircraft Mechanics course at Hickam Field, 5 June 1940

At the Hickam Field Technical School, located in one of the hangars, each week brought a new class of 23 students to the mechanics course and every other week a new class of 13 armorers. They attended daily lectures, averaged two hours of study each night, then took oral and written tests on the previous day's lecture. In addition, they received practical experience by working as actual members of maintenance and combat crews before graduating 12 weeks from the date of entry. The school also provided refresher courses or specialized instruction in propellers, hydraulics, and instruments, for crew chiefs, armorers, and other mechanics. This schooling proved its worth as flying schedules increased and more airplanes joined the Hawaiian Air Force's air armada.¹⁸

The mechanics were a familiar sight on the Hickam flight line, in gray-green coveralls smeared with grease, performing

scheduled inspections, daily checks, engine changes, and all but the most major repairs to airplanes and their engines. Major work—reconditioning, overhaul, modifications, and technical changes—on assigned aircraft and aeronautical equipment was the responsibility of Hickam's Hawaiian Air Depot. Col Harry G. Montgomery, the depot commander, had a small staff of officers to help him manage the work of an all-civilian force consisting of personnel hired from the local community or recruited from the mainland, plus a number of former enlisted members.¹⁹

In addition to the skilled work of trained technicians, the labor of enlisted members on "fatigue detail" was essential to the smooth operation of the base. Unappealing jobs such as post maintenance (keeping lawns trimmed, buildings cleaned, etc.) and the always unpopular KP duty fell in this category, and assigned personnel did their best to avoid them. First sergeants



Members of Aircraft Mechanics Graduation Class 2A pose in front of a Douglas B-18 at Hickam Field, 5 June 1940. (Herbert J. Kelly)

were known to resort to trickery to get the men required for such base details. In one instance reported, the "top kick" lined up his people and asked all those who could do shorthand to fall out. Expecting to be assigned to office work, a number of them stepped forward. The first sergeant then turned to the corporal and said, "March these men to the mess hall. We are *shorthanded* on KPs this morning!"²⁰

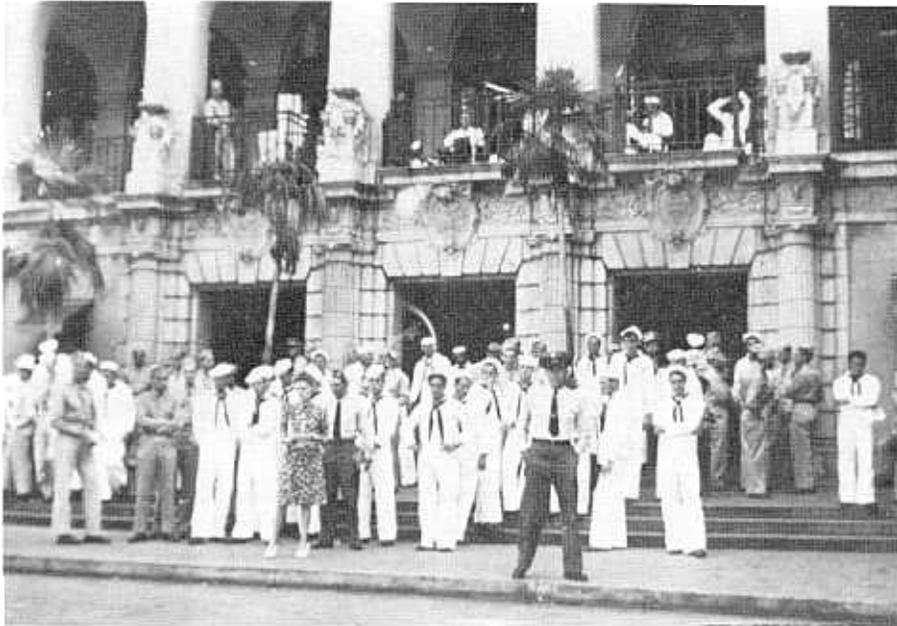
First sergeants, with the distinctive diamond design at the center of their chevrons, were the top enlisted men in their respective outfits and had a tremendous amount of authority. In many cases, they administered discipline and virtually ran their organizations, with the squadron commander and adjutant handling administrative details and signing necessary paperwork such as the morning report. On payday, it was the first sergeant who sat with the pay officer at a desk in the day room and called out the names of assembled personnel, one at a time. As his name was called, each man stepped up, saluted the pay officer, repeated his own name, received his pay in cash, saluted again, did an about face, and left the room. The pay in those days was \$21 a month for privates, and from that amount 25 cents went to the Old Soldiers Home and \$1.50 to the quartermaster laundry. After receiving what was left, the men normally had the rest of the day off.²¹

If they wanted to go to Honolulu, a bus ride cost ten cents and taxi fare was a quarter. The bus line ended at the Army and Navy YMCA on Hotel Street in downtown Honolulu where a taxi depot was conveniently located so military members could take cabs to other areas. Across the street was the famous Black Cat Cafe, a favorite hangout for off-duty soldiers and

sailors. A Coney Island atmosphere prevailed there, with hot dogs, hamburgers, sea food, slot machines, and various other concessions. The men especially enjoyed posing for pictures with hula girls and sending the souvenir photos home to their families. The food was plentiful and inexpensive—10 cents for a hot dog, 15 cents for a hamburger, 50 cents for a roast turkey meal, etc.—with the most costly item on the 1941 menu being porterhouse steak and mushrooms for a dollar.²²

Other well-patronized eating places included the Wo Fat restaurant in Chinatown, a first-class establishment but located in close proximity to the red-light district of the city; Lau Yee Chai in Waikiki; and Kau Kau Korner (at the site of today's Hard Rock Cafe), a drive-in restaurant famous for its "Crossroads of the Pacific" sign that was probably photographed more than any other man-made object in Honolulu next to the Aloha Tower. The Waikiki Theater, with its huge indoor palm trees that reached up to the ceiling, and the Royal Hawaiian and Moana Hotels (the only ones in Waikiki at the time) were other favorite haunts of servicemen spending their leisure time downtown.²³

Hickam Field personnel also had plenty to keep them busy on the base during nonduty hours. There were movies every night, and the affordable admission price of 10 cents permitted even \$21-a-month privates to go to the theater several times a week. The Hickam Hostess Society, a group of officers' and noncommissioned officers' wives, sponsored monthly dances in the large consolidated mess hall, which was decorated with colorful streamers and tropical plants. The hostesses kept an invitation list with the names of over 200 Honolulu girls to whom bids went out for these popular



Above is the Army and Navy YMCA on Hotel Street in downtown Honolulu, patronized by military personnel of all services; and directly across from the YMCA was the Black Cat Cafe (below), where many military members spent their off-duty time enjoying good food at low cost. (Charles L. Tona) Military men pose for a souvenir photo with a hula girl at the Black Cat Cafe (right). The bandage on the arm of the man on the left could indicate that he had just frequented one of the tattoo parlors along Hotel Street. (William T. Faulk)





The Black Cat, a popular bar across from the Armed Forces YMCA, 1943

BLACK CAT CAFE
Honolulu, Hawaii

"Do You Remember When"
Sampling Of Items From The 1941 Menu

Breakfast Dishes

Hot Cakes.....	\$.10
Waffle.....	.15
Oatmeal.....	.15
Corn Flakes.....	.15
Ham, Bacon or Sausage & eggs, Buttered Toast and Hash	
Browns.....	.35
Poached eggs on toast.....	.30
Egg & tomato scramble.....	.30
Oyster omelette.....	.45
Hard boiled egg, pickled egg, or raw egg.....	.05

24-Hour Specials

Breaded Veal Cutlet.....	.35
Roast Turkey with dressing....	.50
½ Fried Chicken with bacon....	.60
Roast Pork & applesauce.....	.40
Swiss Steak & brown gravy.....	.25
Corned Beef & cabbage.....	.30
Spaghetti & meatballs.....	.25
Hot Pork or beef sandwich.....	.25

Steaks, Chops and other meats

Porterhouse & mushrooms:.....	1.00
T-Bone.....	.60
Rib steak.....	.40
Hamburger .30.with onions.....	.35
Liver & onions .30.with bacon.....	.35

Fish & Sea Foods

½ doz. Fresh Frozen Oysters, fried, stewed or raw.....	.35
Fried Shrimps on toast.....	.35
Fried Ulua, tartar sauce.....	.30

Salads

Fruit salad with whipped cream.....	.25
Crab.....	.50
Shrimp.....	.35
Potato.....	.15
Alligator Pear (Avocado).....	.10

Courtesy of:

ROBERT STEPHEN HUDSON: AUTHOR-HISTORIAN "PEARL HARBOR SURVIVOR"

Cold Meats with Potato Salad

Boiled Ham.....	\$.35
Assorted cold cuts.....	.35
Pig's foot.....	.20
Sardines.....	.25

Soups

Chicken.....	.20
Corn Chowder.....	.20
Vegetable.....	.20
Turtle.....	.20

Sandwiches

(Any sandwich under .20 - on toast .05 extra) Potato salad with any sandwich .10	
Black Cat Special.....	.20
Bacon & Egg.....	.20
Cold ham.....	.10
Bacon & tomato.....	.20
Hamburger.....	.15
Hamburger & cheese.....	.20
Peanut butter.....	.10
Club House.....	.50
Denver.....	.25
Barbecued Beef.....	.15
Hot dog.....	.10

