

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
NUMBER

204

Interview with
Emil E. Matula
May 18, 1974

Place of Interview: Austin, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

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Approved: Emil E. Matula

Date: 5-18-74

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Oral History Collection

Emil Matula

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Austin, Texas Date of Interview: May 18, 1974

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Emil Matula for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on May 18, 1974, in Austin, Texas. I am interviewing Mr. Matula in order to get his reminiscences and experiences and impressions while he was at Schofield Barracks during the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Now Mr. Matula, to begin this interview, why don't you very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself. In other words, tell me where you were born, when you were born, your education--things of that nature. Just be very brief and general.

Mr. Matula: My name is Emil Matula. I was born on April 4, 1918, in the city of West, Texas, and later in life we moved to Granger, Texas, where I really was brought up--on a farm. During my lifetime as a boy, I was brought up on a farm, as a farmer, you could say.

I went to school originally at the Denson Elementary School, which is a country school. Then I went to school at Saint Cyril Methodious School at Granger, Texas, which was a parochial school. Then I went to school at the Granger Elementary School. I had a seventh grade education, is all I had. My father took ill when I was in the seventh grade, and I had to quit in the seventh grade. I didn't get to make the eighth grade. That's as much education as I had.

Marcello: When did you enter the service?

Matula: I entered the service on January 3, 1937, and I enlisted at Fort Sam Houston. I was assigned to Company M of the 9th Infantry. I spent three years at Fort Sam Houston with Company M of the 9th Infantry. Upon my discharge I re-enlisted, and this Hawaiian deal was in a bloom at that time, and I re-enlisted to go into the foreign service. I heard about this 20 per cent increase in pay when you went overseas, so I decided, well, I wanted to see some of the foreign countries, you know. So on March 19, 1940, I landed in Honolulu, Hawaii, and I was assigned to Company D, 35th Infantry.

Marcello: Let's just go back there a minute. Why did you enter the service in the first place?

Matula: Well, it was kind of a funny thing. A bunch of us boys got together, and we dared each other about joining the armed forces, and so six of us volunteered. But when it actually come down to joining one of the armed forces, when the recruiting sergeant arrived at the post office to pick us up, there was only one left and it was me. The rest of them . . .

Marcello: Why did you decide to enter the Army as opposed to one of the other branches?

Matula: Well, I really didn't know that much about any of the services, and one of my friends from my home town was in the Army, and that's the reason that I selected the Army.

Marcello: So you spent approximately three years at Fort Sam Houston, and as you mentioned, you re-enlisted mainly because you wanted to see some foreign service.

Matula: That's right.

Marcello: At the time you re-enlisted, were you assured that you would go to Hawaii?

Matula: That's right. That was a sure thing--that I would be stationed in Hawaii.

Marcello: Why did you want to go to Hawaii?

Matula: Well, during my tour of duty at Fort Sam Houston, we had a number of service people that came back from overseas duty, and, of course, the stories of the Hawaiian tour of duty sounded real good, so I said, "Well, I'm going to investigate it."

Marcello: And, once again, when did you arrive in Hawaii?

Matula: On March 19, 1940.

Marcello: What was your particular function in the service at this time?

Matula: Well, I went to Hawaii as infantry unassigned. I was in the infantry when I left Fort Sam Houston--discharged as an infantry machine gunner. Of course, naturally, when I shipped overseas, I was shipped as infantry unassigned. During my career at Fort Sam Houston, I played football for the 9th Infantry Manchus, and, of course, the 35th Infantry was always on the lookout for ex-jockey straps, you could say, or ex-football players. When we arrived in Honolulu, the 35th Infantry regimental commander was there, and he picked us out. He said, "You're a football player. You're a football player. You're a football player. You belong to me." So that's how I got into the 35th Infantry.

Marcello: What sort of a function did you have after you got into the 35th Infantry?

Matula: After I got into the 35th Infantry, I was reassigned back to a machine gun company, and I was a machine gunner, and later I transferred into heavy weapons--.50 caliber--and, of course, as we kept improving our weapons, I was transferred into an 81 millimeter section. At the time that the Pearl Harbor attack came on, I was an 81 millimeter section leader.

