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## Article Title: I Remember Pearl Harbor: A Nebraska Army Air Force Officer in the Pacific Theatre During World War II

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Article Summary: Gray recounts his experiences from enrollment in ROTC at the University of Nebraska in 1937 until he was discharged in 1946. Stationed at Hickam Field, he witnessed the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

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Appendix: letter of commendation for "splendid spirit and high courage" demonstrated by Gray on Pearl Harbor Day, Decorations Board report recommending that a Bronze Star Medal be awarded to Gray for meritorious service on Pearl Harbor Day



*2nd Lieutenant Denver Gray, January, 1942.*

# I Remember Pearl Harbor: A Nebraska Army Air Force Officer in the Pacific Theatre During World War II

BY DENVER D. GRAY

Lieutenant Colonel, United States Air Force (Retired)

When asked to talk about my service in World War II, I can usually expect the question, "Do you remember Pearl Harbor?" My answer naturally is "Yes," for how could a 2nd lieutenant in the United States Army Air Force stationed at Hickam Field adjacent to Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, ever forget? But momentous as the events at Pearl Harbor certainly are, memories of my World War II years with the military are not restricted to that awesome day.

In the spring of 1937, my sophomore year at Nebraska University, Lauren D. Lampert, a fellow student, and I walked up the rickety steps to the second floor Reserve Officers' Training Corps office in Nebraska Hall and took the oath "to defend the country . . . so help me God." We were enrolling in advanced military training for our junior and senior years. Lampert looked at me after the swearing-in ceremony and said, "I'm not sure this is the right thing to do." I, too, sobered by the oath, responded, "Time will tell." Fighting was then taking place in Ethiopia as Italy invaded that country. Hitler and Mussolini were in the news. But that seemed a long way off.

The commander of the Nebraska ROTC was Colonel W. H. Oury, a World War I veteran and a close friend of General John J. Pershing. I was in a newly organized, motorized field artillery unit on the Nebraska University campus.

All freshmen and sophomores were required to take basic or primary ROTC, while advanced was optional. Advanced ROTC, which led to a second lieutenant's commission in the senior year, was unpopular with most students, who considered it a "pipe" course requiring a minimum of library time. Advanced students often required persuasion before they would enroll, and our quota was not filled.

Field artillery, for me, was difficult, since it required a great deal of mathematics in gunnery courses. Members of our class who were

engineers or math-oriented found it easy. I was not a star—only a respectable B student.

Wallace (Wally) J. Chaloupka, a roommate, despised ROTC, and did not take the advanced course. A highlight of his sophomore year was allowing his uniform to mold after getting it soaked in the rain. He had a field day riding me on drill days, when I had to wear boots and spurs. Wally was drafted and served in the bitter ground fighting of the cold Italian campaign (1943-1944). Tom King, another roommate, shared in roasting me and my military training, and accused me of “starting future wars.”

My first summer camp in 1938 was at Camp Funston (Fort Riley), Kansas, a wooden-barracks, temporary-training facility remaining from World War I. It was especially remembered because troops were decimated there in the influenza epidemic of 1917-1918. I was assigned to tent No. 5 with classmates John Loos, Alvin Christensen, Melvin Glantz, and Wilson Andrews. We were not a spit-and-polish group, never winning the competition for neatness. Loos was our “brain,” a 1939 candidate for Rhodes scholar. He later earned a PhD degree and is now chairman of the History Department at Louisiana State University. Alvin Christensen had no desire to be a military man and is now a large landowner and prominent agricultural leader in Dannebrog, Nebraska. However, he became the most decorated and publicized of our quintet in tent 5 during World War II, serving with a field artillery battery at El Guetler Valley in the North Africa campaign. He was pictured in the May 17, 1943, *Life* magazine (page 17) and was awarded the Silver Star for gallantry. Melvin Glantz made the military a career, combining it with farming. He served for a number of years as head of Selective Service in Texas. Wilson Andrews, an athlete who excelled in Big 6 competition, made the military a career.

Cadet uniforms were regular Army issue except for an added orange hat band. Junction City, almost adjacent to Fort Riley, was an old Army town dating from the 1850s, and soldiers were welcome to its watering places—some of them illegal. Northeast of Fort Riley was Manhattan, home of Kansas State University, a more appealing area to student cadets. However, “dog faces” (soldiers) were not well accepted by the community. We were avoided and once were scorned and jeered. We did not return to Manhattan when in uniform.

Over the Fourth of July we drove to Kansas City in Christensen’s auto to see Thomas (Boss) Pendergast’s town. In the picture rooms at the World War I Memorial, a museum south of the Union Railroad Station, the soldiers who died looked so young to us. They would have been the same age as my father, who had been exempt from World War I, since he was farming. We saw the town. It was wide open. Nude waitresses served us in the Chesterfield Club. We had planned to stay several days,

but by noon the second day we were broke and heading back to Riley where we could eat Army rations—free.

Fort Riley was home for the US cavalry. The 1936 Olympic team trained there in both the indoor and outdoor facilities. Along the Kaw River were riding trails with jumps, slides on creek embankments, and winding paths over the bluffs. Off-duty riding for recreation, both in columns and individually, was a pure delight. It's a shame the era of horses has passed.

For the first and only time I was given an Army haircut (head shave)—a disaster. My appearance was not aesthetic; it was worse when it began to grow out. When first assigned to KP (kitchen police), I splashed lye in my eye and had my only ride in a jolting Army ambulance to the post hospital. The doctor washed my eye and had me back in the kitchen in record time; he may have felt I was avoiding KP—"goofing off."

All battery positions were rotated. A cadet might be on KP one day, perhaps commander the next. This device was designed to determine the capabilities of the cadet. Prior to the day I was named battery commander, a notice on the bulletin board reduced speed on the public highway (US 40 ran through the reservation) from 20 to 15 miles per hour. I missed reading about the change and directed the driver of the command car to proceed at 20. Command instructor Major R. G. Barkalow, in the back seat, changed my order to 15 miles. When he asked me if I had read of the change, I replied that I had missed it. That incident, in my opinion, prevented my later promotion. My highest cadet rank was first lieutenant—respectable enough, but it predicted that I would become no future Pershing or Napoleon.

Fort Riley's Flint Hills—rolling prairies with limestone outcropping over much of the post—are hot in summer. Frequent rains meant alternately raising and lowering the sides of our tents and the flaps. Showers and bath facilities in a wooden building were at the bottom of the tent row with a wooden building for food facilities at the top of the row. Thus No. 5 tent had the advantage of being midway between necessary facilities. A cadet earned \$21 a month, the same as a Regular Army private, with a deduction for the Old Soldiers' Home. Haircuts were 20 cents, post movies 15 cents, and neither barber nor theatre operator became wealthy from our trade. A Junction City photographer took our pictures, which were sold in postcard size.

Not all of the cadets finished the summer training—disciplinary action and illnesses took their toll. All in all, Riley is a pleasant memory and was an excellent learning experience. Regular instructor Major Barkalow, Major William R. Philip, and Captain William R. Grove were talented leaders. I recall a couple of things from their teachings: They said we were better trained than the new second lieutenants in the field artillery in World War I, which was hard for me to believe. They told us

that if moving forward in combat and enemy fire killed or wounded soldiers, we should, as leaders, keep the column moving and leave casualties to the medics—a sobering thought.

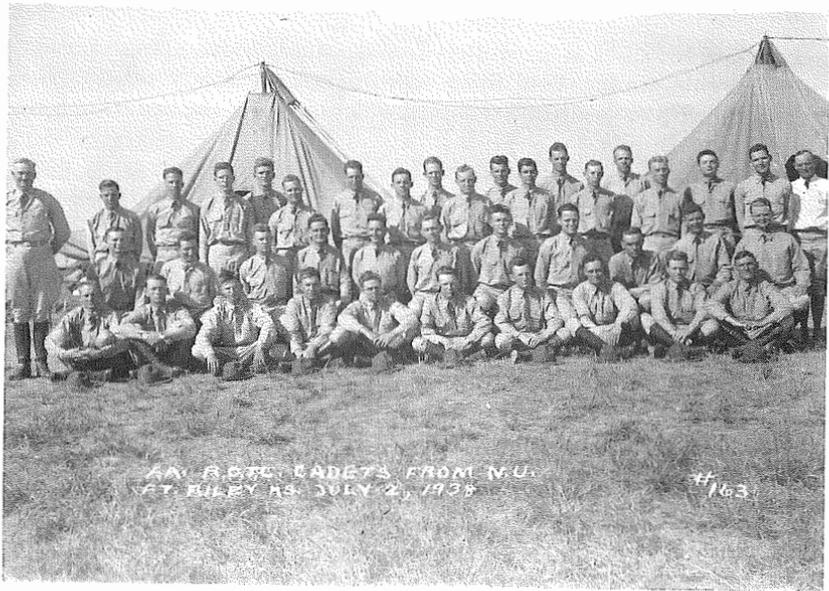
The last semester of my senior year at Nebraska University I audited a course in geology that entailed a bus trip through the Sandhills of Nebraska, the Badlands of South Dakota, the Black Hills, eastern Wyoming, and back down the North Platte Valley—an interesting trip headed by Dr. George E. Condra, acknowledged geological leader of the Great Plains. While on the trip, I was bothered with a sore throat. Upon return I learned that my tonsils were slightly inflamed, and that it might be well to have them removed. Upon graduation June 3, I had a week's leave before reporting for two weeks of active duty at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. The thought occurred to me that the period was long enough to get rid of my tonsils. I went to our family physician, Dr. Leonard Daniel Deiter in Otoe, Nebraska, unaware of what I was getting into. I was told to sit in a dentist-type chair, given some shots, and out came my tonsils. Then he said, "Your adenoids look like grapes. Should I take them out?" I could only grunt. So out came my adenoids.

I was taken to a bed and told to chew Aspergum. I couldn't and the nurse scoffed that a younger child the day before had eaten ice cream following the same ordeal. I lay for a week saying nothing, eating nothing. John Loos and Alvin Christensen picked me up to go to Fort Des Moines. I wondered about passing the physical examination. The doctor examining my throat said it looked red but passed me; I recovered while on active duty.

During recovery I hadn't gone to a barber, so I reported as soon as possible and asked for the usual Army trim. The barber asked if I wanted hair oil. Unsure, never having used it, I responded yes. When I went outside in the heat, the oil ran down my neck, into my eyes, and soiled my Army overseas cap. I couldn't get to a shower quickly enough to get rid of my oil job.

Since I was going back to graduate school in the fall at Nebraska University, I applied and received a second week of active duty in early July with the Salina (Kansas) Field Artillery Battery during the two-week summer encampment at Fort Riley. I experienced a different atmosphere as a commissioned officer than I did as a cadet. Most National Guard officers were older, and an orderly barred me when I tried to enter the officers' mess for lunch. I informed him as kindly as I could that I was an officer and was quartered in an individual officer's tent.

The youngest of the battery officers, I was first to fire on the 75 millimeter firing range. I was nervous. My first artillery shell exploded well beyond the target. I reduced the range and fired. The shell fell short. I moved up between the two settings. The round looked close, and I repeated the order. A direct hit! The battery commander ordered



*ROTC cadets from NU at Ft. Riley, Kansas, July 2, 1938. Gray is fifth from right, second row. . . . (Below) ROTC B Battery, Ft. Riley, Kansas, July 19, 1938, firing French 75 millimeter field artillery.*



a cease fire. My stock as an artillery man zoomed. Meyers (Bud) Cather from Lincoln was at Fort Riley serving as an infantry officer. For recreation we were soon back riding cavalry horses in the beautiful Kaw Valley.

The National Guard band marched in front of the tents each morning playing "Roll Out the Barrel" instead of reveille by trumpet. I rolled myself out of bed.

After graduating in June, 1939, from Nebraska University, having completed most work on a masters degree in agricultural economics, I joined Travelers Insurance Company in Omaha on April 1, 1940, where Randall Porter played a key part in my business training. Over coffee one day Porter told me of his Army experiences in World War I. He had an aversion to my frequent response of "sir," a sore point with him, I suppose, because of some World War I experience. It had become second nature to me in the military to respond with "sir" in place of "what" or "say that again." I told him I'd eliminate it.