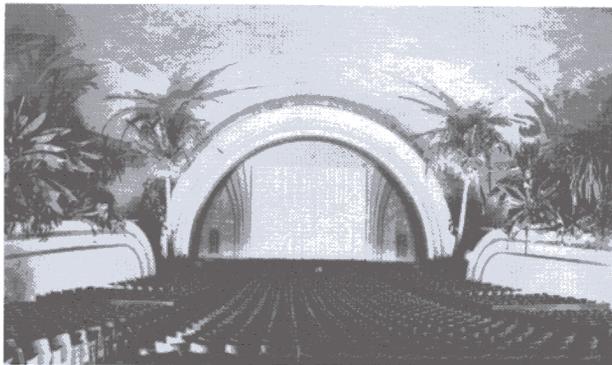
Desserts

Strawberry shortcake with whipped cream.....	.20
Pies (per cut).....	.10
Pie a la mode.....	.15
Brown bobbies.....2 for	.05
Ice Cream.....	.10
Banana Split.....	.25

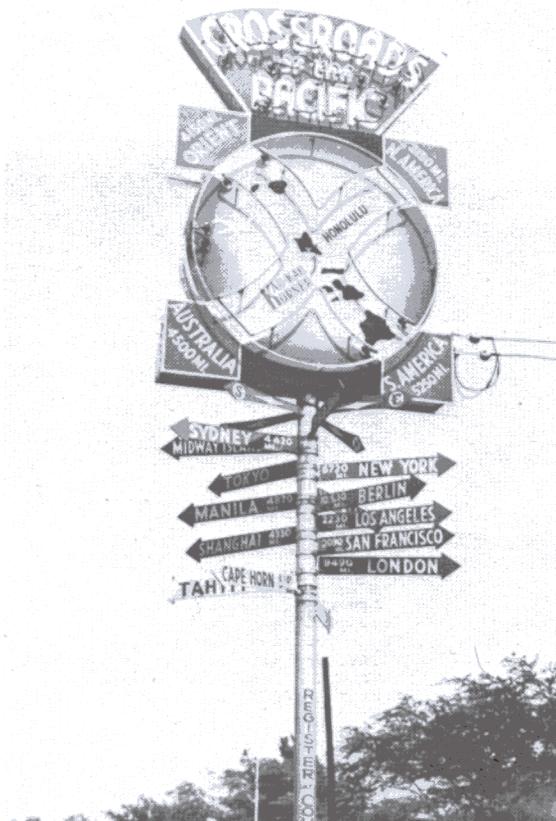
Drinks

Buttermilk.....	.10
Milk (second glass .05).....	.10
Postum.....	.10
Cvaltine.....	.10
Milk Shakes.....	.15
Malted Milks.....	.20
Coca Cola & other sodas.....	.10
with meals.....	.05

Sampling of items from the 1941 menu of the Black Cat Cafe. (Robert Stephen Hudson)



Right is the famous “Crossroads of the Pacific” sign at Kau Kau Corner on Kalakaua Avenue, at the entrance to Waikiki, circa 1941. (11th Bombardment Group Association) Above, the popular Waikiki Theater in 1941, with a rainbow over the stage, flanked by coconut trees and other tropical flora. (Edward J. White) Below, the Waikiki area and Diamond Head, as photographed on 18 January 1934. (Arthur C. Snodgrass)



events. Dances were also a regular weekly feature at the Hickam Officers' Club adjacent to the Pearl Harbor channel. This beautiful new structure, which replaced club facilities formerly located in the basement of the operations building, contained a large dining room, bar, ballroom, and a fully equipped game room. No officer could go to the club after seven o'clock in the evening without wearing dress whites or a white formal jacket, and everything was signed for with chits rather than paid in cash. The many special programs and activities at the club, such as "Monte Carlo Night" and formal dinner-dances, were well attended by assigned officers.²⁴

The Noncommissioned Officers (NCO) Club at the end of Mills Boulevard replaced a wooden frame building that had served as a temporary club ever since the base was built. The old structure fell victim to

Hickam's first major fire in March 1940; but work on a new facility had been started months before, so shortly after the disastrous fire, the new club was ready to open. By that time, however, the number of men stationed at Hickam Field had increased considerably, and there were far more NCOs than the club could accommodate. Consequently, it became a first three graders' club, and lower grade NCOs had to content themselves with restaurants and beer gardens operated by the post exchange. Enlisted personnel patronized the "Snake Ranch," a beer hall set up in a wooden building across the parade ground from the big barracks. "I don't know who started that name, 'Snake Ranch'," said Kenneth L. Bayley (former private first class assigned to the 4th Reconnaissance Squadron), "but I suppose if you drank enough of the local beer, you'd see snakes."²⁵



HEARD:-- M/Sgt Jessie Martin has got religion. He tried to put in for OCS to be a chaplain - We hope he gets it, too. Imagine Sunday School in the Snake Ranch!



SEEN:--Sgt. John Mullins, holding his own individual 3-day luau - at the Reptile House. Didn't seem to realize (or mind) that there was no roast-pig. Bye-bye, Johnnyboy, understand you're about fed-up on hulias, anyway.

The Snake Ranch (enlisted men's beer hall) was regularly featured or mentioned in Hickam Field's newspaper.

The sports program provided the men at Hickam Field with yet another off-duty activity. In many units, participation in sports was also a regularly scheduled requirement for assigned personnel several times a week during duty hours. Athletes from "Bomberland" (as Hickam was sometimes called) soon made their mark in the Hawaiian Department by winning many interservice and local competitions. The athletic program, set in motion before the last man had vacated old Luke Field, had its first basketball team competing in the Sector Navy League before Hickam was three months old. In the first two years of participation in service sports within the Hawaiian Department, Hickam Field teams won seven major titles in track, baseball, and basketball.²⁶

Sports coverage was a major part of *Hickam News* (later renamed *Hickam Highlights*), the base newspaper. In the initial issue published on 15 March 1940, a message from Chaplain James C. Bean stated:

Hats off to our efficient Base S-2 [intelligence officer] for having the foresight and initiative to see that what this field needed most next to a good five cent cigar is a good news sheet. No matter what they print, as long as it is news, it will add to our acquaintance with the set-up of the field, the current situation of this war, and our acquaintance with each other. Let this letter form the official commendation and blessing of the Base Chaplain.²⁷

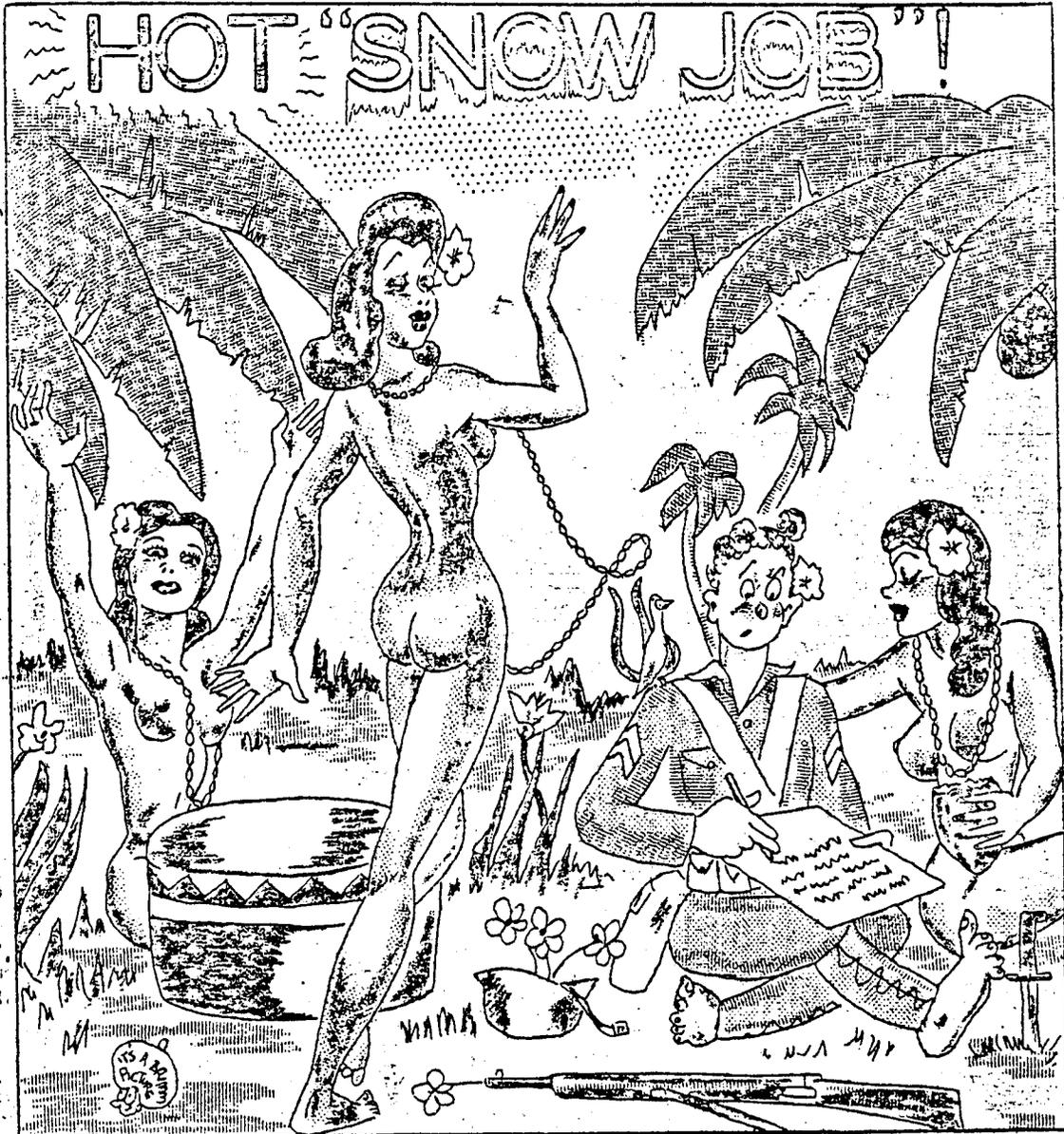
When talented PFC W. J. (Joe) Brimm later assumed duty as art editor, his drawings of buxom, scantily clad women began appearing on the covers and many inside