Marcello: Now what is the 81 millimeter? Is that a gun or is that a mortar?

Matula: That is a mortar.

Marcello: I thought it was.

Matula: Right.

Marcello: When you arrived in Hawaii, were you assigned directly to Schofield Barracks?

Matula: Yes, I was assigned to Schofield Barracks, Company D, 35th Infantry.

Marcello: What did Schofield Barracks look like? In other words, describe it from a physical standpoint, and then locate it for me.

Matula: Well, most everything looked just like the pictures did before I left the States, you know, and the only

thing I remember about Schofield Barracks was that there was a coconut grove . . . there was coconuts on each side of this four-lane highway that led into Schofield Barracks. It was a beautiful picture with the Schofield Barracks in the background. Of course, the barracks themselves were clustered in a coconut grove, too. So it really was a beautiful picture.

Marcello: Was this a fairly new military installation, or had it been established there for some time?

Matula: It had been established for quite a while.

Marcello: What was the normal complement of Schofield Barracks?

Matula: Well, you mean as far as the . . .

Marcello: Total number of men involved.

Matula: Concerning the total number of men involved, during the time before Pearl Harbor, I would say that there were maybe 50,000 men in Schofield Barracks.

Marcello: It was a relatively big place, then.

Matula: It was a big place, which consisted of three regiments of infantry, three regiments of artillery, plus your two engineer corps regiments, and, of course, hospital units and everything else. Tripler General Hospital was right there at Schofield Barracks. It was really a beautiful laid out post.

Marcello: I gather that it was the largest Army installation on the island.

Matula: Yes, it was. It was the biggest installation in the island of Hawaii.

Marcello: Was this where General Short had his headquarters?

Matula: No, General Short . . .

Marcello: He was at Fort Shafter, I guess, wasn't he?

Matula: General Short was at Fort Shafter, and this was more or less in the Naval area.

Marcello: How far were you from Honolulu?

Matula: Approximately eighteen miles.

Marcello: How would you describe the training and routine that you received after you arrived at Schofield Barracks?

Matula: Well, I was surprised when I got to Schofield Barracks. I was reassigned to, you could say, a recruit training group, and this was done to all military personnel that came from the States as a refresher course in Army discipline and so forth. This was also to acquaint you with the islands.

Marcello: The terrain or the topography or something of this nature?

Matula: The topography, and then also, the Hawaiian cultures. That was part of the retraining program that you had.

You were retrained and acquainted with the Hawaiian customs, I guess you would say.

Marcello: During this period when you were initially sent to Schofield Barracks, was there a large influx of recruits coming in at this time?

Matula: At the time that I was assigned to the 35th Infantry, I believe that we had about 150 men that came in on the same boat and that were assigned to the 35th Infantry Regiment. And, of course, all 150 of these either took the recruit training or else the refresher course.

Marcello: This is hard for me to fathom at times because today, of course, we're used to seeing men trained at regular training facilities here in the United States and then usually sent abroad. But during this period, it was quite common to take recruits--raw recruits--and send them directly to the duty station and train them there.

Matula: That is correct.

Marcello: How would you describe the training that these recruits underwent here? Was it intensive? Was it thorough? Was it competent training?

Matula: It was intensive, it was thorough, and they got competent training, too. In other words, when the recruiting section got through with a recruit, he was ready to go ahead and be reassigned with any soldier in the regular outfit that was in the unit.

Marcello: How long was basic training at this particular time?

Matula: Eight weeks, which was actually two weeks longer than we used to have the regular recruit training here--boot training as they call it in the Navy here in the States.

Marcello: Generally speaking, for a person who had been in the Army as long as you had been up to that point, was training a rather constant thing?

Matula: Yes, it was constant. We trained every morning. We fell out for reveille at five o'clock. We'd have breakfast at seven o'clock, and we'd fall out for training at eight o'clock, and we'd train until 11:30. Then at one o'clock, of course, there were details--work duties--to be performed on the post. In other words, we trained in the morning, and in the afternoons usually there were details that had to be dispatched to do odd jobs on the post.