I learned early about the respective clout of Army and Navy men. Loren Biggs, midshipman at Northwestern University, invited me to Chicago, where he was attending Navy ROTC School. Chicago welcomed the white-gloved, Navy-blue men with open arms. A Navy man on leave could not visit a night club without hearing "Anchors Aweigh" and offers of drinks. I told Biggs that if I had known Chicago liked uniforms, I'd have worn my Army khaki. He told me Army colors wouldn't turn them on, but Navy pizzazz would. Midshipmen were invited to debutante parties and into prominent private homes.

Considering the threat of war and that I was a commissioned second lieutenant, I had been fortunate to land a job with Travelers. Most companies would not discuss employment with me, since it was obvious I could be a short-term employee. However, Major John Rosenzweig Sr., a Travelers agent and active Army Reserve officer, took an interest in me. He helped me join Colonel Leo Crosby's Field Artillery Regiment (89th Reserve Division), an active reserve unit in Omaha. The US Reserve Officers' Association originated in Omaha after World War I.

In June, 1941, Rosenzweig, who had been called to active duty with the 7th Corps Headquarters in Omaha, told me at the Embassy Lounge at 39th and Farnam: "Gray, your ROTC class of '39 is going to be called to active duty in July, 1941. Where do you want to go?" I replied that since the call to active duty was only for one year, I'd like to go overseas, having never traveled farther away from home than Chicago. I asked, "How about the Philippines?" John responded, "Hell, you'd be in the boat 20 days to get there." I pondered awhile and said, "How about Alaska?"

"You'd freeze your rear up there, but it is beautiful," the Major

replied. "I've got the place. It's only five days on the boat and the weather's warm—Hawaii." I responded, "If something shows up, that sounds good to me." I filled out a questionnaire sent to reservists on July 8, 1941, listing Alaska and Hawaii as choices for an overseas assignment.

After joining Travelers I finished my thesis for an MA in economics. The oral examination was in Lincoln July 24, 1941. Since formal graduation was not until February, 1942, I did not participate in graduation exercises. The day I returned to Omaha after taking exams, I received a War Department red-bordered letter informing 2nd Lieutenant Denver D. Gray, 03794137, to report August 7, 1941, to Fort Omaha for one year of active duty with the Army Air Corps on a non-flying status with the Hawaiian Department of the War Department.

In August at Fort Omaha we stood naked at the medical detachment as attendants took our height, weight, and blood, and urine samples. We bent over for an examination for hemorrhoids. A doctor jabbed a finger along side our scrotums while we coughed to determine if we had hernias. Candidates with either hemorrhoids or hernias were rejected for service.

The universal question, "Where are you going?" drew responses such as "Camp Claiborne, Louisiana; Fort Hood, Texas; Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri." None sounded like sand and surf. Finally someone asked, "Gray, where are you going?" I answered quietly, "Hawaii." Several responded, "Gray, you SOB, how did you get that assignment?" I said somewhat inaccurately, "It was the roll of the dice. I'm worried about getting too much sun." Those of us bound for Hawaii stayed in Omaha from August 7 to October 1, when we were ordered to Fort Mason, San Francisco, California, for departure by ship. To get there, my parents, sister, brother-in-law (Mr. and Mrs. Fred Gray, Mr. and Mrs. Joe Dowding), and I took an auto trip through the scenic Northwest and down the coast to San Francisco, arriving there October 10. I was advised that sailing could be delayed a week. My family proceeded with their trip, since my departure was uncertain.

I phoned Ensign Loren Biggs, whom I had visited in Chicago, then stationed at Treasure Island, site of the 1939 World's Fair. I had known Loren in both undergraduate and graduate school at Lincoln, and our fathers were friends. He offered to come to the Canterbury Hotel where I was staying, since my orders were changed so that I would sail alone on the *USS St. Mihiel* the next day, October 11. When Ensign Biggs arrived, he suggested that we go to Fort Mason to inspect the ship where it was docked. Military police said we could not board the *St. Mihiel*, but Biggs spotted Ensign Gordon R. Bishop, deck officer, who allowed us to board. The ship, a mothballed World War I transport, was not fancy.

Since my time had been cut short and it was my first visit to the west

coast, Biggs wanted to "show me the town." Bishop, a friend of Biggs from midshipman days in Chicago, joined us. Others in our party were 2nd Lieutenants Herbert V. Dow, James Diers, and Philip B. Deily. Biggs knew his way around the city. We did all the things expected of newcomers—cable cars, Fisherman's Wharf, Top of the Mark, Chinatown, shows at several bars. One that stands out is Charlie Low's "Forbidden City," where we had a group picture taken. Other Omahans who were visiting in San Francisco sent the story to the *Omaha World-Herald*, which printed it. Randall Porter of the Travelers in Omaha wrote me that he had not bid me farewell to become a dead hero—nor to be a night club hero.

During the course of the evening there was the usual farewell banter. My friends offered endless advice, since I was leaving the next day. Biggs said that he had access to the 12th Naval District Intelligence which knew where all the Japanese ships were, and the Navy hoped they would start something so they could blast them out of the ocean. Others assured me that the ocean between San Francisco and Honolulu was not too wide to swim if the boat sank. Bishop, a member of the *St. Mihiel* crew, insisted that I was going on a *ship*, not a *boat*.

When I went up the gang plank on October 11, 1941, I noticed a tanker about a city block's distance from our ship. I was told it was a Japanese oil tanker, docked there since July, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt embargoed oil shipments to Japan. I was disappointed that fog covered the Golden Gate bridge as we sailed under it. I had crossed it by auto just the day before.

Dinner was served shortly after we were out to sea. We were assigned to tables of four. Two of my partners, 2nd Lieutenants Irving S. Harrell Jr. and Frank M. Burt, both ordnance officers and recent graduates of Georgia Tech with strong Southern accents, immediately wanted to know my feelings on the Civil War. They didn't get a rise, since my forebears were making peace with the Indians and trying to raise food for the family in Nebraska Territory in the 1860s. I didn't know then that the ocean land swells close to the shore cause the ship to roll and toss excessively. The first meal was New Zealand lamb with green mint jelly. It didn't appeal to me on the rolling ship, nor does lamb appeal to me even now—but I did not get seasick.

Ten Army nurses were passengers with a shipload of 98 men. Naturally, they were popular.

As a 2nd lieutenant with no seniority, I was not assigned a cabin but instead to a spot below deck and rearward over the bent propeller shaft, which clanked on each revolution. Four of us were assigned hammock-type cots. One huge ex-football player cabin mate was from Texas A & M University. We could not fit into our quarters unless we took turns getting into a hammock and lying down. After we were under way,



*Gray and friends at Charlie Low's "Forbidden City" Chinese supper club, San Francisco, October 10, 1941, before sailing for Hawaii: 2nd Lieutenant Herbert V. Dow (left), 2nd Lieutenant Philip B. Deily, 2nd Lieutenant Billy J. Diers, Ensign Gordon R. Bishop, 2nd Lieutenant Denver D. Gray, and Ensign Loren R. Biggs.*



*Gray and mother, Canterbury Hotel, San Francisco, October, 1941.*

Ensign Gordon R. Bishop of Seattle looked me up. He saw the tight quarters, called me aside, and said, "Keep your gear separate and I'll send for you later." A sailor soon appeared and asked me to follow him to a top-level, double-bed, walnut-paneled cabin occupied by an Army major. I introduced myself and took the remaining bed. He never questioned my presence, nor did I tell him why I was there.

For the five-day trip I spent most of the time with Ensign Bishop, going with him on watch and on his duty routine. I, a Midwestern landlubber, saw the ship from top to bottom. My roommate probably considered me a mystery, since I was seldom present. I could tell our location from storm data and other information I learned from Bishop. We had a lot of time to spin stories on our backgrounds. Bishop, a talented singer from Seattle, had promise of a professional career in music. While a midshipman, he had become engaged to a socialite Chicago girl, a relationship that concerned him. He related his concerns to me in full detail—religion being one factor.

On October 16, 1941, as we rounded Diamond Head on Oahu, I bumped into a greasy ship cable. Compelled to clean my hat before debarking, I missed some of the arrival sights, but the greenery, mountains, and humid weather were exciting eye-openers which remain in the memory of a Midwesterner.

When the ship docked, we got the full arrival treatment. A band played as we came down the gangplank, and we were kissed by pretty native girls, who placed flowered leis around our necks. I was convinced this must be a coveted assignment. John Rosenzweig in Omaha hadn't briefed me on this sort of entry. Each incoming Army Air Corps officer was driven to Hickam Field in a Ford convertible. Every flying officer who had graduated from flying school at Randolph Field, Texas, it appeared, immediately bought a convertible Ford with the aid of a Texas bank loan. Silver wings meant class in the air and on the ground. My escort was Lt. Elmer (Soybean) Nelson from Illinois, whom I got to know well.

At Hickam Field we were assembled on the lanai (patio) at the Officers' Club, overlooking the entrance to Pearl Harbor, adjacent to Hickam, and separated only by a cyclone link fence. Each officer filled out a sheet to aid in the assignment to air bases in the Hawaiian Department. Before completing the form, I asked a master sergeant what I had to do to stay at Hickam. I knew nothing about the other bases, but I could see that Hickam was the show place of the Pacific—red-clay tile roofs, boulevards, buff-painted buildings, and flowers blooming everywhere. I told him my background—the NU College of Agriculture with a master's degree in economics. He said Hickam had a plant nursery, while none of the other fields had such facilities. I put "nurseries" as one of my preferences.

When assignments were announced, I stayed at Hickam. To my inquiring friends who were assigned to Bellows and Wheeler Fields, I explained, tongue in cheek, that I had special talents and skills that were critically needed on the larger base. I never got close to the nursery for duty.

While reporting to Colonel William L. Boyd, commander of the 17th Air Base Group, I was quizzed about my background, especially in sports. I had lettered in basketball in high school and played in college intramurals (basketball and tennis). He wanted the 17th Air Base Group to win the base basketball championship over the "Blue Goose," the emblem for the 11th Heavy Bomb Group commanded by Colonel Blondie Saunders, as well as over the 5th Heavy Bomb Group. My assignment would be with headquarters squadron under 1st Lieutenant Howard Cooper. I also had other duties usually assigned junior officers: custodian of squadron fund, chemical officer, etc. Besides Commander Cooper, the squadron staff consisted of 1st Lieutenant Malcolm J. Brumwell, 1st Lieutenant Donovan D. Smart, and myself. Lieutenant Howard F. Cooper was a native Hawaiian and a graduate of Hawaii University. Lieutenant Brumwell, a professor of biology at Kansas University, was originally from the Dakotas. Smart was a heavyweight boxer and full back of the North Dakota University football team.

Colonel Augustine F. (Gus) Shea, deputy group commander, supplied me with these bits of wisdom when I reported to him: (1) Be seen at the Officers' Club but refrain from excessive drinking where you might be observed by superiors. (2) Remember, you are here to serve your superiors. He illustrated with this story: A cavalry 2nd lieutenant who reported to the Colonel stated, "I think we'll get along fine." The Colonel replied, "You're damn right—you will do the getting."

I had a total of six airmen in my unit. I looked after the squadron's dirty laundry and supplies, which included more typewriters than rifles, pistols, or helmets. We had one water-cooled World War I machine gun with ground-mount tripod. My job required a lot of signing and processing of forms. But my most important duty was as assistant coach to a basketball team we hoped would be a winner. Lieutenant Smart, the head coach, and I could get any airman off duty for basketball practice or games. One weekend in November we used two C-47 (DC-3) Army Air Corps planes to fly to Hilo (350 miles) for the weekend to play the Hilo National Guard team. We also played teams from Pearl Harbor and Schofield Barracks. Our high school and college star players were able to win against less talented opposition. We used a short, fast five for man-to-man defense and a tall five for zone defense, substituting teams by quarters.

A pleasant routine was emerging—busy, but not rushed. My

responsibilities were well defined: duty roster of the officers, occasional supervision of calisthenics, some barracks inspections, and surprise "short arm" inspections. We had one drill in which we threw live hand grenades, and we spent one Sunday firing 30.06 Springfield rifles. I had a good rapport with fellow officers, though I was the youngest and most junior in rank. The young airmen, a bright group, were from every state, with a good representation from Pennsylvania.