Irrepressible Joe Brimm, Hickam Field artist, obviously took great delight in his work, which vexed the chaplain but endeared him to his buddies. (Toni Gunn Rafferty)

pages of the base paper. He also added the personal touch of including recognizable drawings of known enlisted men in his cartoons, along with the seductive *wahines* (the word for "women" in Hawaiian). This incurred the wrath of the base chaplain, who repeatedly went to the base commander to complain that Joe was corrupting the morals of personnel on the base. Joe would then put a few more clothes on the women for a while but invariably drifted back to the kind of art that he and his friends liked best.²⁸

All was not fun and games, however, for the war situation in Europe had made it evident that an immediate expansion of American air power was vitally needed; and this affected air activity in the Hawaiian Islands. In the spring of 1941, the allocation of a greater number of heavy bombers to the Hawaiian Air Force than to any other overseas garrison was an indication of growing concern over the



A.P.O. — "and so, Sweetheart, as I listen to the Savage War drums on this lonely out post — I think only of you! —"

Front cover of *Hickam Highlights* (Vol 9, Nr 23, 14 November 1942).

possibility of war in the Pacific. The first mass flight of 21 B-17Ds took off from Hamilton Field, California, on 13 May 1941 and landed at Hickam Field the next morning after an average elapsed time of 13 hours and 10 minutes. Members of the Hawaiian Air Force, who had never flown heavy bombers, began to receive intensive instructions from crew members of the 19th Bombardment Group who had ferried the aircraft to Hawaii.²⁹

In the fall of 1941, a War Department decision to send reinforcements to the Philippines adversely affected the ability of the Hawaiian Air Force to perform its mission by assigning a lower priority in allocation of aircraft and requiring a diversion of some of its strength. On 5 September 1941, nine of the Hawaiian Air Force's B-17Ds and 75 crew members under the command of Maj Emmett O'Donnell, Jr., took off from Hickam for Clark Field in the first flight of land-based bombers across the central Pacific. Successful completion of this historic flight proved that the Philippines could be reinforced by air.³⁰

On 27 October 1941, Col William E. Farthing assumed command of Hickam Field from Brig Gen Jacob H. Rudolph, who was reassigned as commander of the 18th Bombardment Wing. As base commander, Colonel Farthing managed housekeeping functions, while General Rudolph had the responsibility for tactical defense of the field. As relations between the United States and Japan continued to deteriorate, squadron commanders at Hickam were concerned about their crews being trained and meeting certain essential requirements. Capt Russell L. Waldron, commander of the 31st Bomb Squadron, was particularly frustrated about not having enough people for his gunnery and other combat crew

positions because the Hawaiian Department was demanding that he provide these men for guard duty around warehouses and other facilities in Honolulu.³¹

On Saturday, 6 December, word soon spread through the base that the exercise was over and all restrictions had been lifted. Ira W. Southern, who was on duty that afternoon as Charge of Quarters for the 17th Air Base Group, was busy for two or three hours handing out passes and taking phone calls inquiring about whether the alert was lifted or "Is there a pass for me?" Russell Tener of the 18th Bomb Wing went to Pearl Harbor with Tom Martin, Bill Enos, Stanley Toye, and Lou Kirchner to see the "Battle of Music." He had a proud feeling when the band from the USS *Pennsylvania* (his home state) won the contest. Second-place honors went to the band from the USS *Arizona*.³²

The Hickam Officers' Club was filled with the usual Saturday night crowd. Lieutenant Gray and 1st Lt Donovan D. Smart finally received the white coats they had ordered from The Hub, a men's store in downtown Honolulu, so they got dates, rented a car, and attended a dinner-dance at the club. Captain and Mrs. Waldron "and probably three-fourths of the pilots who were officers" were also there at a big party. The waitresses serving refreshments that night were, ironically, clad in colorful Japanese kimonos.* A good time was had by all, and it was not until the early hours of the morning that the partygoers finally left to go home, looking forward to sleeping late that Sunday morning, 7 December 1941.³³

*Information received from Mrs. Yukie Yamashiro, one of the Japanese waitresses working that night at the club, who is the aunt of co-author Leatrice R. Arakaki.

CHAPTER III

ASSIGNMENT PARADISE: FIGHTER COMMAND

“Actually Hawaii turned out to be a great assignment. There was a nice social life, and if you had a good sergeant to handle your ground duties you could fly in the morning and be on the beach in the afternoon. War really messed up the whole thing.”

2d Lt Charles E. Taylor, 6th Pursuit Squadron
(*The Pineapple Air Force*, 1990)

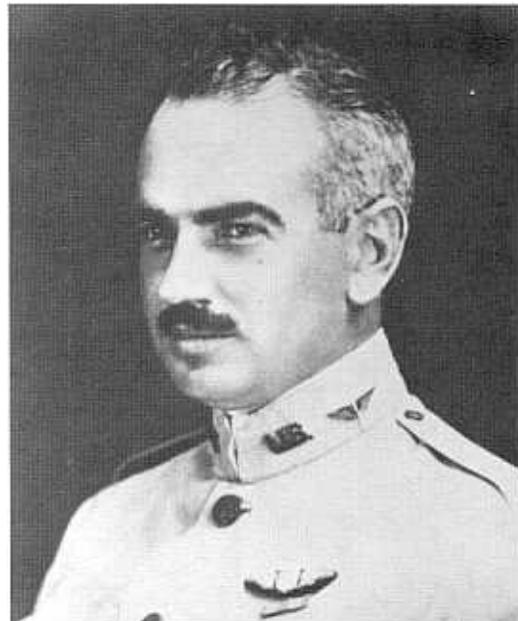
Just as Hickam Field was the Hawaiian Air Force's bomber base, Wheeler Field was its fighter base. Periodically, assigned aviators and aircraft would deploy to Bellows Field in Waimanalo or to Haleiwa Field on the north shore for gunnery training.

Wheeler Field

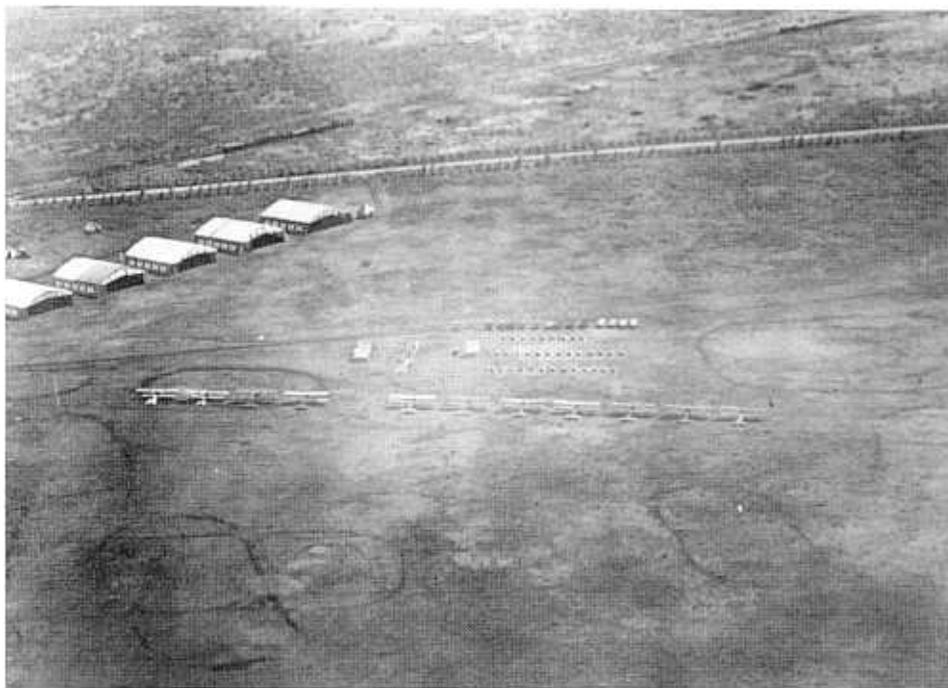
Named in honor of Maj Sheldon H. Wheeler, former commander of Luke Field who died in a plane crash on 13 July 1921, this was the second air station established in the Hawaiian Department. It was located on the old 17th Cavalry drill grounds at Schofield Barracks in central Oahu, bounded on the north by the Oahu Railway, on the east by the main road to Schofield Barracks, and on the west and south by gulches.¹

Construction of Wheeler Field began on 6 February 1922 under the direction of 1st Lt William T. Agee of the 4th Squadron (Observation), who departed Luke Field with 20 men to start clearing away trees and undergrowth. Within a month, they had completed a landing strip sufficient to

handle the relatively slow and light aircraft of the time; and by 30 June 1923, hangars and storage tanks had been built. Originally called the Hawaiian Divisional Air Service Flying Field, this airdrome at Schofield was renamed in honor of Major Wheeler on 11 November 1922. Maj George E. Stratemeyer became the first post commander on the day that construction commenced.²



Maj Sheldon Harley Wheeler (1889-1921)



Above, Wheeler Field, before completion of permanent hangars, when it was still part of Schofield Barracks (circa 1922-1923). And, below, Wheeler, with hangars in place, as well as barracks, family housing, and other buildings (23 January 1936).