Marcello: In other words, even as an old experienced hand, your training was a rather constant thing.

Matula: That is correct.

Marcello: How would you describe the morale of the Army at Schofield Barracks during this pre-Pearl Harbor period?

Matula: Well, I think that the morale at Schofield Barracks was tremendous. Of course, one thing we had was discipline,

and anytime that you went out to train, everybody had pride in their organization. In other words, when we went out, say, for instance, for a close order drill, you were trying to be the best in Schofield Barracks or in the Hawaiian Department.

Marcello: How do you explain this high morale? You mentioned that discipline probably played a part in it. Are there any other factors that you see as being responsible for the high morale of the Army troops at this particular time?

Matula: Well, I presume that the reason for the high morale and the discipline was that the people that were in the Army wanted to be there, and therefore there was a high quality discipline, and, of course, that was expected because that was one of the rules that you had to follow.

Marcello: In other words, we're talking about volunteers. These were not draftees.

Matula: This was a volunteer Army at this time--the United States Army.

Marcello: And from what I gather, it was more or less a privilege to be accepted into any branch of the service at that time.

Matula: That's right.

Marcello: The service wasn't just taking just everybody.

Matula: That's right. It was a privilege because I know a number of my buddies who wanted to get in couldn't get into the armed forces. Even though they had better educations than I had, they didn't pass the qualifications to get into the service.

Marcello: Generally speaking, what did you do in your off-duty hours? What sort of social life did you lead here on the Hawaiian Islands?

Matula: Well, in the off-duty hours, like I said, I was active in sports, and there was always a group of us boys that got together, and we always participated in any sport that come along--handball, basketball, volleyball. I guess it was just like an athlete here in the United States itself. You just constantly stayed in training. Not necessarily training, but you just enjoyed playing basketball, volleyball, and just whatever there was. I imagine that's what kept us occupied.

Marcello: Did you get to go into Honolulu very often?

Matula: I went into Honolulu about once a month, is about all.

Marcello: How come you did not go in more frequently? Was it because of the distance involved?

Matula: Well, really, it was because I didn't that much need to go to Honolulu. I had different interests. My

interests were sports, and my buddies that I associated with, we enjoyed getting out there, and like I said, playing basketball, baseball, whatever there was.

Marcello: What sort of liberty did you receive while you were at Schofield Barracks?

Matula: Well, at Schofield Barracks we had weekend passes during peacetime.

Marcello: Did you get those passes every weekend?

Matula: If you wanted to, yes. Of course, there were three-day passes once a month. You could get a three-day pass if you wanted to.

Marcello: What's the difference between a three-day pass and a weekend pass?

Matula: A weekend pass meant that generally we had the inspection Saturday morning, and after the Saturday inspection, well, if there was no . . . if you weren't flunked on the inspection, well, the rest of the weekend was yours. A three-day pass meant that . . . if you got a three-day pass, you could take off Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday--the regular days of training, you see. That was considered a three-day pass.

Marcello: Those were tougher to get than weekend passes.

Matula: Well, those were available once a month if you behaved.

Marcello: But generally speaking, I would gather that even when you had a three-day pass, you perhaps stayed at . . .

Matula: Stayed at the base.

Marcello: . . . at Schofield Barracks.

Matula: Right.

Marcello: Normally, I guess, the time that you would go into Honolulu was on payday.

Matula: Well, it would be on payday, yes.

Marcello: And when did payday usually occur? Was it at the first or the beginning of the month?

Matula: We got payed once a month, and it was on the first of the month, yes. Of course, there was a lot of . . . most of the people that I associated with, we stayed out of Honolulu on paydays, and we waited until the tenth or the fifteenth of the month to go down because there wasn't that many people down there.

Marcello: I would gather that on payday that there was a tremendous number of people in downtown Honolulu. I'm referring to service people, of course.

Matula: That is correct.

Marcello: And on the weekends, of course, the fleet would be in, and that even increased the number of people that were down there.

Matula: That's right. It sure did.