One evening at 4 o'clock I was showering at the bachelor officers' wooden temporary barracks (BOQ-5 Rm 4) when a siren went off. I hadn't heard one before and thought it announced a fire. Lieutenant Brumwell, concerned that I wasn't at the orderly room, phoned me. The siren signaled an anti-sabotage alert, and I was to report for duty immediately. Since I was junior officer, my job was to stay on duty at headquarters all night. There was deep suspicion of the Japanese long before December 7, 1941. I had plenty of time to read the Master Plan to counteract sabotage. There was a needless concern that Japanese-Americans on the islands might attempt to cut communications, disable airplanes on the ground, or wreck installations. We patrolled the airfield boundaries and had guards on planes. The alert also meant we need not wear neckties but were required as officers to wear side arms—Colt .45 pistols with live ammunition.

The Officers' Club was beautiful—light, modern, and open. Philippine mahogany used in its construction was reported to have cost \$27,000. It was the envy of other clubs. No officer could go to the club after 7 o'clock p.m. unless in dress whites or white formal jacket. I, as well as the other newly assigned bachelor officers, didn't possess whites, but as bachelors we were required to eat at the club. Some of us felt this regulation was for the purpose of creating business and providing a solvent club for married officers to use. The tables in the dining room were set for four. Filipino house boys would bring menus to diners for each course, explain course selections, and place napkins in diners' laps. The service and food were superb.

Lieutenant Smart and I ordered white coats from the Hub, a men's store in Honolulu, but they had to be sent from the Mainland. Since they were not delivered until December 6, 1941, we were excluded from formal dinner-dances on the open-air lanai. Everything at the club was signed for with chits rather than cash. My first monthly bill exceeded my salary—\$125 for a non-flying 2nd lieutenant. The more affluent flying officers had received a 50 percent increase in their basic pay.

Our group of officers included the bulk of the four-engine B-17-trained pilots in the active Army Air Corps. It included All-American football players, college tennis champions, scholars, and other out-

standing men. The Air Corps had skimmed the elite from the campuses in the 1939-1941 era, both physically and academically. As I recall, the Air Corps took two from my Nebraska University class of 1939 out of a class of 1,000. They were both fine students and athletes.

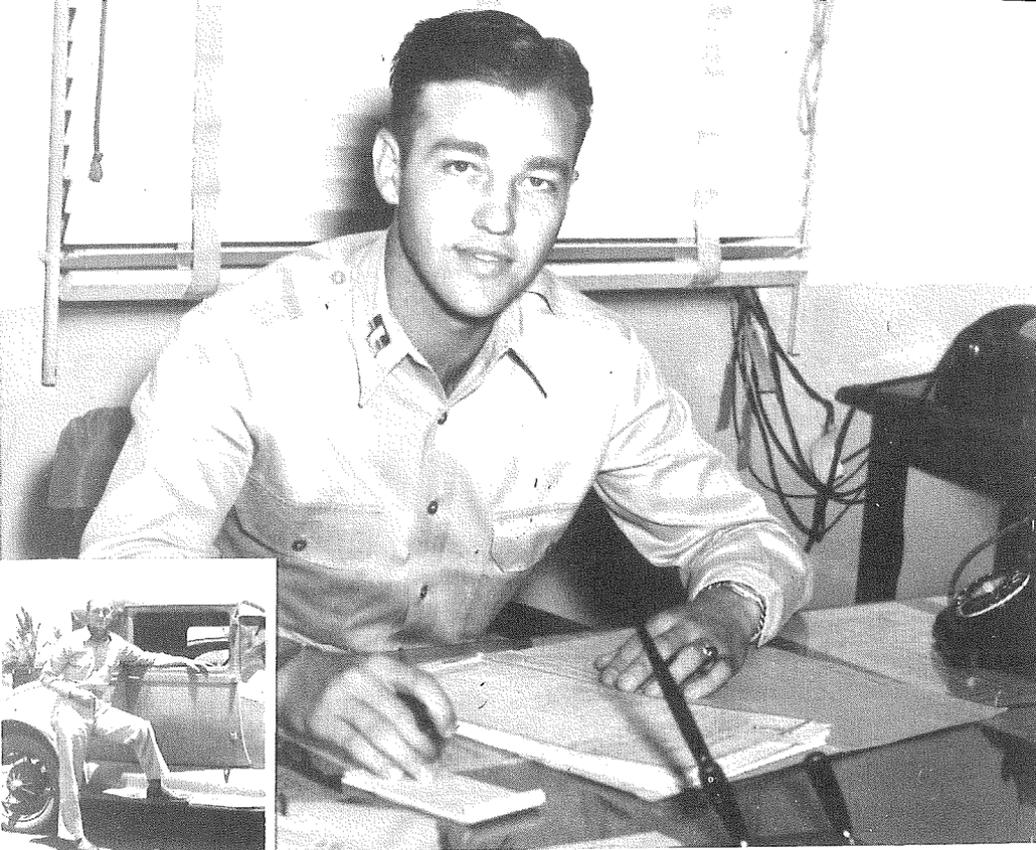
Bachelor barracks at Hickam were wooden; rooms contained steel cots. In a tropical climate it was thought necessary only to screen windows and protect them by overhanging eaves to keep out the rain. New construction on the base kept the red dust stirred, and my bed had a dusty covering each evening. I bought a roll-down wicker shade from Sears Roebuck for the windows, which partially solved the problem.

In mid-November the *Honolulu Observer* reported that the Japanese ambassador had flown in by Pan-American Clipper en route to Washington and had held an open briefing at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. I thought, vaguely, this guy could be making history, and I should attend. Something prevented my going. I learned later that he had said ominously, "I am sure that we can work out a peaceful settlement."

Several weeks after I had settled at Hickam, Ensign Bishop phoned that he was back, docked at Honolulu. I invited him out to stay with me while ashore. During his stay I got him a flight in a B-17, the \$250,000 4-engine wonder of the Army Air Corps. He told me that he had broken his engagement with his Chicago girl friend. He also mentioned that on the return voyage from Honolulu to San Francisco, the ship was filled with service personnel dependents. Their husbands and fathers in the 2nd Bomb Group had been ordered from Hickam to the Philippines to establish General Douglas MacArthur's long-range B-17 strike force. One of the names that I recall was Mrs. Colin P. Kelly Jr. and small son.

It was good news for Lieutenant Smart and me when our white coats arrived. We got dates, rented a car, and attended a dinner-dance under the stars on December 6, 1941. Our dates lived far from the base, and by the time we had taken them home and returned the car, it was perhaps 3 a.m., December 7, when we reached the barracks. Lieutenant Smart lived above me on the second floor. The barracks were a block from the Officers' Club, but a mile or so from the Headquarters Squadron orderly room in Consolidated Barracks.

Sometime after 7 a.m. on Sunday, December 7, a loud explosion blew out the wicker screen over my steel cot. Although I had not been in bed long, I got up immediately and looked out the window. Overhead pulling up from a dive was a bomber with large red circles on its wings. I saw the top of the Hawaiian Air Depot Hangar fly into the air. The rising-sun insignia told me we were under Japanese attack, though someone scoffed, "The damn Navy is practicing again." Finally we all agreed, "It's the Japs."



*Captain Gray as base adjutant, Hickam Field, 1943. . . (Inset) Gray with Model A Ford cabriolet, purchased in Hawaii. . . (Below) Damaged hangar, Hickam Field, December 7, 1941, with burning ships at Pearl Harbor in background. Photo by Base Photo Laboratory, Hickam Field, T.H.*



My heavy-lidded thoughts were, "What should I do; what could I?" Smart, still in his shorts, said, "We've got to get to the squadron." I went back to my room, and put on my uniform. One flustered officer put on the dress clothes he had worn the night before. He changed when reminded he might be shot running around in civilian clothes.

Smart, now dressed, and I took off on foot. We noticed that nozzles to underground airplane gas storage tanks were on fire. A camouflaged B-24, ready to take off on a secret photographic mission to Guam, had been hit by a bomb. I saw the detached head of a crew member roll out of the plane. Exploding bombs had broken a water main, flooding the street.

Lieutenant Smart stopped at the photo lab next to the fire station near the consolidated barracks and ordered staff members to take pictures. I later learned that some of the photographers he had sent out were killed as the air attacks continued. I proceeded to the orderly room of Wing C facing the hangars. Lieutenant Cooper had been hit by shrapnel at his residence and was unable to command. Lieutenant Brumwell, a former infantryman, had assumed command. Sergeant Major Robert L. Hey, our first sergeant, was also a former infantryman.

Concerned about broken mains and loss of water pressure, Lieutenant Brumwell and two airmen took aluminum kitchen containers to get water before the supply failed. Shortly one of the men came back with the news that Lieutenant Brumwell had been hit in the chest by machine gun fire from a strafing plane. "Why couldn't it be me rather than the Lieutenant?" he said. Lieutenant Brumwell was carried into the orderly room as the building continued to be shaken by a multitude of explosions. Smoke was everywhere and the air smelled of powder. When silence returned, dead and wounded men were everywhere, particularly in the building entrances and in the courtyard. With Lieutenant Brumwell injured, I succeeded to the command of the squadron for the moment. Lieutenant Smart, next in command, was at the photo lab.

Infantry-trained airmen were ordering all personnel to disperse to lessen the possibility of multiple deaths from a single explosion. Many who had left the buildings were killed by strafing or by bomb fragments. The concrete-reinforced barracks offered better protection. It was reported that over 500 bombs fell from Japanese bombers at 8,000 feet on the Consolidated Barracks, the most heavily bombed building on Oahu. The suddenness of the Japanese attack and the continuing series of bombing and strafing runs did not permit time for thought.

I had never felt so inadequate. Young men of 18 and airmen double my age looked to me for guidance, which I did not have to give. Following the bombing, strafing by torpedo planes took place at

Hickam. The main part of the attack on Hickam was over. Thirty percent of our squadron had become casualties, most of them wounded. Of the many casualties strewn about, few cried out for special attention, even those with fearful wounds. A calm seemed to prevail.

The wounded were carried by stretcher to the base hospital, where, I was told, they were laid on the lawn. Doctors assessed individual needs, and sent the most serious cases to Tripler Army General Hospital. With lipstick, hospital personnel marked on foreheads the severity of wounds. Volunteer civilians from Honolulu arrived.

The barracks were on fire, particularly the roofs, dictating removal of the contents—clothing, foot lockers, bedding—to an open area near the main gate. The supplies remained there for a few days before airmen could return to the damaged barracks. The rigidly constructed Consolidated Barracks had been the safest place during the bombing, as well as the most resistant to fire. The floors were reinforced concrete. The roof burned but not the third floor. Bombs hitting the roof did not shatter the concrete ceiling. However, projectiles falling at an angle struck the sides of the barracks, penetrated, and exploded on the third, second, and first floors. Two bombs fell into the courtyard between wings, where heavy casualties occurred. Other injured men lay in the entrance to our wing and in our orderly room.