On 10 November 1926, the Hawaiian Department commander appointed a board of officers to study the needs of the Department in connection with the Air Corps Five-Year Program. Three months later, the board recommended the expansion of Wheeler Field into a 400-acre parcel of land immediately east of old Wheeler Field, in a triangle formed by Wahiawa Road, Schofield Road, and the existing Wheeler Field boundary. By 1934, construction had been completed on hangars and other technical structures, family quarters, barracks, and a number of other facilities.³

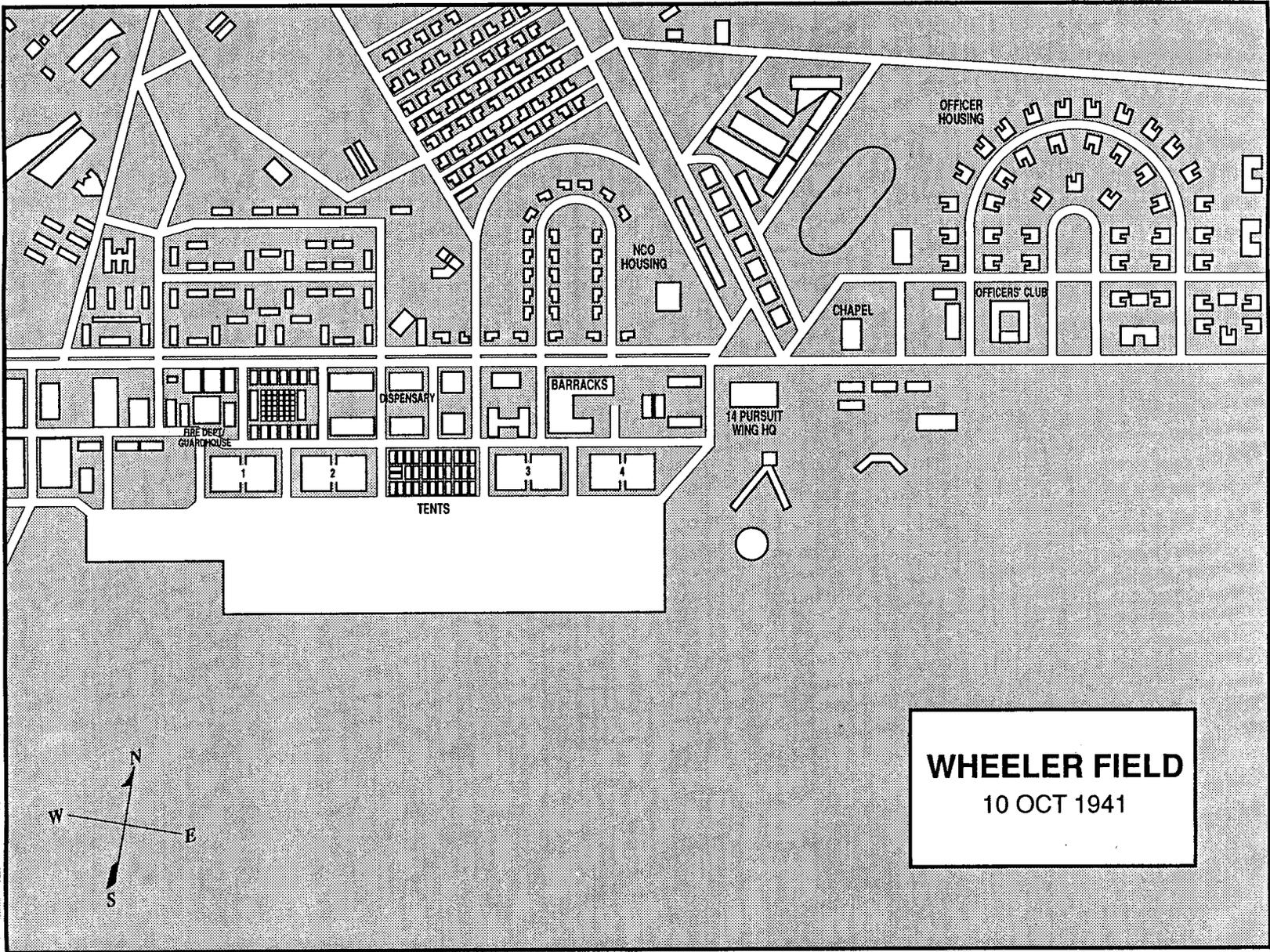
Wheeler Field became the center of world interest in the 1920s and 1930s as the site of several highly significant achievements in aviation history. On 29 June 1927, Army 1st Lts Lester J. Maitland and Albert F. Hegenberger completed the first nonstop Mainland-to-Hawaii flight from Oakland, California, to Wheeler Field in a Fokker C-2 trimotor airplane called the "Bird of Paradise." Two months later, on 17 August, Arthur Goebel and Martin Jensen landed their tiny planes at Wheeler Field as winners of the Dole Derby, an air race from California to Hawaii. On 1 June 1928, Australian Squadron Leader Charles E. Kingsford-Smith landed his Fokker monoplane "Southern Cross" at Wheeler on the first leg of his pioneer trans-Pacific flight from Oakland, California, to Brisbane, Australia, by way of Hawaii and Fiji. Amelia Earhart departed from Wheeler Field in her Lockheed Vega on 11 January 1935 and successfully completed the first solo flight from Hawaii to the mainland in 18 hours and 16 minutes, landing at Oakland, California.⁴

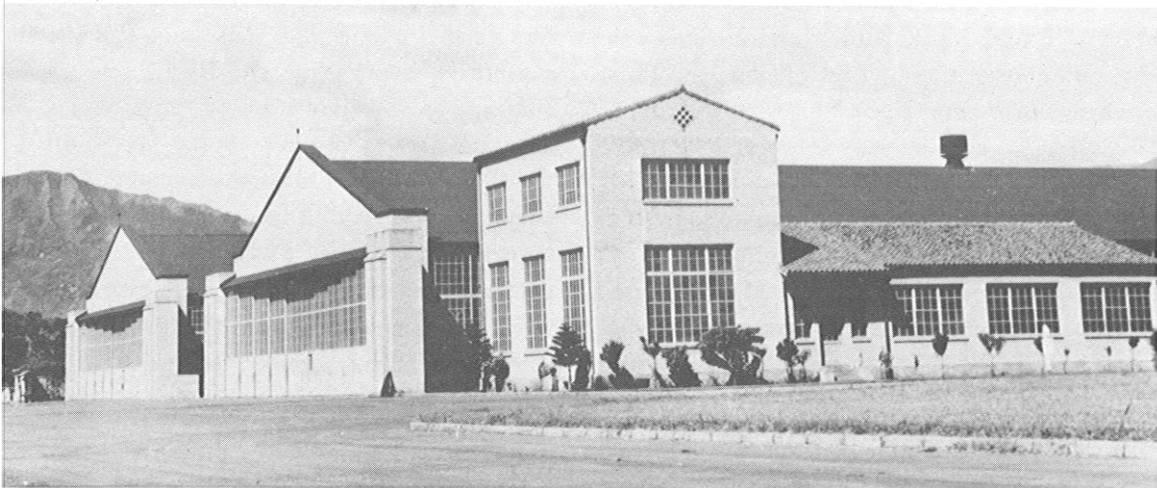
On 5 August 1939, the War Department issued General Orders No. 4

reassigning 1,427.81 acres of Schofield Barracks land to Wheeler Field. Less than four weeks later, on 31 August 1939, it became a separate permanent military post. By this time, the air base had mushroomed into a large and productive facility. Many steel and wooden hangars as well as machine and repair shops had been constructed, and combat units stationed there conducted intensive training throughout the year. For aerial gunnery training, they went to Bellows Field, which had been attached to Wheeler for administrative support since 15 September 1930. Until Bellows became a separate military post on 22 July 1941, Wheeler provided all the manpower, equipment, and supplies required to operate that installation.⁵

