

WWII
A Child's View As
Recalled 68 Years Later

by John Marote

Pre war:

I was born in Hilo, Hawaii on June 9, 1932 and moved to Oakland, California at age four and a half. I moved back to Hawaii when I was eight. At that age, the Great Depression was an adult thing as long as there was a roof overhead and food on the table. My mother, brother and I moved into my grandmother's house because of my brother's poor health.

December 7th 1941:

We heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor over the radio. All the relatives got together at our house. What stands out in my mind is that the adults acted scared. This had never happened before. The fear was that the islands would be invaded and occupied by Japan. My concern? The Palace Theater cancelled the Mickey Mouse Club. (What else would a child be upset about?)

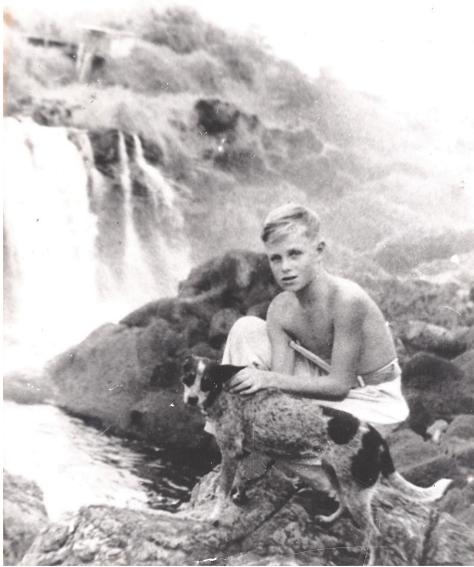
Immediately after the attack:

I believe that Marshall Law was enforced at once. A curfew and blackout were immediately put into effect. Most of Hilo's population was Japanese. Only a few who were close supporters of their homeland or were suspected spies were sent to internment camps. At my age, I had no trepidation about being surrounded by those "people" who attacked Pearl Harbor. I cannot, however, speak for anyone else. We painted all windows a dark green color in order to comply with the blackout. Barbed wire was placed on the beaches and a machinegun emplacement built alongside our road. Gas masks were issued and we were required to carry them at all times. Students were subjected to tear gas and air raid drills. Air raid shelters were built at schools as well as at individual homes. The shelters consisted of an earthen roofed ditch, which would at best have provided protection only from shrapnel. A cement bunker was built at the mouth of the river. Currency in use was replaced with currency that had the word "Hawaii" written on both sides. This was done to allow bills to be put out of circulation if the island were taken over by the Japanese.

Subsequent events:

Military personnel were housed in town in ever increasing numbers. Rationing and metal collection were everyone's contribution to the war effort. When my father was drafted, we were given PX privileges. That was a plus. An event partly steeped in myth is the eruption of a Mauna Loa crater shortly after the attack. Not only was the glow bright enough to read a newspaper in Hilo, the light could be seen on the island of Oahu. A cloud that formed over the eruption took the shape of woman's head that faced toward Japan. Supposedly, Japan shortly thereafter had a violent earthquake. PELE'S REVENGE!!!

My personal contribution towards the war effort consisted of making solid miniature wooden airplanes to be used by spotters. I paled around with my cousin who was somewhat of an instigator. I did not always follow his ideas, but at times I did. On occasion we wrestled for servicemen in order to make a quarter. Once we dived for quarters off of LSTs, which were beached for repairs. The loose change



we made was paid for dearly when we both broke out with blisters all over our bodies caused by the oil, which leaked, from the LSTs. Our most daring antic was when we climbed a mango tree at night to watch a couple making out on the lawn below. Although branches rubbing together almost gave us away, we were not caught.

When an invasion was no longer imminent, life returned to normal and what still remained of the military became normal. When the war in the Pacific was over, all I could think of was that my father would be coming home. He did, two years later, for a day.