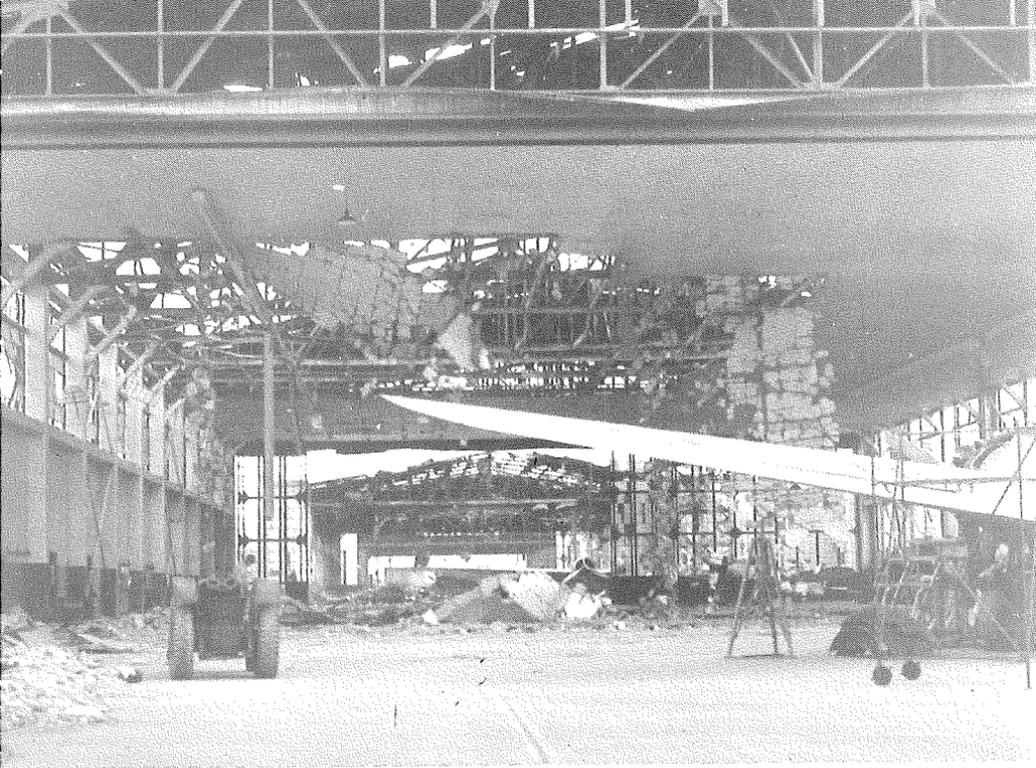
Following the attack confusion and fear prevailed. Rumors were rampant. Some were sure the Japanese would land troops, since landing strips had not been bombed. Some said General F. L. Martin, USA, commander of Hawaiian Bomber Command, had been seen on the flight line. When asked if our planes had taken off from Hickam Field, he is supposed to have replied, "I can't order them up, we are not at war." Colonel Gus Shea, who knew B-17 E bombers were due from the Mainland, was at the control tower to assist arrival. Strafing planes at Hickam came down so low he could see pilots' faces. Camouflaged B-17s under the command of Colonel Truman Landon, arriving during the height of the attack, were damaged by our own anti-aircraft fire as well as by small arms fire. Their camouflage, new to us, as was the B-17D with the tail gunner, differed from our silver B-17Cs. Anti-aircraft shells, fired from both ships and ground, exploded, showering fragments everywhere, including downtown Honolulu. One did not always know if injuries and damage to property resulted from our shell fragments, from strafing by Jap planes, or from Jap bombs and torpedoes at Pearl Harbor.

Bombs that exploded directly into the interior of the dining hall killed most of the personnel in that area. Fortunately, breakfast had been served before the attack, or the death toll would have been greater. Our mess sergeant suffered only a minor flesh wound. We all thanked God for the new "sulpha" wonder drug, used to treat the wounded.



*Hangar and plane damage at Hickam Field after December 7 attack. . . (Below)  
B-18s damaged in hangars. Photo by Base Photo Laboratory, Hickam Field, T.H.*





*Interior of damaged hangar at Hickam Field after December 7 attack . . . (Below) Interior of badly damaged Consolidated Mess Hall, Consolidated Barracks, Hickam Field, where many lives were lost.*



No national news reporters were at Hickam Field, and no news or official photos were taken during the attack. Army photographers arrived soon afterward, and some pictures were taken by a visiting soldier with his personal camera. Since the photo unit was in our squadron I received copies of all the photos.

Our barracks a shambles, the squadron relocated for the night at an essentially undamaged wooden school building near Hickam Tower. It was near the fence that separated Hickam Field and Pearl Harbor, as well as near Pearl Harbor channel. Rejoicing prevailed as friends were united, but sorrow returned as we determined those who had been injured and killed. We all grieved, some with tears and outward emotion, some with stony faces. William Payne of Travelers in Omaha had given me small Bibles from his First Christian Church in Omaha prior to my departure. Forgotten until then, I now retrieved them from my effects and distributed them.

After dark, trigger-happy soldiers, sailors, and airmen fired tracer bullets into the darkened sky at the least provocation. We had no floodlights; the electricity had been cut off. Airmen were still shaken, and no one slept. Carrier planes arriving at Ford Island with their landing lights on were fired at in the belief they were Japanese. Some planes were lost. This, of course, was not known until the next day. One of our airmen, emotionally drained, started shouting, and had to be subdued. But in the main our men acted admirably on this day "that will live in infamy."

I had been fortunate to escape uninjured. My thoughts drifted back to Ensign Biggs' assurances at San Francisco of our superiority and to the detained Japanese tanker that watched and counted us as we boarded the *St. Mihiel* at Fort Mason. As a democracy, I suppose, it was inevitable that America received the surprise first blow. Bitterness as to whether we had been "sold down the river" by our government has faded with time. Life did go on, on December 8; one day always follows another. I had been detailed to be officer of the guard for December 8 at Hickam Field, but I never served in that capacity.

Texans Elton C. Hufley and Rowland F. Halbert, the latter from Granger, were newly assigned bombardier cadets to Hickam. They wore the blue cadet uniform with wing insignia on the cap and were soon to be commissioned 2nd lieutenants. When the Japanese attack started, they had no assigned place to report. They delayed leaving the barracks, but, feeling they should "do something," went to the Consolidated Barracks area to see if they could assist. While crossing the baseball diamond, they looked up and saw bombs falling directly at them. Later, captured maps showed the Japanese believed gasoline tanks were under the baseball area. Hufley and Halbert fell to the ground as the bombs exploded close by. Halbert was struck by falling debris. He wore

his arm in a sling for awhile and of course got a Purple Heart. Hufley was not hurt but lost his cadet cap. Both crawled into a defile and waited for the attack to subside. After the attack they looked high and low for his hat because he had promised his Texas girl friend that she could have the insignia given him when he was commissioned.

Almost everyone had a rumor to tell, some of them initiated by the Japanese themselves aboard their nearby ships. Broadcasting on a Hawaiian frequency, their rumors were designed to confuse both the military and civilians. The announcer spoke flawless English to make it appear the program originated in the islands. One admonition at about 10 a.m. on December 7 was to drink no water because the Honolulu water reservoir had been poisoned. Other rumors later in the day were that San Francisco was under bombardment; that the Panama Canal had fallen to Japanese forces; and that Kansas City was the target for enemy planes. A locally concocted rumor had lady-of-the-evening volunteers giving invaluable assistance at Tripler General Hospital. Hardly true; however, some women were asked to leave military areas because they rendered therapy not on the doctor's chart.

Military life took on an entirely new cast. Since Christmas turkeys destined for Armed Force messes in the Philippines, now cut off by the Japanese, were diverted to Hawaii, we had an abundance of turkey on our menu. The squadron's Christmas dinner was served without menus, and there was no attempt to make it a festive occasion. The services had always recommended that servicemen take the maximum \$10,000 GI life insurance coverage. With limited obligations I only had \$2,000, but after December 7 I took out the remaining \$8,000 without any encouragement. Major General Willis H. Hale became commanding officer of the 7th Air Force Bomber Command.

Lieutenant Vernon Reeves related to me that in late 1940 he had sent in a magazine coupon requesting applications for flight training. At the time he was teaching and coaching in an Arizona high school. The Army informed him that he could join the March or April, 1941, class. He accepted the April offer in order to give his teaching replacement more time to prepare. It was fortunate for him, since the March class went directly to the Philippines and many were lost in the early fighting. In his class of 120 graduates, the first 40 (by alphabet) were retained as instructors; the second 40 went to fighter planes; and the last 40 to bombers. He wanted an assignment to fighters but had no choice, nor did the other graduates. He sailed in early November, 1941, on the *Lurline*, a west-coast-to-Hawaii tourist ship. The passengers in first class were older officers and civilians. There were also on board a number of well-dressed women in their thirties, who, he later learned, were prostitutes.

Lieutenant Reeves, of the 4th Reconnaissance Squadron, 11th Bomb

Group, then quartered in temporary barracks, was shaving when the Japanese came on December 7. Being a fat-cat pilot with lots of money, he had bought a 1941 Studebaker Commander in Hawaii on arrival. His first thought was of his car. He dropped his razor and rushed out to protect it. In desperation he moved it four times before parking it next to a bomb crater on the theory that lightning wouldn't strike twice in the same place. He was pleased to see that on December 8 it was still undamaged. The car was shipped to his parents in Arizona when Reeves was transferred. It was put on blocks until after the war, when Reeves retrieved it. I, too, purchased a car for transportation, a Model A Ford with soft top and rumble seat. I sold it for \$125 when I left Hawaii, making a slight profit.

Lieutenant Reeves had too little rank to fly B-17s, but flew as co-pilot for Captain Brook Allen on a search mission the afternoon of December 7. During the first attack he encountered a distraught Air Corps colonel who pleaded, "Lieutenant, do something." Reeves had no plan to present but told me he mused, "Colonel, why don't you do something, and tell me what to do?"

On May 16, 1942, Reeves was sent to the French island of New Caledonia east of Australia to fly B-17 photo missions over Guadalcanal Island prior to the Marine landing on Henderson Field in one of the first offensive moves the ground forces made against the Japanese. His plane was shot up by Japanese naval fire, and though wounded twice, he successfully crash landed. Later he joined the 19th Bomb Group, which had flown from the Philippines to Brisbane, Australia. He flew a B-17 in the Battle of Bismarck Sea.

Survivors of the *USS Arizona* were mustered at Bishop's Point, two blocks from our Officers' Club. I became acquainted with some of the survivors, numbering about 200 of a 1,400 complement. Ensign George B. Lenning later gave me a copy (dated December 20, 1941) of his testimony before Associate Justice Owen J. Roberts of the Roberts Committee investigating the disaster at Pearl Harbor. An *Arizona* officer told me he had felt fortunate getting a battleship assignment; however, it hadn't worked out that way. Now his ship had been sunk with great loss of life. During peace time he had often wondered, he said, why he was being paid for the insignificant amount of work he was doing on the ship. He now knew why. He was expendable as were thousands of other servicemen now awaiting assignment to some war zone.

For the defense of Oahu, an anti-aircraft gun from the disabled *USS California* was moved from the battleship to a position near the entrance to Hickam Field. The gun crew and some of our airmen hobnobbed at the Army small-arms firing range. Ensign Hartley (Jack) Joy of

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and I became friendly competitors firing the .30 caliber rifle (Springfield). I think the Air Corps won. Later in the firing control tower, Joy related that on graduation from Amherst College in Massachusetts he had aspired to be a pilot. When being vaccinated during the Air Corps physical examination, he fainted and failed to pass. He had been a classmate at Amherst of Jim Stewart, vice-president of Travelers, who remembered him as a football player and was in his wedding. Stewart is a valued associate and friend.

After December 7 our basketball team became scattered and never played again. Only one player was a casualty: Private James W. Pryor, a high-scoring 6-foot-1-inch forward, lost a hand.

We were soon issued gas masks, which later were issued to civilians as well. We were required to carry them. We were also issued the newer M1 Garand rifles and new World War II-style helmets. Martial law was declared, with curfews, black-outs, no evening gatherings, and only emergency night-time travel. It was thought that the large number of men congregating in the officers' mess presented a needless risk in the case of another Japanese attack. As a result, individual messes were authorized. Officers, predominantly from the 17th Group, ate separately in a residence. We had our own cook and attendants. Food was still excellent. I remember being exposed to garlic in cooking for the first time.

March 4, 1942, at 1 a.m. the Japanese bombed Oahu again. We learned later that it was done by two 4-engine sea planes that had been refueled from submarines at French Frigate Shoals below Midway Island. Due to cloud cover, the bombs landed northeast of Honolulu, causing no damage. They had flown 4,000 miles to complete the mission.

In March, Lieutenant Quinten Buchard, a friend who was a B-18 pilot, was lost on a reconnaissance flight. Radio contact was broken soon after take-off and no trace was ever found of his crew or plane. Pilots of his 4th Reconnaissance Squadron vowed the plane was jinxed, that it had been reconstructed from junked B-18s and was not airworthy. (Stanford University has a memorial scholarship in his name.) Chances of recovery were nil if a plane went down more than 15 minutes out of Hickam. Following the Pearl Harbor attack the Army Air Corps flew search missions in B-17s from Oahu. The Navy wanted to put a third pilot aboard to assist in ship recognition. This was opposed by the Army Air Corps, since it would decrease the number of its pilots in training. Pilots for four-engine planes were scarce, and it was necessary to increase their ranks.

Ensign Biggs wrote following Pearl Harbor telling me he had been assigned to convoy duty on a ship on the east coast of America. The German submarines were then sinking many of our merchant ships on their runs to Europe and on coastal shipping lanes.