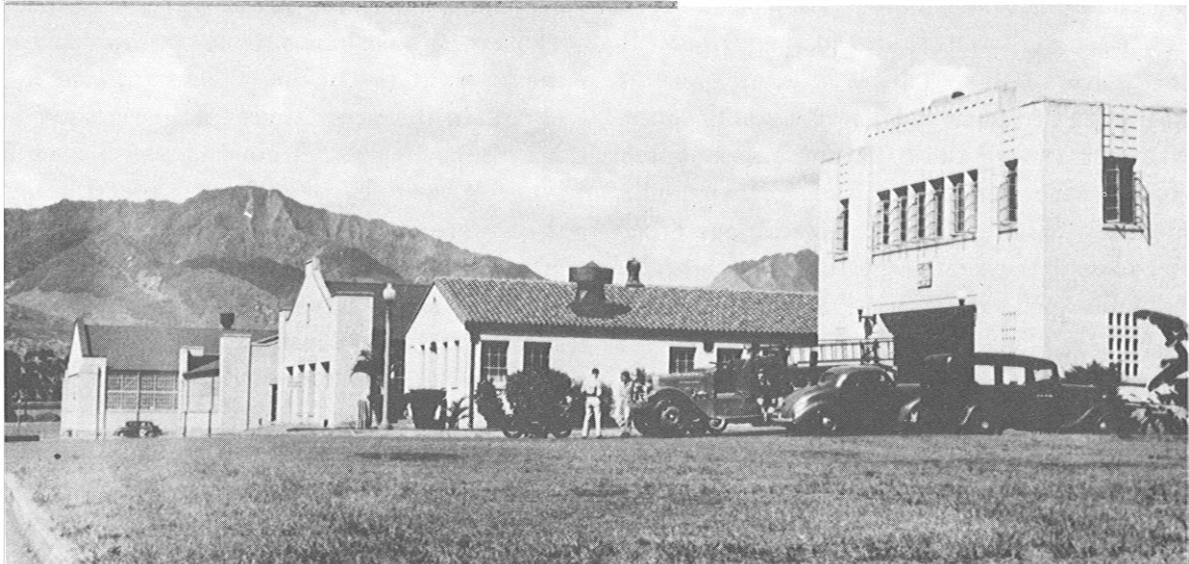
On 1 November 1940, the 14th Pursuit Wing activated at Wheeler Field. Assigned units included the 18th Pursuit Group (Interceptor) with its 6th, 19th, 44th, 73d, and 78th Pursuit Squadrons; and the 15th Pursuit Group (Fighter) with the 45th, 46th, and 47th Pursuit Squadrons assigned initially, then augmented later by the assignment of the 72d Pursuit Squadron on 5 October 1941. Other organizations at Wheeler included the 18th Air Base Group (with its 17th Air Base Squadron and the 24th and 25th Materiel Squadrons) as well as various quartermaster, signal, ordnance, and service units.⁶

In February 1941, the Hawaiian Air Force received its greatest single increase in assigned aircraft since its activation. Thirty-one P-36s, with pilots and crew chiefs, sailed aboard the carrier *Enterprise* from San Diego to the Hawaiian Islands, arriving shortly after daylight on 21 February. While the ship was still some 10 to 15 miles off the coast of Oahu, the





Above, engineering buildings and parachute shop; left, the flight line; and, below, the fire station at Wheeler in 1940. (Vincent T. Ryan)



planes took off in groups of three from the carrier's broad deck and flew directly to their Wheeler Field destination. This launching of Army fighters from the deck of an aircraft carrier was a historic "first" in military aviation. Led by flight commander Maj George P. Tourtellot, the P-36s were a spectacular sight as they whisked in, three by three, effecting precise and perfect landings. They taxied in front of the hangars and drew up to form a line. Col Harvey S. Burwell, Wheeler's commanding officer, strode to the side of the flight leader's plane to offer his aloha and to extend his post's hospitality. Major Tourtellot returned to the mainland aboard the *Enterprise* the next day, but the 30 pilots who flew in the other planes were absorbed within units of Wheeler's expanding pursuit wing. Among the arriving pilots were 1st Lts Kermit A. Tyler and Lewis M. Sanders, 2d Lts George S. Welch, Othneil Norris, John M. Thacker, and George A. Whiteman—who were all destined to have key roles in the drama that unfolded during the Japanese attack on 7 December 1941.⁷

Within the next two months, more modern pursuit planes began arriving. In March 1941, Wheeler pilots welcomed sleek new Curtiss P-40Bs that had come right off the assembly line. They had a top speed of 352 miles per hour, compared to 314 for the P-36 and 234 for the P-26, and also mounted six machine guns while the older pursuits had only two. Those units still operating P-26s were the first to get the new fighters. By mid-April, there were 55 P-40s in the inventory, and more arrived during the ensuing months until the Hawaiian Air Force had a total of 99 P-40 aircraft assigned.⁸

Intensive training became a way of life for the pilots. Lieutenant Sanders, who

had been appointed commander of the 46th Squadron, cautioned his men to "Learn something every time you fly. There's a war coming on. I don't know just when, but knowing what you're doing is your life insurance." Air raid alerts became a regular part of the flying routine, and between March and October 1941 assigned personnel participated in seven exercises, two of which were alerts directed by Washington. The intense training took its toll in flying mishaps that resulted in a number of deaths and serious injuries, but it was the younger, inexperienced pilots who usually made up the accident statistics.⁹

It took good pilots to fly the modern military warplanes, but it also took other men, just as good in their own line of work, to keep those planes flying. The mechanics, sheet metal workers, and other unheralded ground support personnel were conscientious and serious about their responsibility to insure safe and efficient flying at all times. Edward J. White, a young recruit from Concord, New Hampshire, learned this firsthand. When he arrived in Hawaii after sailing from New York aboard the *Chateau Thierry*, he and other Army Air Forces personnel assembled at the pier for roll call. Those with last names from "A" to "part of the S" went to Hickam Field, while he and others in the remaining group were put on the "Oahu Express" train and transported to Wheeler. After completing basic training, they were interviewed for the duty they desired. Most of the men wanted to be aircraft mechanics, but Ed White chose sheet metal work instead and was assigned to the 18th Air Base Group's sheet metal shop at base engineering.¹⁰

Capt Jack Gibbs, the base engineering officer, was well liked by his men; and SSgt "Ace" Snodgrass, who ran the sheet metal



PFC Edward J. White in Sheet Metal Shop at Wheeler Field, 1940.

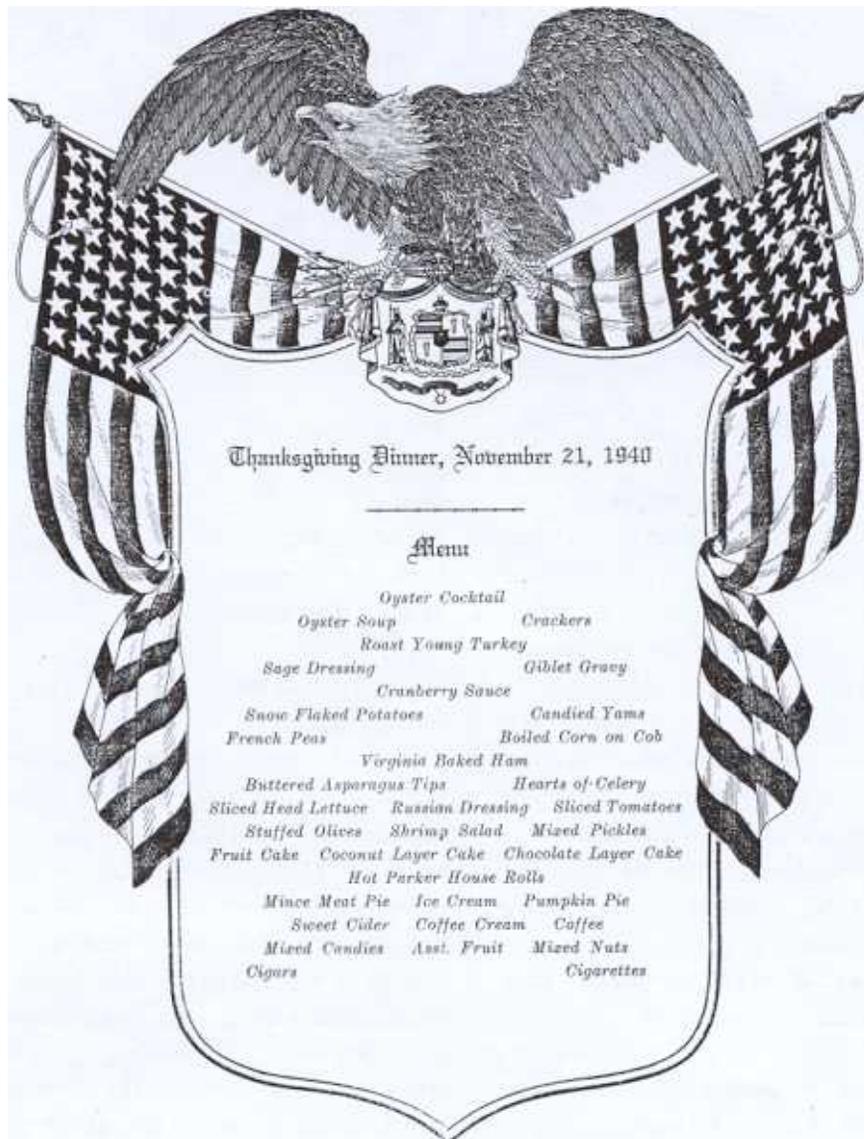
shop, was highly respected. The Wheeler shop was unique because of the depot-level work accomplished there, far above and beyond that normally expected of an airfield sheet metal shop. Sergeant Snodgrass, known as “a natural born mechanic [who] could do almost anything,” conducted a school for those interested in learning about aircraft sheet metal. This was not compulsory, but those who attended qualified as aircraft mechanics; and their “AM rating” entitled them to the same pay as a staff sergeant, regardless of whether they wore private, private first class, corporal, or sergeant stripes. When they attained the rank of staff sergeant, they lost the AM rating but received the same pay. The maintenance of their planes was of prime concern to these men, and they took great pride in their work. White recalled a new apprentice completing a job

and saying, “Oh, it’s good enough.” He was quickly asked, “Would you want your life hanging on that repair you’re making?” When he answered, “No,” he was told, “If it isn’t good enough for you, it’s not good enough for anyone either—fix it right.”¹¹

