

## And I was There

*Norman Dale Stuckey (March 2008)*

IT WAS ANOTHER BEAUTIFUL SUNDAY MORNING, December 7, 1941, as I lay on my bed in the barracks at Hickam Field, Hawaii. My bunk neighbor Baker and I were the only ones to get up and have breakfast before the mess hall closed at 8 AM. There really wasn't much of interest in my Sunday paper for this Private First Class. The stillness of the morning was occasionally broken by the snoring of the other men in the room. It sounded as if some were really suffering after a long Saturday night of drinking in Honolulu.

About this time I could hear planes flying low overhead, and this was followed by great explosions. The immediate speculation was that the Admiral had roused out the navy pilots next door at Pearl Harbor for a sham battle. The Admiral did this every so often, and it was disturbing to the men trying to sleep off a hangover. As the noise became more intense with more planes flying overhead, Baker and I decided to climb up the ladder on the end of the barracks to get on the roof and look the short distance over to the ships in Pearl Harbor. We couldn't imagine such a realistic sham battle with all the explosions and smoke, but it wasn't long before we took a closer look at the low-flying planes to see their red circle and two people in the plane looking at us as they flew by.

It wasn't until the second wave of planes hit the island that Hickam Field came under attack. By this time Baker and I had hurriedly got off the roof and went looking for a nonexistent bomb shelter to get away from all the strafing as our hangers and planes were blown up. This went on for an hour and forty-five minutes, and by then all of the Japanese planes were gone.

We had mock drills periodically when we would hear the sirens and everyone would run to their assigned place to defend the island, but on that fateful day no one sounded the sirens. Baker and I were busy helping the wounded to the Post Hospital as the smoke and fires finally subsided.