*Consolidated Barracks, Hickam Field, after December 7 attack. Gray was just inside entrance on the left during the bombing.*



*Dedication of Hickam Men Gymnasium, December 7, 1941  
Colonel William C. Farnur speaking.*

In late spring, 1942, I flew with Lieutenant John (Jack) Wilson of Lincoln, in a B-17 to view the eruption of Mauna Loa on the Island of Hawaii. The eruption lasted from April 26 to May 10, 1942, spewing debris at times to a height of 400 feet in the air. I sat in the nose—the bombardier's compartment. The red glow was visible from a distance of 350 miles. The molten lava was spectacular as it flowed toward the city of Hilo. B-17s dropped bombs in the crater, hoping to divert the flow but with little effect.

With headsets on, I recall that we listened to one of President Roosevelt's fireside chats, giving the 'deteriorating status of the American position in the Philippines. The President mentioned awarding the Congressional Medal of Honor to the survivors of Captain Colin P. Kelly Jr., a pilot who had been killed in the Philippines. It immediately dawned on me that Ensign Bishop had transported Kelly's wife and son to the Mainland on the *St. Mihiel*, which had brought me to Hawaii.

When the carrier *USS Hornet* returned to Pearl Harbor after carrying the Doolittle Raid fliers close to Tokyo, Lieutenant Bert H. Hartzell of Beatrice and other B-25 crew members were assigned to the 17th Group awaiting transportation to the Mainland. They had been spare crews for the Tokyo mission.

In early May, 1942, Major General Clarence L. Tinker, USA, swagger stick and all, conducted a "classified" meeting for Hickam Field officers. He said, "Gentlemen, this area of the Pacific will be under attack by the Japanese Navy within two weeks." The 7th Air Force was then preparing to challenge the Japanese in the Battle of Midway in June. We learned after the war the Jap code was even then deciphered, and it was certain that Japan would attack. B-17s from Hickam were flown to Midway Island, where they stood ready to strike when the Navy's PBY search planes sighted the Jap fleet. The B-17s took off, dropped bombs, and returned to Hickam. Other B-17s from Hickam flew directly to the Jap fleet when Midway was under fire, not knowing if they could land and refuel. Their gas supply was insufficient to return without refueling. Fortunately, they were able to land at Midway. The high-altitude bombing was not as destructive to the Japanese fleet as the pilots had reported upon return. The altitude bombing did confuse the Japanese and this resulted in their switching from torpedoes to bombs, which was a costly error.

Early in 1942 Lieutenant James G. DeWolf of Kearney, a Nebraska University student in the latter 1930s, arrived at Hickam in a B-17 he was ferrying to Australia. A ferrying command pilot, he had previously flown a B-24 to India. As an Air Corps cadet, he was once pictured on the cover of *Saturday Evening Post*. DeWolf survived the war and had risen to the rank of lieutenant colonel by 1951. I had known him as a

fellow member of Corn Cobs, a booster organization for sports at Nebraska University.

One of our B-17 planes bombed one of our submarines in the Battle of Midway, luckily inflicting no damage. The forgiving submariners later got together with their tormenters for a party in Hawaii.

We were reinforced in early June just hours prior to the Battle of Midway by 114 Mainland planes at Hickam Field, which it seemed was covered wing tip to wing tip with planes. One could look toward Diamond Head and watch the incoming aircraft. Airfields throughout the US apparently were cleared of all available planes suitable for the battle. Four B-26s, a new two-engine plane, arrived from Dayton, Ohio. Flying the 2,000 miles over water in a twin-engine was a feat in itself. At the Hawaiian Air Depot the four planes were outfitted with torpedo racks. Their pilots were given instructions as to the location of the Japanese fleet, then sent into the Battle of Midway. Only one plane managed to return; it had been riddled by anti-aircraft fire. They had flown toward a Jap carrier at water level, released torpedoes, then pulled up and over the deck and headed for Hickam. All this happened to the B-26 crews in a four-day span—from Ohio cornfields to a fiery Pacific battle in four days.

Lieutenant Herbert N. Henckell, Cairo, Illinois, who ate at our mess, flew a B-17 at Midway. His plane was hit, and he was awarded a Silver Star medal for gallantry. Two Smith brothers, one named William, flew pilot and co-pilot in one B-17 from Hickam in the battle. Their father, Colonel Andrew (Andy) Smith, was stationed at our base hospital. All three were graduates of Michigan University, and I believe all were football players there. Midway was a great Naval victory and the turning point of the war in the Pacific Theatre. Major General Clarence L. Tinker was later lost on a mission from Midway to Wake Island. He knew the Japanese had Wake loaded with planes ready to take over Midway and wanted to destroy them on the ground. General Willis Hale succeeded him in command of 7th Air Force.

Since the Consolidated Barracks dining room was partially destroyed in the December 7 raid, the space was converted into a recreational hall. In 1942, when I was base adjutant, governors were asked to contribute state flags to be hung in the "Hickam Memorial Recreation Hall." State flags hung around the interior, and a large banner with a star for each serviceman or woman lost at Hickam covered one end of the hall. The American Legion, Daughters of the American Revolution, VFW and other groups assisted in filling our request.

Unit mess halls, one-story frame buildings, were scattered over the base, replacing the consolidated mess. All officers now wore side arms with live ammunition. Once I arrived late, as the noon meal was being

served. Before sitting down at the officers' table, I removed the clip, pointed the Colt 45 at the floor, and clicked the trigger, which was standard. A bullet in the chamber fired, creating a cloud of dust following a deafening noise. A pause—then, someone said, "Please pass the peas," and everyone started talking again. I looked neither way, but started eating. If the building is still in existence, it has a hole in the floor.

During the curfew and blackouts, dances, when held, were at the Officers' Club in the afternoon. We had an airman who had also been a professional bartender in Chicago. He was a good friend of mine. When I was at a dance, I had only to signal him, and he could produce rubber legs in the most boisterous hot-shot pilot.

The USO played a big part in maintaining troop morale. Bob Hope, Jerry Colonna, and other "big names" entertained in Hawaii on their way to forward bases in the South Pacific. Maurice Evans and Judith Anderson played Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Local Hawaiian talent provided frequent first-line amusement.

On December 17-20, 1942, I flew in an LB-30 (converted British version of B-24) on a cargo flight destined for Brisbane, Australia. The crew and plane were from the 14th Troop Carrier Squadron stationed at John Rodgers Airport (now Honolulu International Airport) and were assigned to us for records administration. We had on board Brigadier General John R. Hodge with an advance staff for the Army Division that was replacing the Marines on Guadalcanal. During the overnight stay at Noumea Tontuta, New Caledonia, we were called back in order that the plane could carry supplies to Midway for aerial strikes over Wake Island. Stoddard later was shot down over Saipan but survived a prisoner-of-war camp. Others in the crew were Lieutenant James F. Walters, co-pilot; Technical Sergeant M. C. Bell, navigator; Corporal R. G. Curtis, radio operator; and Sergeant D. D. Donetto, engineer.

Lieutenant Walters and I had hitched a ride into Noumea, where Admiral William H. Halsey maintained his headquarters. We visited the city, looked at the shops, and had dinner. We had difficulty getting an automobile back to the airfield. When we did arrive, we became lost and ended up in a tent camp with empty beds and mosquito nets. We went to sleep. Walters assured me he'd awaken early, but he didn't. In the morning I was shaken awake by a fighter pilot in whose bed I was sleeping. We borrowed a jeep to drive to the plane, boarded it in time for departure, saying as little as we could and giving the impression that we were "on the ball." We conveniently abandoned the jeep.

The plane, a Liberator B-30 (British) (B-24) flying at night above the clouds was not pressurized, and it was a cold flight. Our itinerary was:

<i>Down:</i>	<i>Take-off</i>	<i>Landed</i>	<i>GTC</i>	<i>Total Hrs</i>
Hickam to Canton	1740	0315		9:35
Canton to Nandi, Figi Islands	1120	1800		6:40
Nandi to PDG New Caledonia	1925	035		5:10
PDG to Tantuta, New Caledonia	1817	0184		1:10
 <i>Return:</i>				
Tantuta to Wallis, Samoa Island	-	-		7:17
Wallis to Canton	0250	0658		4:05
Canton to Hickam	094	0658		9:10
Gas, 167 gallon per hour	(hours) 43	(min.) 7		

This trip was my first exposure to Micronesians, who are shorter and have bushier hair than native Hawaiians. You addressed them by raising the right hand and saying "bolo," meaning "hello." The story was told on a landing strip at dusk that an airman raised his hand and said "bolo." The reply came back in a Southern accent: "Bolo, hell, you came on the same ship I did."

Lieutenant Frederick K. Koebig of Buckingham Road, Los Angeles, had been a friend of mine prior to December 7. He was originally a non-flying officer and a former employee of Aetna Insurance Company in Los Angeles. As a former Travelers employee, we had a common bond. He was handsome and rugged and I believe once the student-body president at the University of California at Los Angeles. He became aide to Major General Clarence L. Tinker, commander of the 7th Air Force.

Lieutenant Koebig and I started the air navigator course at Hickam. I had to withdraw because my commission was still technically in the field artillery. Koebig survived the "cut" and was graduated. After General Tinker was lost over Wake, Koebig became a navigator for the 11th Heavy Bomb Group and went to Guadalcanal in 1942. Prior to Christmas, 1942, he returned to Hickam with a plane requiring an overhaul and stayed awhile. While there he called his hometown sweetheart, who gave him the "Dear John"—found someone else, she said. He returned to action and was shot down within days over Rabaul, New Britain Island. I still have the Air Force navigator's watch he traded me for a circulating fan to place in his tent at Guadalcanal.

All units on Oahu were ordered to send company grade officers to Honolulu on occasion for foot-patrol duty with the Police Department. It was reported Admiral Chester W. Nimitz felt military courtesy there was lax. Each officer was ordered to give a certain number of tickets for military violations. My beat was River Street, an area frequented by ladies of the evening, where a visit cost \$3.00. My duty fell on the first day of liberty for Army combat soldiers arriving from Attu Island,

Alaska, where they repelled Japanese invaders. My time was spent keeping the lines about equal at the various establishments. Violation tickets were issued to men with a lot of stripes and service time who did not salute briskly or had ties askew, shoes unshined, or other dress infractions. Ladies of the evening were really ladies of the day, since the blackout and curfew kept both servicemen and civilians in their quarters after dark.

A test pilot for the Hawaiian Air Department once asked me, as an air officer not often in the air, to fly with him to check out an A-24 Army Air Corps dive bomber used also by the Navy. It was a two-seater with one seat behind the other. He proceeded to maneuver inside and outside loops and dives. I was able to walk steadily away upon landing, but I realized afterward that he had set me up to turn green and mess up the plane. I didn't tell him, but I was glad to be back on the ground.

In 1943 while still base adjutant, I learned of a one-month administrative inspector's course at Fort Logan, Colorado, near Denver. I was getting restless, since I had been overseas since 1941. I applied for temporary duty and was granted permission to take the course. The trip to San Francisco was on a former US banana ship. The accommodations were limited but comfortable. From the San Francisco dock, I used volunteer gray-lady transportation to get to the airport. I first flew to Omaha, landing at Offutt Field. Blinds were pulled down on landing, since the restricted B-29s were being built in this area, and the new plane was still under wraps.

The month's course at Fort Logan was a great change of pace. While at Logan I stubbed my toe on a steel cot one night while slipping in late. The toe became infected and painful and caused a limp. I was wearing a Purple Heart ribbon for Pearl Harbor and I received a lot of sympathy from people who thought my limp was the result of action. It was embarrassing. In Omaha following the course, a special dispensation was given me to take in two nights of Masonic work at the Blue Lodge Nebraska 1, AF&AM.

On returning from Omaha to San Francisco I rode the train. At the Union Pacific Railroad station at North Platte, the array of food furnished by community organizations to traveling servicemen was overwhelming and something western Nebraskans can be proud of. As a result, North Platte's reputation for generosity was spread all over the world by servicemen. While rolling across Wyoming, I stood on the vestibule at the rear of the train to watch the moon and breathe the mountain air. Shortly afterward, I broke out with a rash. Upon arrival in San Francisco, the Army doctor laughed and said I had picked up sand fleas in Wyoming.