The enlisted troops were extremely serious about their work but managed to have their share of fun and found ingenious ways to make life more comfortable for themselves. In 1940 for example, following the big Thanksgiving dinner for enlisted personnel, held in the final assembly hangar, the men knew that the mess fund had been hit hard for this lavish feast and they could expect only sparse meals for the next few days. Unwilling to suffer such a cruel fate, they raided the hangar and took the leftover food to the sheet metal shop, keeping it refrigerated in a container that



Left, Thanksgiving feast in the final assembly hangar at Wheeler Field, 21 November 1940 (Edward J. White). Below, the dinner menu, with “Cigars” and “Cigarettes” listed right after the desserts. (Donated by W. W. Collins and Douglas Van Valkenburgh)



held Dry Ice. For the next few days, instead of going to the mess hall, they heated and ate the roast turkey. Using an oven in the shop that was set at 1200 degrees for heat treating aluminum alloy, they placed the turkey on a piece of aluminum, with one man raising the oven door and another shoving the turkey in for a count of eight to ten, then pulling it out. The system worked well, and the men enjoyed a second, third, and fourth Thanksgiving that year.¹²

During their off-duty time, Wheeler personnel enjoyed the same recreational activities and places of interest as their counterparts at Hickam Field. In addition, they patronized many of the restaurants and bars in nearby Wahiawa, Hawaii's second largest city. Especially popular was Kemoo Farm Restaurant located across the street from Schofield Barracks' Funston Gate. It was a common sight to see long lines of people waiting to dine in the eucalyptus-framed building overlooking Lake Wilson. On Sundays, buck privates and generals alike would line up outside the restaurant door for a home-style breakfast of pancakes and waffles.¹³

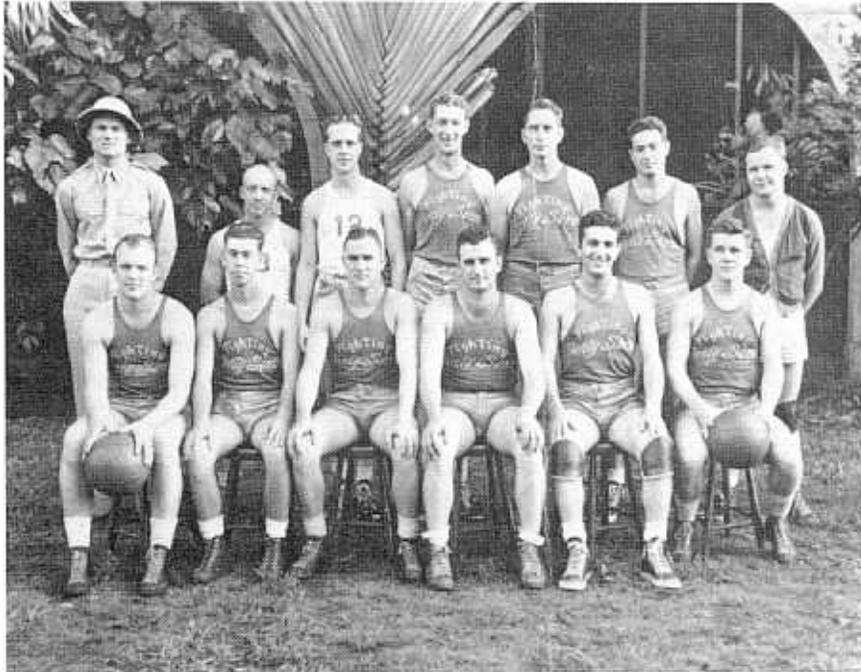
As war clouds gathered over the Pacific and the intensity of alerts, exercises, and other training activities increased, Hawaii's military community as a whole still maintained a peacetime mentality and continued to operate with a business-as-usual attitude. On 7 August, just four months before the blitz, Wheeler Field held a big "GALADAY" to commemorate the dedication of the Wheeler Field airdrome and post office. The program included a welcome by General Davidson, 14th Pursuit Wing commander; presentation to the wing commander of the key to the new post office by Mr. Albert P. Lino, Postmaster of



Dance held in the consolidated mess at Wheeler Field, sponsored by the 18th Air Base Group, circa 1940-1941. (W. Bruce Harlow)

Honolulu; presentation of athletic awards and trophies, an aerial demonstration, and an all-star baseball game. Incredibly, the public was invited to visit Wheeler for this occasion, unrestricted except for a ban against cameras. Needless to say, "Tadashi Morimura" (alias of Takeo Yoshikawa, a trained intelligence agent who was the Japanese Navy's top spy) took advantage of the invitation and wandered freely around Wheeler Field, missing nothing. He watched the P-40s in flight, observing that "they were very fast" and the pilots' "flight technique most skillful." He noted such things as the number of hangars, direction of runways, their length and width, and the fact that three aircraft took off at once, then recorded his observations when he returned to the Japanese consulate.¹⁴

On 27 October 1941, Col William J. Flood assumed duty as post commander of Wheeler Field from General Davidson, who retained tactical responsibilities as



Active participants in Wheeler's sports program: Members of the 46th Pursuit Squadron's championship basketball team, pictured here with Athletic Officer Lt Bill Southerland, circa 1940-1941. (Clarence Kindl)

commander of the 14th Pursuit Wing. With the buildup of men and planes in the Hawaiian Air Force, a housing shortage surfaced. A wooden barracks was hastily erected for junior bachelor officers, and many enlisted men were billeted in tents located between Hangars 2 and 3 along the flight line.¹⁵

In late November, Colonel Flood reported to General Martin's office, along with the other base and tactical commanders, was briefed on a message outlining the strained relations between the Japanese and the United States, and instructed to implement Alert One for sabotage. Earlier, earthen bunkers had been built all around Wheeler for about 125 aircraft so they would be suitably dispersed and protected from air attack. Colonel Flood asked if he could keep the aircraft dispersed, but General Short disapproved his

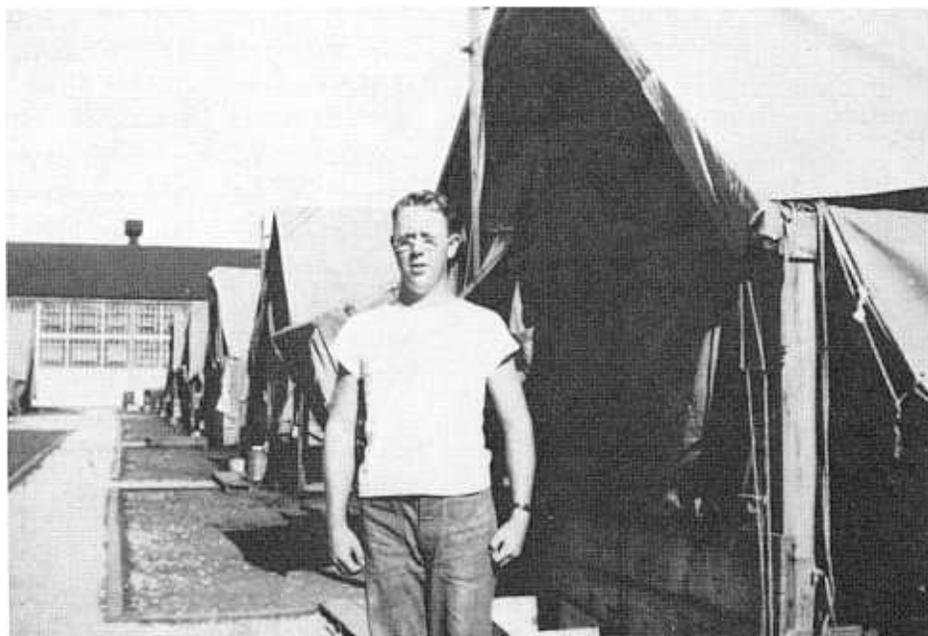
request. He therefore had all the aircraft pulled in and parked together on the ramp, then increased the guards around the aircraft and around the perimeter of the field.¹⁶

On Saturday, 6 December, following a classic peacetime parade, all but essential Wheeler personnel received the weekend off. The aircraft of all but two squadrons, however, remained lined up on the ramp in front of the hangars. The 47th Squadron was at Haleiwa Field on the north shore and the 44th Squadron was at Bellows Field in Waimanalo for gunnery practice. The officers and enlisted men at Haleiwa and Bellows, who had their fill of the primitive living conditions, lost no time heading back to Wheeler for a hot shower and a night of partying at the Officers' Club or in Honolulu.¹⁷



Above, Tent City, located between Hangars 2 and 3, along the Wheeler Field flight line. (Harry P. Kilpatrick).