Marcello: Did you have very many civilian workers on this particular base?

Matula: During my tour of duty at Schofield Barracks, the only civilian workers at that time were the utility engineers, they called them, and they were in charge of all the utilities. In other words, cleaning out the streets and picking up garbage and things like that. But they were in charge. The enlisted men details were the ones that did the utility work. There were no civilian workers who picked up our garbage or did our KP or anything like that.

Marcello: I do know that the Hawaiian Islands had and still have large numbers of people of Japanese ancestry. Did you have very many of this type of person working on the base during this period?

Matula: No, there weren't any people of Japanese ancestry working on the base at that time outside of a Japanese restaurant that was operated for the 35th Infantry itself.

Marcello: And this was located right on the base?

Matula: Right on the base, yes.

Marcello: Now I do know also that outside of Schofield Barracks there were small villages close by.

Matula: Correct.

Marcello: Were there very many Japanese-Americans located in these villages?

Matula: There were a number of Japanese-Americans living in the villages. For instance, Wahiawa had quite a large population of Japanese civilians, and then there was a place across the street from Schofield Barracks which was called Kemo, and it was operated by Japanese ancestry, too.

Marcello: How close were these places to Schofield?

Matula: Kemo was located about 150 yards outside the gates of Schofield. Now downtown Wahiawa, I would say, would have been about a mile walking distance from the post.

Marcello: The reason I bring up this question of the Japanese population on the Hawaiian Islands is because at least in some quarters it was felt that these Japanese might represent a threat in terms of sabotage or fifth columnist activities. Did you or your buddies ever think about the Japanese in these terms?

Matula: Not in the villages next to the post, we didn't. Of course, we were trained to know that there were civilians that would sabotage a military installation in case of

hostilities. But actually, it was never brought up that it would be Japanese only, you know.

Marcello: What particular efforts did the base put forward to guard against sabotage and this sort of thing?

Matula: We had around-the-clock guards. Every regiment furnished its own guards, and they furnished guards for the quadrangles and the military officers' quarters, enlisted quarters, and this was not only for the purpose of safeguarding them from sabotage, but also for fire protection and so forth.

Marcello: Was the security of the base pretty rigid?

Matula: Yes.

Marcello: In other words, did you have to have a pretty good reason to get on the base if you were a civilian or something of this nature?

Matula: Yes, you did. The gates were maintained by the military police, and you had to have a special permit to get onto the base at this time. Even the military, especially, had a tough time getting off or on the base. You didn't leave the base without a pass, and you couldn't come back on unless you came in as a soldier. In other words, if you came in drunk or something like that, of course, you would be picked up at the gate and delivered to your company commander or company quarters. But then, of course, you'd be verified by the charge of quarters that

you belonged to that particular unit, and, of course, the next morning you would hear about it from the company commander or the first sergeant.

Marcello: In line with the subject that you were just discussing, what percentage of the complement of troops at Schofield Barracks usually spent the weekend in Honolulu or at least off the base?

Matula: Well, I would say during the regular month from the tenth to the fifteenth, probably 15 per cent. Now on paydays it might have gone up as high as 50 per cent that would go into Honolulu on payday, and, of course, the other 50 per cent would probably go in the next day or so.

Marcello: Would the weekend of December 7 fall somewhere within the payday?

Matula: December 7 was actually seven days after payday, so the big weekend would have been the Saturday before. In other words, it would have been exactly a week before Pearl Harbor was attacked.

Marcello: But on those non-payday weekends, you say that probably somewhere around 15 per cent of the base might be in Honolulu or someplace else?

Matula: I would say yes. The reason for that was that the majority of the boys that went into Honolulu, they spent their payday on that one particular run, and that was it for the month. The idea behind all this, just like we were discussing awhile ago, was that the soldier got paid on the first, he went down there and bought his toilet articles, his cigarettes, and whatever he needed for the month, and whatever he had left, he just went out there and blew because he didn't need the rest of it, you see. Then in the middle of the month, of course, it was gone.

Marcello: Suppose a person did have weekend liberty. Did he usually stay in Honolulu because of the distances involved, or normally might he come back on the base at night and leave again in the morning or something of this nature?