Farewells, when I left my folks at the hotel in San Francisco in October, 1941, were emotional but brief. Farewells were said again

when I departed from Omaha in 1943 to return to the Pacific. My folks knew and I knew the war was far from over; however, this time I left home as casually as from an overnight visit. My relatives, the Suttons, took me to the railroad depot in Omaha and dropped me off. Nothing is worse than a lingering wait with loved ones at an airport or depot. I continue to feel the same way.

In San Francisco I boarded a submarine tender at Mare Island, US Navy Base at Vallejo, California. It was its maiden voyage in the Pacific. Only a few passengers were aboard, and we were spoiled with the service. Daily laundry service and excellent food were routine because submarine crews, those men whose duty is onerous while at sea, deserve something better when resting. They live aboard the tender at forward bases when submarines are being refueled or repaired.

Upon return to Hickam, my assignment was in the base inspector's office, not the adjutant's office where I previously served. The base commander was Colonel William C. Farnum, a balloon pilot.

Lieutenant Reeves, just returned to Hickam Field on leave from the 5th Air Force in Australia, told in detail how his B-17 Group destroyed every Japanese ship of a 22-ship convoy in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea in March, 1943. Reeves later received a masters degree at Columbia University, remained in the military, and at one time was an ROTC commander at Maryland University. Now an Oklahoma rancher, he and I still correspond and maintain a close friendship.

In 1941 Paul King had written Paul and Beth Gantt (his sister), former Omahans in Honolulu, telling them of my first assignment to Hawaii. Paul was associated with the dairy extension department at Hawaii University. The Gantts were gracious hosts, and I visited them frequently during my service in Hawaii. They had phoned the Kings and my parents after December 7 that I was OK—news which relieved their anxiety.

At Hickam, a transit base for servicemen moving in and out of the Pacific Theater, personnel changed daily. One of my roommates was Lieutenant Herbert V. Dow, a fellow Nebraska University graduate who later returned to the States for flight training and served in the 8th Air Force in England. Lieutenant Dow and I shared a duplex on Signor Boulevard near the Officers' Club. Due to the blackout no lights appeared at night, and windows were covered with black paper. Lights were turned off before opening doors. One night Dow turned out the lights and opened the door for a visitor. Out of the darkness came this announcement "I'm General Howard K. Read, and I'm trying to find Colonel Gus Shea's quarters." Dow replied, "I'm Lieutenant Dow, and I'll escort you to his quarters." Colonel Shea told me General Read appreciated the accommodating lieutenant and took Dow with him as

an aide when he assumed command of the 7th Air Force Bomber Command. Dow served in this capacity until General Read became commander of the 5th Air Force in Australia, then returned to the Mainland for flight training. General Read was lost on a flight over New Guinea.

At the rear of our apartment was parked a large tractor for pulling gas tanks to airfields. It required a ladder to climb into the cab. One evening Henckell and others thought it our patriotic duty to exercise the vehicle. We did so, tooling up and down streets.

At the Base Hospital I met Charles Amory, a navigator from St. Louis and New York. He brought Oswald Jacoby, the well-known bridge expert, then a Navy officer doing secret code work, to our apartment. Jacoby was an habitue of the Hickam Club, where his game was poker.

Smart, the base athletic officer, talked me into taking a jujitsu course. The instructors were competent "black beltters," and the students were mostly infantrymen who would later be instructors. I had never been exposed to such strenuous training. At a party my date was telling RAF pilot Frank Low, a British carrier flier at Pearl Harbor training with US Naval Forces, that I was taking jujitsu training. He said, "Show me what you would do if I attempted to stab you." I flipped him to the floor, and he hit a piece of furniture. Later he told me, "You bloke, you cracked my rib, and I haven't been able to sleep for a fortnight. I've had two ships sunk under me without a scratch." I apologized.

Lieutenant Jake Charters, a Golden Gloves boxer from Chicago, a handsome, fun-loving B-17 pilot, was at Hickam on December 7. Owner of a new Pontiac sports car, he was the envy of the crowd. When the 11th Bomb Group left in mid-1942 for the South Pacific, he did not get a crew but was taken as a replacement pilot. Apparently, superiors did not feel he had a serious attitude toward war. However combat proved him a fearless leader. He volunteered for dangerous B-17 night flights over a Solomon Islands area called the "Slot." With bomb bay doors open, his crew dropped fragmentation bombs to harass Jap troops in fox holes. Bombs were interspersed with beer cans that whistled, and the four propellers were set for maximum noise. He ran up mission time quickly and was returned to the Mainland. At Hickam, Admiral Nimitz questioned him on his experiences. He returned to duty in one of the early B-29 raids over Japan and was lost at sea. His name is inscribed in granite at Punch Bowl National Cemetery in Hawaii along with all members of the Air Corps lost at sea.

In 1943 the 7th Air Force was reorganized, changing to the Manning Table to gain flexibility in ground support. The old Table of Organization and Equipment set precise numbers in personnel, pay grades, promotions, and equipment, while a Manning Table set out overall numbers. The 7th Air Force could more easily assemble desired

staffing for operations such as attacking islands and establishing air bases. The bugaboo from a personnel and morale viewpoint was that promotions were made only when specific positions called for higher grades and the overall number in that grade permitted promotion. By that time the personnel pipelines were improving and transfers from the States kept Manning Tables full, particularly with field grade officers. Advancement proved to be non-existent. We now had officers who had been enlisted men at Pearl Harbor. They had returned from Officer Candidate Schools on the Mainland with rankings higher than those of officers stationed overseas who had helped send them to school.

Ensign Loren Biggs, skipper of a sub-chaser that convoyed cargo or acted as a weather ship, again docked at Bishop's Point, Hawaii. Since I had last seen him at San Francisco, he had patrolled the Atlantic shipping lanes where ship losses were high, and had served on a convoy to the Mediterranean Theater of War. I visited his ship and he spent some nights with us when on shore. He shipped out, and I did not see him until after the war at National City Bank of New York, where he handled Latin American affairs and rose to a vice-presidency. He died of leukemia at an early age, leaving a wife and three children.

After the Women's Auxiliary Corps had transferred a company to Hickam, everyone was happy; however, untoward incidents occasionally occurred. Sometime before the war a young man and his bride opened a joint banking account in the States. Disillusioned with matrimony, she cleared out, bank account and all. He vowed he would kill her if he ever caught up with her. Coincidentally, they both joined the Armed Forces, and both were sent to Hawaii. The airman was watching an outdoor movie on the base when he spotted his former wife, now a WAC, across the aisle. She also saw him. Enraged, but thinking better of his vow to kill her, he left. After further thought, he returned with mayhem still in mind. By then his ex-wife had left the theater.

Fuming, he reported to the orderly room and demanded: "Get me out of Hickam or I'll harm her." A check of the personnel records confirmed his story. He was put on the next plane with a transfer to Australia.

The University of Hawaii graduated many Infantry ROTC officers of Oriental ancestry. For fear of an identity problem while fighting the Japanese in the Pacific Theater, they were assigned to Hickam, to other bases on the Mainland or to Europe. They were good officers. Some that stand out are Lieutenant Mun Charn Wong, Lieutenant Man Hing Au, Captain Hiram Fong (former US senator from Hawaii), and Lieutenant Tom, to name only a few. I attended Mun Charn and Mew Choy's weddings and have maintained their friendship since. No acts of

sabotage by any citizen of Oriental ancestry were reported in Hawaii.

For entertainment and for troop morale, the 7th Air Force and the Navy in 1943-1944 formed athletic teams and imported famous athletes from the States. Keen competition between services filled stadiums with Navy whites, Army tans, and Marine greens. The Air Force baseball team had New York Yankees Joe DiMaggio and Joe Gordon. Our football team was loaded with college and professional stars. It was great entertainment for the thousands of servicemen who moved through Hawaii toward the battlefields of the Pacific.

George (Bus) Knight, a 1941 Nebraska University Rose Bowl team member, arrived as a pilot of a B-25, a twin-engine bomber with a French 75 millimeter nose cannon designed to knock out Japanese gun emplacements. He confided to me that while flying the 2,000 miles from San Francisco his gas supply fell so sharply due to head winds he thought he'd have to ditch at sea, but he did not tell the crew. Then he caught tail winds and flew safely to Hawaii. Whereupon, the navigator confessed his radio had malfunctioned, and he had been lost until he made radio contact and determined the proper bearing. Later Knight, while flying low over a Japanese-held island, was hit by an anti-aircraft gun, whose flower-like muzzle flash he observed. The plane rocked from the hit but was still flyable, and he made it back to an American base.

When President Franklin D. Roosevelt came to Oahu in 1944 to plan strategy with General Douglas MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz, we were called out in military formation to welcome him. He was zoomed down the ramps so fast no one could see him. Disappointed, we felt that he might at least have slowed up and waved. We were told the Secret Service cut the coconuts from the palm trees lining the streets so nuts would not fall on the President.

When John Loos, my tentmate at Fort Riley, arrived in Hawaii with the 33rd Infantry Division enroute to some front in the Pacific, he dropped in at Hickam to visit. The 33rd eventually fought in the Philippines and in Okinawa. Combat units were constantly formed in or staged through Hawaii as task forces to invade Pacific Islands, and cadres were formed to establish air bases from which to extend the land-air arm toward Japan.

In the service Kilroy\* was everywhere, listening and watching. The grapevine scuttlebutt was "keep your uniform clean and pressed and your pants and your mouth zipped up." I had "good duty," a wide

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\* Kilroy was a ubiquitous cartoon character, origin unknown, who monitored the war. Drawn by servicemen, he peered over walls with only his hands, nose, and top of his head visible. The cryptic legend below usually read, "Kilroy was here."



*Denver Gray (third from right) with friends, including Captain John (Jake) Charters (left). . . (Below left) Gray with Hawaiian girl. . . (Below right) Bob Hope on tour in the South Pacific.*



circle of friends, both military and civilian—and I was in Hawaii! But by 1944 I was weary of the long time overseas. I did not make waves but harbored the thought that some order might assign me to the Mainland. Due to the Manning Table and overages in field grade officers (major and above), I was resigned to no advancement. Flying officers were rotated to the Mainland after a number of missions, but there were no such provisions for those of us who were non-flying officers. We were viewed as museum pieces by the stream of new officers from the States who learned how long we had been there. As non-flyers we “flew desks” to make paper fly and in general were general nuisances.

In early 1944 Colonel Farnum, much to his liking, was assigned to command a task force. He asked me to join his staff. Meetings were secret and discussion was in code names, the principal one being, as I recall it, Iron and the APO 247. We had plats of unnamed islands for planning purposes, but the configuration of one island stood out distinctly as Tinian in the Mariannas, 15 miles below Saipan Island. The assault by the Army and Marines was targeted for June 6, 1944 (the same as D-Day in Europe). Colonel Farnum was assigned to the Island Command (a brigadier general slot). The combined staff of all services was under Vice Admiral Richard K. Turner of the Forward Area Command. Saipan Island was commanded by an Army general and Guam by a Navy admiral. I was assigned as acting inspector general of the island. My responsibility was POM (prior overseas movement) inspections; that is, two enlisted men and I inspected all personnel and equipment of units leaving for Tinian.

The Island Command was to arrive, I believe, in July after the island was secured by the ground forces. But our men were ordered to stay in Oahu to inspect the units that followed.

I continued to live in the same accommodations at Hickam. In June, 1944, Colonel John Sikes, Birmingham, Alabama, took an adjoining apartment. Pleasant but cool, he greeted us only when our paths crossed. It didn't bother us because colonels rarely are close to captains. B-29s began to arrive enroute to Saipan, the first advanced base from which they could operate. Any delay of a B-29 was reported personally to General H. H. (Hap) Arnold, chief of the Army Air Corps. All B-29s were under 20th Air Force Global Command, known for its high priority. In July or August a relaxed Colonel Sikes came to our apartment, relating that he was assigned to operations in the 20th Air Force and had received the film of the first B-29 raid over Japan. He had relayed the result to Washington and President Roosevelt announced it in a fireside chat. No longer burdened with secret duties, Sikes said he was tired of living under wraps and could now talk and relax. When Sikes moved on to Guam, I gave him our furniture. We no longer

needed it, since I was going to live in a tent at Tinian. Saipan fell July 9, Tinian August 1, and Guam was invaded July 21, 1944.