Below, Cpl William H. Roach, 45th Pursuit Squadron, in front of his tent quarters on Wheeler's hangar row.



Bellows Field

Originally called the Waimanalo Military Reservation when established by Presidential Executive Order in 1917, Bellows Field was renamed in 1933 in honor of 2d Lt Franklin B. Bellows, a World War I hero who was killed in action near St. Mihiel, France. This 1,500-acre installation on the southeast coast of Oahu, located about five miles south of what was then called the Kaneohe Naval Air Station, had Waimanalo Bay bordering its eastern perimeter and Waimanalo town to the southwest. Wailea Point marked its northern boundary along the seacoast, with the sugar mill village of Lanikai extending above.¹⁸

Bellows Field occupied a stretch of white coral sand and rock that varied from 10 to 20 feet above sea level, with a central knoll about 55 feet high. Near the northern boundary, a rise of volcanic rock jutted into the sea and formed Wailea Point. Approximately three miles from shore, the Koolau Mountains ran northeast to



2d Lt Franklin Barney Bellows (1896-1918)
(Wilmette Historical Museum, Illinois)

southwest as a solid wall back of the reservation, with rich sugar cane acreage and some marshland stretching between the sandy shore and the steep slopes of the mountains. Rainfall was abundant, and dust was not a problem despite the strong prevailing winds.¹⁹

At first, Bellows was a satellite of Wheeler Field and served as a training camp, providing a bivouac area for the Infantry, a target practice area for the Coast Artillery, and a strafing and bombing practice range for the Army Air Forces. Sugar cane and guava bushes covered the land except where cleared away for training areas and for tents in which the men slept while at Bellows for gunnery training. There was also a single asphalt runway, 75 feet wide and only 983 feet long (later lengthened to 3,800 feet), and a wooden air traffic control tower.²⁰

In early 1941, the small group of enlisted men who maintained the installation were members of the 18th Air Base Group at Wheeler but on detached service at Bellows, under the supervision of TSgt Salvatore Torre, the first Bellows camp commander. They were primarily responsible for base maintenance, which included upkeep of the rifle pits, pistol range, and strafing targets. In addition, they monitored the use of barbecue pits and shelters along the beach.²¹

The beach at Bellows was one of the finest on the island and a favorite picnic ground and swimming spot where Hickam and Wheeler Field personnel frequently spent their free time. There were also reports of "good pheasant hunting from the beach to the mountains" (although the legality of this activity was never mentioned).²²



Aerial view of Bellows Field, 27 October 1941

As the commanding officer, Sergeant Torre lived in a small stone building, which was the only permanent structure on the installation at the time. The other assigned personnel lived in tents set on wooden frames located in a flat grassy area lined with palm trees. There were two rows of about 30 tents, with the entrances to the tents facing each other and separated by perhaps a hundred feet. This open space was used as the squadron formation area. At the south end was the mess hall, a wooden building which also served double duty as the dayroom. Behind the west row of tents was a latrine and shower facility, a little further north was the guard house, and on top of "Headquarters Hill" was the officers' club. A small two-room shack nearby served as the dispensary. The focal

point of activities at Bellows was the operations shack located at the bottom of the hill adjacent to the flight line. It served as a combination radio room and armament facility.²³

March 1941 marked the beginning of many changes and a program of expansion at Bellows. On 23 March, Lt Col W. V. Andrews succeeded Sergeant Torre as camp commander. During the month, both the 86th Observation Squadron with its O-47B aircraft and the 58th Bombardment Squadron with B-18s moved from Wheeler Field to Bellows. A month later, on 29 April, the 58th Bomb Squadron transferred to Hickam Field, because its newly assigned A-20 aircraft could not be accommodated with the facilities existing at Bellows. Squadron



Above, tent area at Bellows Field, 1940. (Gene Taylor)

Below, headquarters building at Bellows in 1941. (Jean K. Lambert)





Operations shack at Bellows, located at the bottom of "Headquarters Hill" and adjacent to the flight line.

personnel at first hated their new duty station at Bellows. The tents which housed them were old and rotten, so equipment and personal belongings sometimes suffered considerable damage during heavy rainfall. Hordes of mosquitoes that bred in cane field ditches around the camp made life miserable and caused Colonel Andrews to issue orders on 26 March 1941 decreeing that "between retreat and reveille the members of the guard, while on post, will wear the campaign hat and mosquito headnet."²⁴

Despite the discomfort and inconveniences, morale remained high and the men gradually began to enjoy their Bellows assignment. Cpl Chuck Fry of the 86th Observation Squadron found that "living was quite pleasant, with good food, excellent beach for swimming and walking, and perhaps a 30-40 minute ride to Waikiki in Honolulu when you were off-duty." Transportation was scarce in those days,

however, so the men spent most of their off-duty hours on the base or in the adjacent community of Waimanalo, where they had limited use of the tennis courts and the gymnasium. Participation in sports competitions between officers and enlisted men also filled much of their leisure time; and with an outstanding beach in their own backyard, most personnel sported a fine suntan and generally maintained a good physical condition. A unique one-time benefit enjoyed by Bellows personnel on 11 June 1941 was an extra day off in memory of King Kamehameha I. This was a legal holiday observed by the Territory of Hawaii; and Bellows published General Orders No. 5 proclaiming Kamehameha Day a holiday for Bellows Field also, "with all activities suspended except for necessary guard and police duties."²⁵

Members of the 86th Observation Squadron bore the brunt of guard and

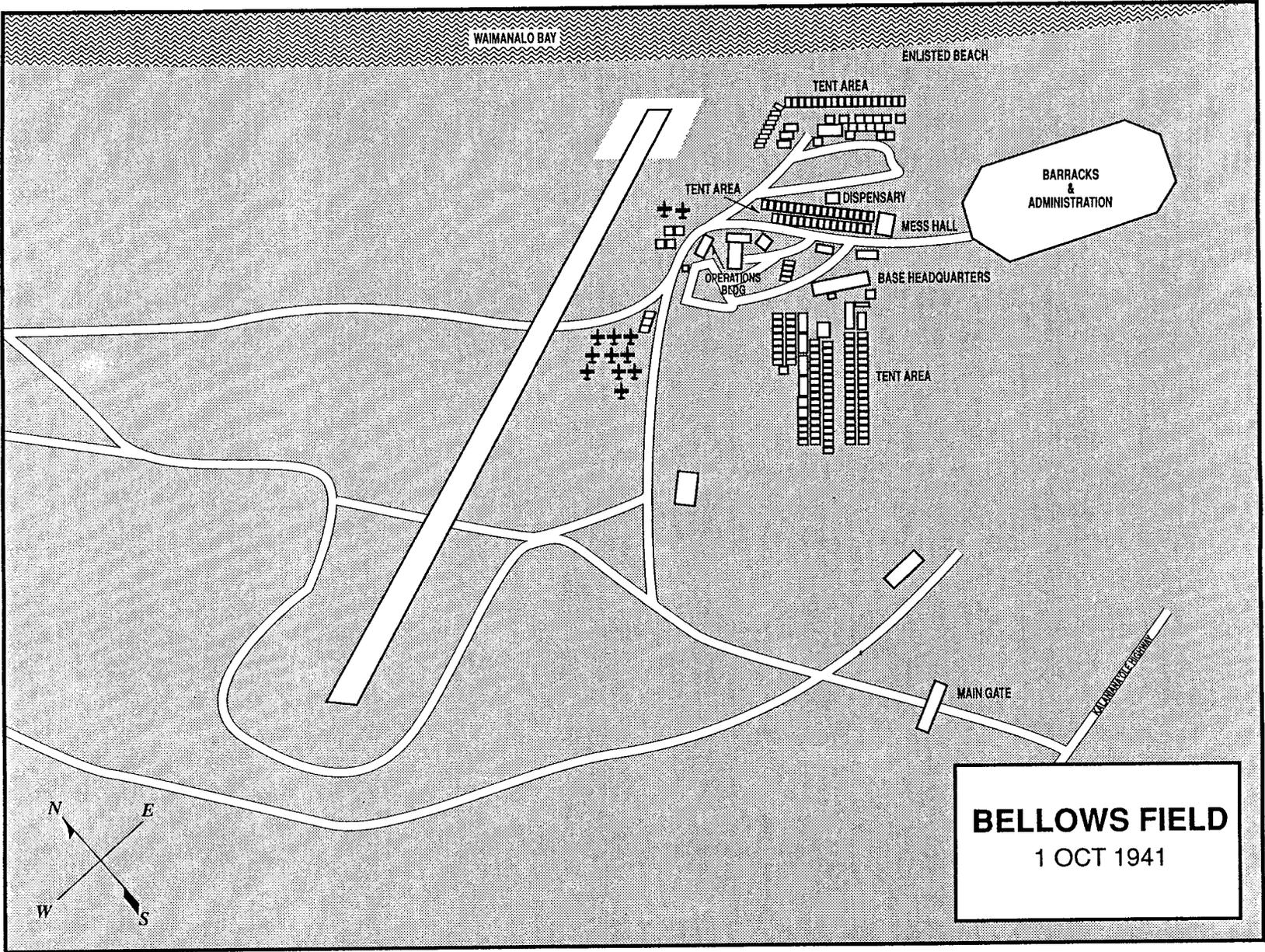
fatigue duties at Bellows Field during the summer and fall of 1941. With pick-and-shovel labor, they moved tons of coral to level off several shoulders of land for field operations. The squadron's communications personnel laid several miles of telephone wire for the base system, but grass cutters continually severed these wires, adding to the headaches of the communicators. The primary function of the 86th Observation Squadron, however, was air-ground liaison work, and assigned personnel received numerous commendations for their cooperation and spirit in supporting the ground forces' maneuvers. On 14 June 1941, seven new officers reported to the squadron for observation training, to fill a requirement for trained observers to participate in forthcoming maneuvers. Several squadron members, on the other hand, went to Wheeler Field for their training at radio, photography, and clerical schools, while others attended the mechanics and armament schools at Hickam Field.²⁶