Matula: That was entirely up to the individual. If he wanted to stay in Honolulu and had the money to pay for his room, well, he could stay in Honolulu, but it was his privilege to come back to the base at night if he wanted to.

Marcello: Generally speaking, what was the condition of those men who did come back to the base at night from Honolulu during a weekend pass?

Matula: I would say that probably 25 per cent would be in an intoxicated condition, but the other 75 per cent, I would say, always came back in good condition.

Marcello: Even concerning those who might come back intoxicated, would they usually be fit for duty the next day?

Matula: Oh, yes. That was one of the prides of every soldier. Regardless of how late you stayed out--if you stayed out until four o'clock in the morning and reveille came at five o'clock--you were up to do duty. I would say that less than 1 per cent of the men would fall in the category where they would not be able to do duty the next morning.

Marcello: In your leisure time or in your bull sessions, did you and your buddies ever discuss the possibility of a surprise attack by some unknown enemy?

Matula: No, we never have. It just never even occurred to us. As a matter of fact, even during training periods, it never occurred that we would come under a surprise attack like later on we went ahead and received.

Marcello: Did you feel that you were relatively secure here at Schofield Barracks?

Matula: We thought so.

Marcello: Why did you feel so secure?

Matula: Well, one reason we felt secure, I guess, was because of the high quality of training that we had. We knew what we could do in case of an attack, and it never occurred that we would be attacked by air like we were.

Marcello: When you thought of a typical Japanese during this period, what type of an individual did you conjure up in your own mind?

Matula: This is prior to Pearl Harbor?

Marcello: Correct.

Matula: Actually, I didn't have that much experience with them. The Japanese that I had known or encountered in either Honolulu or Wahiawa or Kemo, they were very friendly people, and we had no reason to suspect that anything like that could happen.

Marcello: As diplomatic relations between the United States and Japan worsened during this period, how did your routine change or vary?

Matula: Well, our routine changed. I'm not definite on the exact dates, but I will say that it was in the middle of July that we were alerted. At that time the Japanese fleet was maneuvering out in the South Pacific, and we were alerted and we were taken out to the field. We stayed out in the field on alert for six weeks or possibly eight weeks. During this eight-week period,

of course, the only way we had to think that something was in the brewing was because of the fact that we were out in the field cutting down undergrowth in the Ewa sub-sector, cutting fire lanes, and establishing and plotting gun positions in case of an attack.

Marcello: What was the Ewa sub-sector?

Matula: The Ewa sub-sector was a flat plateau which ran from the Pearl Harbor lochs to the Barbers Point area, and, of course, our regiment was responsible for the defense of this area. This was a very sensitive area because of the fact that the fleet was stationed in the Pearl Harbor lochs, and this was part of our responsibility--to protect the lochs from being taken over by an enemy in case of a landing.

Marcello: I was going to ask you why this particular area would be important or how the enemy could utilize it. It was especially susceptible to some sort of a landing. You mean a landing by sea?

Matula: It was because of the fact of the sandy beaches and the high tide that the enemy could come in and land their boats on the beach and come inland without being detected.

Marcello: How far was this Ewa sub-sector from the Naval installations at Pearl?

Matula: I would say that our lines that we were responsible for the defense of would be about eighteen miles from the Pearl Harbor lochs to the Barber's Point in the Ewa sub-sector.

Marcello: When you went on this alert, did most of the base move out of Schofield and into the field?

Matula: Yes, sir.

Marcello: How many divisions are we talking about altogether?

Matula: We're talking about two divisions at this particular point--the 24th Infantry and the 25th Infantry. I was part of the 25th Infantry Division.

Marcello: And about how many troops are we talking about?

Matula: I would say that there were 13,000 troops per division, so that would be about 26,000 soldiers.

Marcello: What sort of activity did you engage in while you were on this alert? You mentioned that you were clearing underbrush and undergrowth and things of this nature here at the Ewa sub-sector. What else did you do during this alert?