My two enlisted men, Staff Sergeant Charles R. Peek of Hartford, Connecticut, and Private Ralph J. Birdsey, and I arrived in Tinian on December 25, 1944. We did not leave for Tinian until December 22, 1944. Since a day is lost at the International Date Line, we nearly missed having Christmas by one day. Our tent headquarters were at the center of the island. My foot locker, shipped earlier, had been left outside in the rain; books and clothes were mildewed. With no refrigeration, food choices were now limited, though fresh steaks had been flown in for Christmas. Standing in a mess line to get a tough, chewy, cold steak impossible to cut in a mess kit, produced no Christmas spirit. My friends showed no sympathy, having been there for five months. Our headquarters were later moved to a planned camp on a hill in south Tinian. Colonel Farnum was replaced by Brigadier General Frederick W. Kimble, US Army Air Corps. A major superseded me as inspector general, and I became his assistant on the island staff.

Two nights after our arrival the Japanese struck by air, apparently from Iwo Jima Islands. The attack was concentrated on nearby Saipan, which gave us a ringside view. One plane bombed the center air field on Tinian, inflicting few casualties. The air blazed with anti-aircraft fire. We had some direct hits on Jap Zero planes, which exploded in the air. We think one Jap pilot got scared of the flak on Saipan and flew over Tinian to drop his bombs. On following nights we had numerous alerts and one other ineffectual attack. We dug slit trenches near our tents for protection when Klaxon horns sounded air raid alerts. I must admit I slept through some alerts on the theory that if we got direct hits, it was curtains either in bed or in the trench. I know I was much more comfortable in bed with mosquito net than in a damp slit trench, where I could get bruised or cut with coral while getting in and out in the dark.

Construction activity on Tinian by Seabee battalions was frantic. Their operations went on 24 hours a day. The trucks hauling coral to construct four parallel landing strips on the north end of the island were timed to arrive at intervals of seconds, and no interruptions were allowed. As soon as strips were finished, B-29s began operations against Japan. Prior to my departure on March 5, 1945, the strips were complete and 1,000 B-29 raids had been flown. The outstanding job done by the Seabees should get more recognition. On Tinian alone, the Seabees blasted and moved 12,000,000 cubic yards of hard and porous coral—equal in volume to three Boulder Dams. The material used in the airstrips would surface a two-lane highway from Washington, DC to Montreal. In August, 1945, Tinian had the world's largest operational airport with four parallel airways on North Field.

The Inspector General's office was busy. We performed inspections of all units assigned to our headquarters—ordnance, stevedores, station hospital, engineers, and other military units. Special investigation required visiting NCO and service clubs. Enlisted men were allotted two cans of beer a day, but non-drinkers were selling their beer to eager GIs, who became too boisterous. Rules were established that bottles had to be sold with caps off and consumed at the club where purchased. Officers prepared for liquor sale in Tinian before departure from Hickam. Each officer pre-purchased liquor which was shipped to Tinian. Liquor became a black market item at \$50 a fifth. I once exchanged two fifths of bourbon costing \$3.50 each for a Monell metal watch band made by a Seabee. I still treasure it.

A Navy officer (former Nebraska University swimming team member), an Army officer from Montana, and I spent our spare time diving in the coral ledges for shells. I still carry coral scars on my shins. For some reason a coral cut would not readily heal and always seemed to fester. Officers on isolated Tinian were of three categories: explorers of countryside and beaches, bridge players, and drinkers. A few could not cope with isolation and were returned to the Mainland under Section 8 (mentally not adjusted).

Production of sugar cane, a major crop prior to our occupation, had stopped. Our field artillery and bombers had completely leveled all buildings on the island during our attack. Tinian, once a town of 4,000, became a maze of concrete foundations and open-top cisterns. The Marines declared the island secure and had gone on to other assaults. Some Japanese soldiers, however, still afraid to surrender to the Yanks, remained hidden in canefields or in coral caves. They came out at night to look for food, and we set up check points in an attempt to capture them. Near our outdoor movie screen we once found evidence of Japanese having crept close enough to watch the show. Clothing left on lines at night might be taken by the Japs. Major Charlie Erb, (former quarterback on a California University Rose Bowl team) of the Island Command G-2, directed the capture of the 1,000 or so bypassed Japanese. I spent one night as officer of the guard. I made the usual night-time inspections. Later after I went to bed the sergeant shook me, "Captain, we had a Jap in the headquarters area." I didn't awaken. In the morning the sergeant related that he didn't get me up because the Jap got away. I wasn't too proud of my reaction.

Young Philippine men worked in our mess hall. Before dawn one morning one walked to the mess hall to start breakfast when a guard challenged, "Halt and be recognized." Frightened, the Filipino started to talk in a Spanish dialect and fled. The guard fired a warning shot, then killed our messboy, thinking he was Japanese. It is understandable

that the Armed Forces used few Orientals in the Pacific Theater.

The coral rock on Tinian had sharp edges and wore out a pair of GI shoes in two weeks. We normally wore short pants and short-sleeved shirts, which lasted longer. Major Carl Yost, a former heavyweight wrestler at Nebraska University and in 1944-1945 Tinian Army Quartermaster Corps officer, had a thriving business in shoes.

Major Jack Rogers, lawyer and former state legislator from Rome, Georgia, and island judge advocate, had a tent adjacent to mine. We shared the same unenclosed outdoor barrel shower and completed our toilette in our helmets. We caught rainwater for shaving as it ran off our tent. We enclosed the shower when USO entertainers Betty Hutton and Gertrude Lawrence arrived. Friendly roving goats, once the property of dispossessed farmers, stuck their heads under our tents, which were raised off the ground by wooden floors. Hogs also ran wild. The major said he was a relative of humorist Will Rogers.

The Spaniards once called Tinian "Island of Paradise." Not so in 1945. Tinian is tiny, roughly 6 by 13 miles; Saipan is 6 by 15 miles; Guam, largest of the Mariannas, is but 7 by 30 miles. The mass burial site of the 12,000 Japanese soldiers killed in taking the island had to be cyclone-fenced to protect it from wandering animals. Mosquitoes were bad. A large pile of re-treadable truck tires had to be burned because mosquitoes bred in the stagnant water inside the casings. Our rations were monotonous: spam, dried potatoes, dried eggs, canned vegetables—and no refrigeration. We had Otoe brand pork and beans from Nebraska City.

Our laundry was done with GI soap and stiff brushes by a native Okinawan called Oshiska. She could read numbers that her father, once a laborer in Hawaii, had taught her, but could not speak English. We were each given a number, mine being 154, and she would separate and bundle clean clothes for us. I still have some items with Oshiska's 154 marking.

Marine assault troops enroute to Iwo Jima made practice amphibian landings on Tinian February 19, 1945. Field artillery spotters had meals with us. One remarked, "If I get hit, I hope I will be able to feel it"—meaning that he hoped he wouldn't be killed outright. Seabee units adopted individual B-29 planes and painted battalion insignia on them. The units met incoming flights and entertained the crews as heroes. The flight crew preparing to drop the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki staged at Tinian. Theirs was a closely guarded unit and no one was aware of their mission. They only told other airmen that they were "going to win the war."

In March, 1945, when I received orders (SO 50, Hqs. Island Command, APO 247) to return on rotation to the Mainland, I was elated. Tinian had had its drawbacks. I boarded the cargo ship *Merchant*

*Marine* off Tinian anchored in deep water and serviced by small boats that put in at the dock. I had left the States on October 11, 1941, and would return March 30, 1945, having spent a few months short of the entire war overseas.

When I departed Tinian I turned in a brand new 30-caliber carbine complete with plastic cover and still coated with cosmoline (an oily substance for preserving firearms). On arrival at Tinian I had been issued the weapon, but I never used it. I had borrowed a clean carbine for the periodic "qualification" in firing. My ship's departure from Guam was delayed in order that it could take on wounded Marines from the battle of Iwo Jima, then in progress. While waiting, I ran into Adna Dobson, a Navy officer of Lincoln. Together we visited Lowell English of Lincoln, a Marine officer who had been wounded at Iwo Jima. Both Dobson and English played football at Nebraska University. Paul A. Gantt of Honolulu was also on the island. He had imported a dairy herd from the Mainland to Guam to supply fresh milk for the medical facilities and expected heavy casualties from the projected assault on Japan. Dairy cows had previously not produced well in the tropics. I am sure that Iowa State University has recorded Paul Gantt, selfless and dedicated, among its illustrious graduates. He deserves posthumous recognition.

After arrival at Hickam Field, there was a celebration with friends, and I learned that a change in diet produces a very distressed stomach. I spent four days in bed. My flight to the Mainland left before dawn and landed as the sun was setting at Travis Air Base at Fairfield Suson, California, now Travis Air Base, on March 30, 1945. The Air Transport Command was not designed for comfort, but it did provide transportation. At Travis I was assigned with other "returnees," principally bomber pilots from the Philippines, to a railroad coach heading east. The railroad must have had unsatisfactory experiences with returning servicemen, and we were locked in our car. We nonetheless enjoyed the long ride by singing and otherwise entertaining ourselves—and occasionally sneaking out at way stations for beer. I switched trains at Omaha for Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Upon arrival April 2, 1945, at the fort, I was assigned to a transient barracks. While washing off the grime of travel, I was accosted through the steam by a Captain Willard L. Miller of Kearney, Nebraska, who said, "Where in the hell have you been?" Recently arrived from the 8th Air Force, which flew B-17s out of England, he was as pale as though he had been living in a cellar. I told him that I had come from Tinian Island in the central Pacific. He was startled by my deep tan, though I wasn't aware of my dark coloring.

I was told at Leavenworth I could be assigned to a Relocation Center either at Miami Beach, Florida, or Santa Ana, California. I expressed

preference for Florida, having never been to the Southeast. Then I learned that unmarried officers living west of the Mississippi were not being sent to Miami. However, a processor told me: "If you get married, or if you plan to get married, I can send you. Now if you tell me you plan to be married, and you fail to do so, you are still in Miami Beach." I told him, "OK, I plan to be married, but I sure don't know who the bride might be."

After leave, Captain Miller and I had rendezvoused in Chicago for our trip to Miami by train. I hadn't yet found a bride; in fact, I hadn't been looking. By the time our train reached Jacksonville, we sweltered inside our wool, winter-blouse uniforms. There we received word of President Roosevelt's death. The train continued down Florida's east coast to Miami.

During the relocation stay, May 2-19, 1945, in a Miami Beach Hotel, VE (Victory in Europe) Day occurred. Miami Beach was an eye opener. I never dreamed there would be so many hotels—miles and miles of pastel-colored hotels lining Collins Avenue. Local merchants were not too happy, since shops on Lincoln Road and the many night clubs were geared to much higher rollers than men in uniform. Married personnel were more interested in getting readjusted after being overseas. One officer told me he felt guilty spending the night with his wife, since they'd been separated so long. I stayed in a hotel occupied only by single officers.

I was reassigned to the 3rd Air Force in Tampa, Florida. Headquarters were located at the National Guard Armory. Drew Field and McDill Field, Air Corps installations, were located there. I shuttled between them—on a bus or in a staff car. My quarters were in one-story, tar-papered barracks, not at all comfortable in June's hot, humid Florida weather. A Captain Henry (Hank) Brundage and I soon rented a furnished high-rise apartment close to what is now Tampa University. The morning after our house warming, the manager invited us to leave because we had disturbed the other occupants. Dispossessed, we added a third member to our menage and moved to a furnished three-bedroom house on Frances Drive. This continued to be our residence while in Tampa.

I was assigned to the Inspector General Department. Personnel wore a distinctive insignia on the collar. My inspection team was sent to air bases throughout the United States, but primarily in the southern half, since air bases were concentrated there. The 3rd Air Force was commanded by Lieutenant General Lewis H. Brererton, who had distinguished himself in the Philippines and in India, and had been in charge of troop carriers under General Eisenhower.

I was shortly assigned to "special investigations." My first case took me to Hunter Field, Savannah, Georgia, to investigate an insufficient

funds charge. The captain under investigation, at first confident, demanded to know the reason for his appearance. Under oath he swore he had been stationed in England when the bad check was issued and denied writing it. Thereupon I produced the check with his signature. An enlisted man had complained about the rubber check to Secretary of War Henry Stinson and had mailed him the no-funds check. The captain was granted a 15-minute recess. On returning he admitted that it was his signature on the check. He said that during his absence from the investigation, he had asked the base adjutant for leave and promised to obtain funds to make the check good. Later I learned the captain had gone AWOL to escape imprisonment—probably to Mexico. This case gave me some stature and permanence in the investigation section, since no one before had been responsible for an officer going “over the hill.” I have often wondered what motivated his action. His file, I was told, had been turned over to the FBI.