On 22 July 1941, Bellows Field became a separate permanent military post under the jurisdiction of the Commanding General, Hawaiian Department; and Wheeler Field was relieved of any further responsibility for its operation. Three days later, on 25 July, Colonel Andrews' official title changed from camp commander to base commanding officer.²⁷

An accelerated construction program began. A contractor moved in south of the tent billeting area to build two-story wooden barracks around a large oval area, with orderly rooms and supply and other buildings located in the center of that oval. Bachelor officer quarters and many other structures seemed to spring up overnight, and work also started on a new and bigger runway. The barracks facilities were finished first, and assigned personnel moved into them in the fall of 1941. During the first week of December, a civilian contractor began work on a project to install a sanitary system. Using a trenching



An O-47B aircraft of the 86th Observation Squadron at Bellows Field in 1941 (William E. Simshauser)



machine to dig into the sandy soil, he soon had excavations about 24 inches wide and 4 feet deep running in various directions in the bivouac area. These trenches later saved many lives.²⁸

While all this construction work was going on, a major mission change occurred in August 1941 when the Hawaiian Air Force established a Casual Training Camp at Bellows to provide basic training for newly arrived casualties (recruits). Ten enlisted men from Hickam and ten from Wheeler, assigned to the Casual Detachment to run the training camp, were attached to the 86th Observation Squadron for administration, quarters, and rations. In addition, eight more enlisted personnel from Hickam reported to Bellows as recruit instructors and were attached to the 86th. By 27 September, the Casual Detachment had a strength of about 500 men, with frequent turnovers due to trained personnel being assigned from the camp to permanent duty stations and new recruits arriving in their place.²⁹

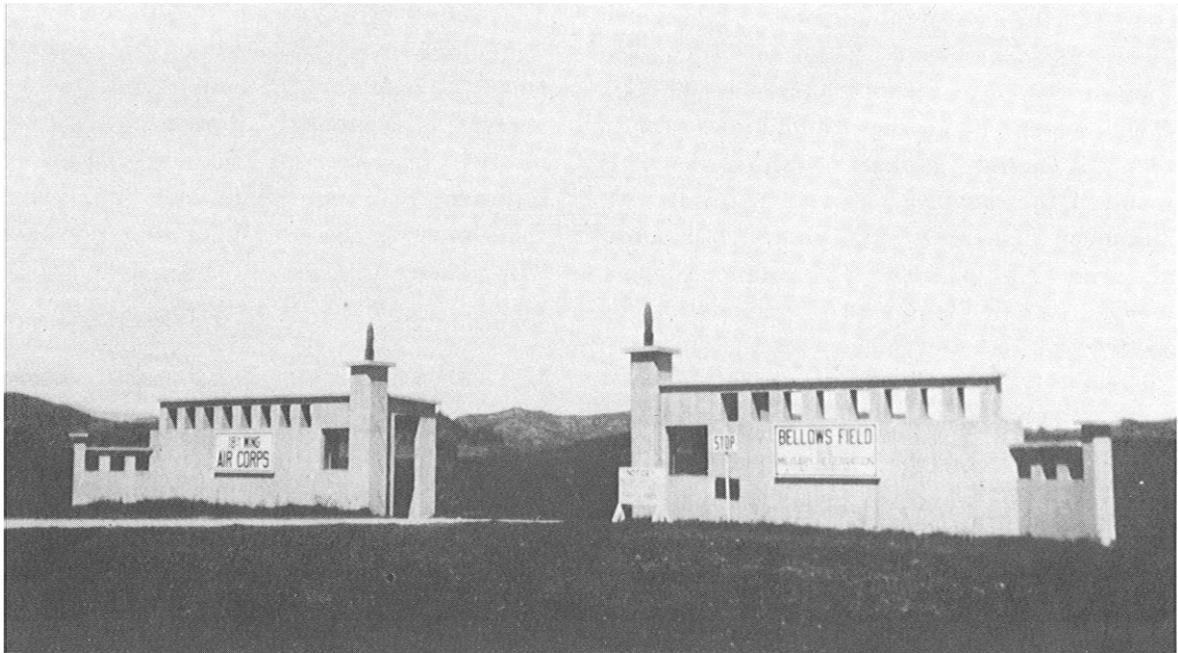
Col William E. Farthing became Bellows Field's new commanding officer on 1 September 1941 but relinquished command to Lt Col Leonard D. Weddington on 27 October. Maj Clyde K. Rich was assigned to Bellows on 15 September 1941 and named base executive officer, base operations officer, and base materiel officer. Also in September, Mrs. Catherine Brush became the first female civil service employee at Bellows Field when she assumed her duties as secretary to the commanding officer.³⁰

Through all these changes, the 86th Observation Squadron continued to operate as the only permanent unit assigned to Bellows Field. It substantially increased in size, beginning on 13 September 1941 with

the assignment of 25 second lieutenants, including Millard C. Shibley, Jr. Two months later, on 17 November, Lieutenant Shibley was on a routine patrol mission as the pilot of O-47B aircraft No. 39-84, which crashed into the sea one-half mile off Bellows shortly after takeoff. When the plane hit the water, it broke in two, instantly killing Lieutenant Shibley and his observer, Warren French of Swampscott, Massachusetts. This was the first fatal air crash for the squadron since its activation on 1 February 1940. Bellows' main gate, which led directly to the tent area at the time, was later named in Lieutenant Shibley's honor.³¹

In addition to military operations, the 86th also supported the local community in numerous ways. In November 1941, for example, an O-49 light observation plane piloted by 1st Lt Richard L. Allen transported Santa Claus to the polo field at Kapiolani Park in Waikiki, where a crowd of wide-eyed youngsters waited anxiously to see Santa arrive in an airplane. This was the first time Santa had been brought by air to the children of Honolulu.³²

In late November, when the commanding general of the Hawaiian Department ordered Alert One to guard against sabotage, Colonel Weddington had his trained 50-man ground defense unit take their assigned positions and issued what little ammunition was available at Bellows. This depleted the regular guard force, however, so the ground defense unit reorganized and assumed post guard responsibilities. The aircraft at Bellows were parked together in one place, not because of Alert One but as a routine practice due to limited space.³³



Above, the main gate at Bellows Field, named in honor of 2d Lt Millard C. Shibley, Jr., who died in an O-47B plane crash on 17 November 1941.

Below, one of two O-49 aircraft at Bellows Field in 1941. This was the type of plane used to bring Santa Claus by air to the children of Honolulu for the first time in November 1941. (John J. Lennon)



Earlier, beginning on 7 November 1941, personnel and P-40s of the 44th Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor) at Wheeler Field began deploying to Bellows for a month's aerial gunnery training. This involved the squadron's twelve P-40 aircraft and a complement of crew chiefs, assistants, armorers, radio men, and other support troops. They flew a practice mission on Saturday, 6 December, but did not immediately refuel their aircraft afterward. This was in line with the normal practice of the various squadrons conducting aerial gunnery training at Bellows. When they finished on a Saturday afternoon, they usually waited until Sunday to refuel their airplanes. Also, during the week, they normally cleaned the guns on the aircraft and armed them the next morning when they were ready to go; however, on Saturday afternoons, they removed the guns from the aircraft to do a more thorough job of cleaning. Consequently, on 7 December 1941, the P-40s at Bellows were parked wing-to-wing, low on fuel, and some had their guns removed.³⁴

On Saturday evening, 6 December, the week-long exercise was completed. This meant a reduction of restrictions, with 50 percent of personnel allowed passes. Most of the 44th Pursuit Squadron's officers returned to their home base at Wheeler Field to enjoy the remainder of the weekend with their families. Only four of the officers remained at Bellows.³⁵

Howard Taylor, who was the Provost Sergeant and responsible for ground defense of Bellows recalled: "We had .50-calibre, .30-calibre, and 20-mm artillery for perimeter overhead defense, and heavy artillery on beaches. On Saturday, 6 December, we were told to take down all arms and lock [them] in [the] Armory and take our passes to Honolulu." Cpl Clarence McKinley of the Signal Section was one of the many who went to town on pass Saturday night. He returned to Bellows about two o'clock in the morning on Sunday, 7 December, and went to bed in his tent.³⁶