Transportation in Tampa was critical. Used autos were scarce, but I managed to buy a red 4-door Willýs with the same motor as an Army jeep. For some reason it occasionally stuck in second gear. I traded it for a Fort coupe, dependable but having a high ratio of oil stops. I concluded to buy only used oil, which left a trail of black smoke. Airmen frequently flew to Georgia or Louisiana to buy cheaper car license tags than Florida offered. I drove with Chatham County, Georgia, plates—cost, about \$3.50.

The 3rd Air Force was responsible for Air Corps combat crew training—fighter, bomber, and reconnaissance. Its training command supplied the replacement “third crews” to the various Air Forces around the world. While Hickam Field before Pearl Harbor had assembled groups of recent college graduates, the 3rd Air Force staff was made up of veterans who had survived and had excelled in combat. Some of my friends were Atlantan John T. Allan, who had flown bombers in North Africa; and William K. (Kenney) Girioux, Kankakee, Illinois, a P-38 fighter ace from the 5th Air Force in the South Pacific with 12 Japanese planes to his credit. Kenney was liason officer from the training command. My roommate, Hank Brundage, an ace from the North Africa campaign against the Germans, was on the staff. He read at least one novel an evening. Jack Puckett of Memphis had flown in the 8th Air Force and elsewhere. Earl W. Quillan and Fred D. Bradshaw were also on the staff.

At Bartow Air Force Base, Florida, I investigated a letter written to US Senator Claude E. Pepper of Florida, which alleged that the base was burning shotgun shells the correspondent could use to keep birds away from his garden. On a trip to Avon Park Air Base, Florida, I ran into Sam Schwartzkopf, a Nebraska University classmate and football great, who later became mayor of Lincoln.

An investigation at Stuttgart Air Base, Arkansas, took more than a week. County Extension Club members there had written their congressman alleging the base, then closing, was destroying usable clothing and bedding. I interviewed all who had signed the letter. One Saturday night in a Stuttgart hotel lounge I made friends with a man who introduced himself as a local well digger and invited me to join him at a local hangout. It was an active place: music, dancing, food. After dinner I asked an unattached girl to dance. While dancing, someone grabbed me by the shoulder and whirled me around. I took the chap off the floor to find out the problem. He was mad as hell after service in Europe as an MP. After calming down he said he had vowed to knock the head off the first officer in uniform he saw. I was the first. From that day on I did not wear my uniform after working hours. The well digger and I rode back to town in his pickup truck.

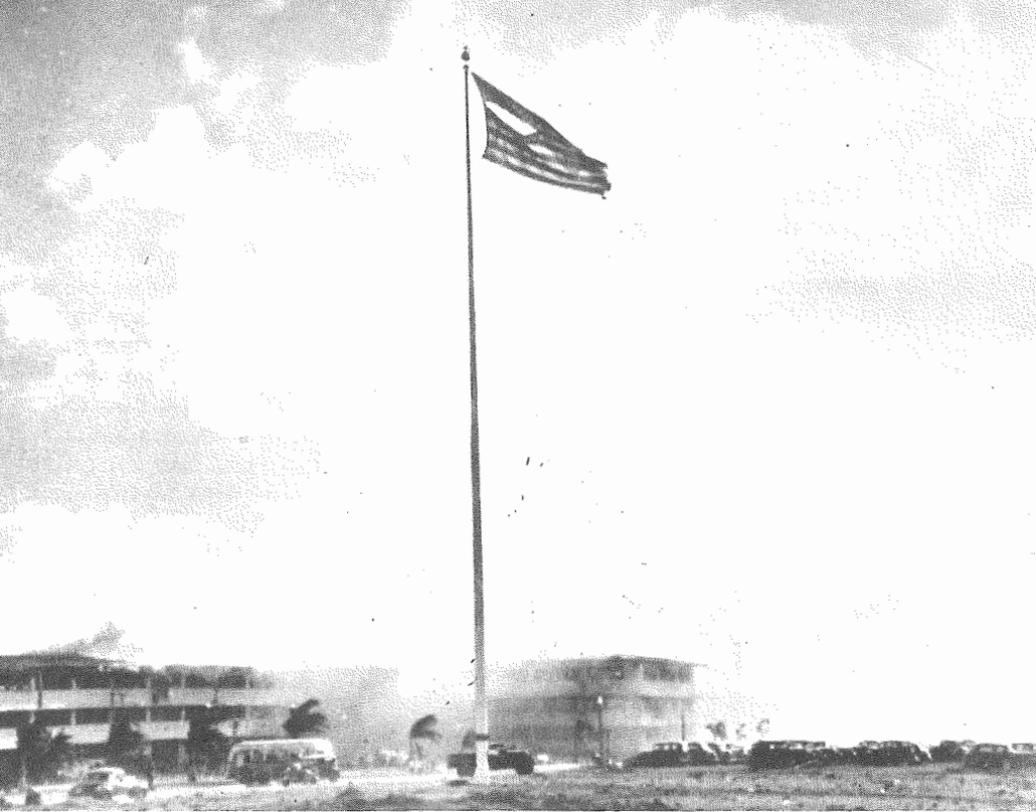
Tampa liked the Air Corps and the Air Corps liked Tampa. The recreation was unlimited—beaches, lakes, fishing, sunshine. The Air Corps had moved en masse to Florida and its bases were scattered throughout the state. The Spanish restaurants were a delight, especially their Spanish bean soup, and I think the Florida Room of the Tampa Hotel never closed.

I'm afraid our neighbors on Frances Street never liked us nor understood us. We all traveled. For days the house would be vacant, then it would be flooded with occupants—our Air Corps friends enroute to work or revelry. VE Day gave us occasion for the latter.

I spent one weekend of leave in Havana, Cuba, and one in Nassau, the Bahamas. Both were short flights from Tampa and had good places to shop. Frequent stops during investigations were March Field, Riverside, California, and Biggs Field, El Paso, Texas.

One investigation took me to Fort Leavenworth, where a witness from whom I needed data was enrolled in Army Staff and Command School. I visited the Army Disciplinary Barracks, our long-term, hard-core confinement facility. With my inspector general's insignia, I received a personal tour by the commander. He had witnessed the hanging of German saboteurs brought to the East Coast by submarine. I remember that he was impressed that not one of the Germans broke down, and each went to death with courage. At the adjacent Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary inmates made jeering remarks such as, "Look us over good for you'll be here some day."

In the fall of 1945, the 3rd Air Force had a winning football team due in part to the great Charlie Trippi of Georgia University. He was released early from the service, reportedly due to the request of Senator Richard Russell of Georgia, in order that he could re-enter Georgia University. Our team played the 4th Air Force for the Air Force championship in the Los Angeles Colosseum. As a minor functionary I sat on the player's bench during the game.



*The American flag at Hickam Field is torn but still aloft during the height of the December 7, 1941, Japanese raid with Consolidated Barracks aflame. 7th Air Force photo by Pfc. P. E. Pelkey, first published in December 7, 1942, Honolulu Advertiser.*

Major commands required annual inspections of all its units and installations. Though units were normally informed beforehand, there was a certain amount of tension about our visits. During inspection at Tallahassee Air Base as I was strolling through the hospital, a busy nurse, said, "Take this," handing me a bedpan. When she discovered I wasn't an orderly, she turned very red. I put her at ease with: "Forget it: I try to do at least one good deed a day."

On another inspection of a fighter group back from Italy, I walked in on a first sergeant who was assembling an Army motorcycle that obviously had been "midnight requisitioned" and shipped to him disassembled. Since a fighter group was not authorized a motorcycle, I had to report it. I doubt if he was able to enjoy a ride.

In early 1946 the 3rd Air Force, redesignated the Tactical Air Command, moved to Langley Field, Virginia, under Major General Elwood R. Quesada. He had commanded tactical aircraft on Eisenhower's staff. Langley is a large, permanent installation. The area was overrun with workers from nearby shipyards, as well as by Navy personnel. Its low-lying areas can get humid and sticky.

I spent one weekend in New York visiting Loren Biggs, out of the Navy and being trained by the National Bank of New York (now

National City Bank). He was elated with his job. Several weekends were spent in Washington DC with Reeves, who was stationed there while flying VIPs—senators, ambassadors, other government officials—out of Bolling Field.

It occurred to me suddenly that I was soon going back to civilian life, and my interest in the service began to wane. As a cadet who once aspired to West Point but was scared off by the mathematics requirements, I know now I was exceedingly fortunate in my military service—22,000 were captured at Bataan and Corregidor in the Philippines; only 4,000 survived! I later turned down a regular commission but not because I disliked the opportunities the Armed Services had to offer. During my years in the Army I often felt that I was falling behind colleagues who had remained in the civilian sector. Time has proved that this was not true. The service thrusts responsibility on its men, and in some military fields its lessons are advantageous to the “separated” serviceman. Time has proved that signing for advanced ROTC with Lampert at Nebraska University was the most productive single college course decision I made—productive since it had a vital impact on my duties during World War II. In all, the training and experience gained in the Army Air Force continued to be meaningful and useful afterward.

I was separated at Fort Meade, Maryland, in 1946 and rejoined Travelers in Florida. I reflected that throughout my military duty, from Fort Omaha, Nebraska, to Fort Meade, I had been transferred many times. Many of my friends spent their entire service time with the same men in the same unit, and I always seemed to be “en route” alone. Once back home, I unpacked my white dress coat—then yellowed—that had been in a footlocker since December 6, 1941. Someone may be wearing it today by way of Goodwill Industries. It has the “Hub, Honolulu, T.H.,” inside the lapels. I wish now I had it as a reminder.

The World War II years will never be erased from my memory. If asked about my war experience, it is difficult to respond, “Yes, I remember Pearl Harbor.”

## APPENDIX

HEADQUARTERS 17TH AIR BASE GROUP (R)  
Office of the Commanding Officer, Hickam Field, T.H.

12 December 1941.

SUBJECT: Commendation.  
TO: Second Lieutenant Denver D. Gray, 0-379413, Air Corps,  
Hickam Field, T. H.

1. You have just experienced your first baptism of fire when we were so treacherously raided on Sunday, 7 December 1941, by units of the Japanese Air

Force. Certainly no troops in the world have ever been placed at more disadvantage than were we on this occasion. With no warning and with very few weapons available we were attacked vigorously and relentlessly by a determined foe.

2. Your actions at that time and at all times since have been highly commendable. You led in the valiant fight against a foe who had superiority in everything but courage. Your cool headed bravery in the direction of our defense efforts succeeded in inflicting considerable losses on our attacker. Since the attack you have worked long hours and have conducted yourself admirably.

3. I commend you most highly for the splended spirit and high courage you have shown.

/s/ W. L. BOYD  
Lt Col., Air Corps  
Commanding

#### REPORT OF DECORATIONS BOARD

W.D., Washington, D. C.,  
26 October 1944.

1. The board having been properly convened and organized, has considered the record in the case of

Gray, Denver D.

2. By decision of a majority of the board, the above-named individual is recommended for the award of the Bronze Star Medal with citation substantially as follows:

First Lieutenant (then Second Lieutenant) Denver D. Gray, 0379213, 17th Service Group, Air Corps, United States Army. For meritorious service in military operations against the enemy during the attack on Hickam Field by Japanese forces (aircraft) on 7 December 1941. Shortly after the initial attack, he reported to his organization to carry out his duties as Squadron Supply Officer. He immediately took command as the Squadron Commander and the Squadron Adjutant were both seriously injured. Without regard for his own safety he rendered aid to the wounded in and around the barracks throughout the entire attack. After the attack subsided he resumed his duties as Supply Officer and directed the volunteer civilian personnel in dispersing vital supplies. The outstanding courage and devotion to duty displayed by Lieutenant Gray on this occasion reflected great credit upon himself and the military service.

/s/E. A. ADAMS  
Major General, U.S.A.,  
President.

Recommendation of the Board  
By order of the Secretary of War