Matula: Well, we plotted gun positions and plotted fire lanes. We plotted the initial defense line and secondary defense

line and a third defense line. These were all mapped and everybody was versed. If an attack came and the first defense line folded up, then the second line of defense would cover the original defense line until they withdrew to the secondary line, and then they would move back into the third defense line while the secondary line held. This was all part of a plan that was more or less a holding action until more troops could be concentrated into that area.

Marcello: Was this particular area fortified, or were all these things basically on paper during these maneuvers?

Matula: It was fortified . . . in this particular case, theoretically, yes. Of course, during our training, we did go through the actual stringing of barbed wire entanglements and the digging of trenches and things like this. In other words, we were well-versed on how to dig a trench and communications trenches and things like that.

Marcello: Were these fortifications at Ewa Point designed to be permanent, or were they simply temporary fortifications only for the alert itself?

Matula: They were temporary only.

Marcello: And how long did you say that you were out in the field altogether on this alert?

Matula: The first . . . the initial alert, I would say, between six and eight weeks, I think, is what we were out there. Then we were put on a semi-alert. We were moved back into Schofield Barracks, and we would run patrols out every . . . maybe twice a week we would be alerted, and we would run out to our positions and then come back. Maybe we'd spend a night or two and then come back into Schofield again. This went on until September. This was a semi-alert, and during the month of September, of course, there were patrols that would be running from Schofield Barracks to the Ewa sub-sector with machine guns mounted on trucks. The squads would go out and patrol their beachhead, and they would come back in. This lasted about a month, and then in the latter part of November--about the 15th of November--the alert was completely called off.

Marcello: Was there any special reason for this?

Matula: There was no special reason except that the green light was given. There was no reason. With the negotiations going on in Washington, they evidently felt that it was not necessary to have the alert on that specific basis.

Marcello: Do you think perhaps that the reason they called off the alert was because of the fact that if they continued to

call this alert and nothing happened, this might have had a detrimental effect upon morale? Do you understand what I'm saying? In other words, suppose they called the alert and nothing happened, they called another alert and nothing happened, and this continued. It seems to me that after awhile this might have had a detrimental effect on morale.

Matula: Well, I imagine it might have been one of the reasons they called the alert off, but like I say, we were professional soldiers and we knew what to expect. In other words, that's why we were there. We were out there to protect United States territory, and that's the way every soldier felt. Of course, there was a lot of griping and fussing going on when we went out on these alerts and when we went out in the field, but we knew that somewhere along the line there must be a reason behind it.

Marcello: Then sometime around October or November, you fell back into your usual routine again. The alert ceased and it was business as usual.

Matula: That is correct.

Marcello: In other words, your pattern of liberty . . .

Matula: The liberties were reestablished.

Marcello: . . . stayed the same.

Matula: That's right. They went back into the normal status as they were before the alert.

Marcello: Now is it not true that generally speaking, Sundays were considered a day of leisure? In other words, if you did not have duty on a Sunday, you could stay in bed as long as you wished.

Matula: That is correct. There were no reveilles, no bed . . . no . . . well, if you wanted to get up at breakfast . . . breakfast was served at 7:30. If you wanted to get up for breakfast, fine. If you wanted to stay in bed and do without breakfast, that was fine, too. There was no special meals served for anybody.

Marcello: I would assume that the force that had the duty on a Sunday morning was usually a skeleton force.

Matula: Yes, generally speaking, the force that would be on duty would be naturally the regular guard duty which each regiment would perform for their own security.

Marcello: And this would just represent a very, very, very few number of people.

Matula: Well, I would say, roughly speaking, it ran to roughly fifty people out of 1,300 in our regiment.

Marcello: So quite possibly, everybody except those fifty people out of each regiment . . .

Matula: Right.

Marcello: Or total? Out of each regiment?

Matula: Out of each regiment, yes. Say, for instance, 300 for the entire Schofield Barracks.

Marcello: Okay, approximately 300 people were on duty the day of the attack, and the rest, theoretically, could have been in bed.

Matula: That's right.

Marcello: Now, of course, everybody wasn't, but they could have been.

Matula: They could have been, yes.

Marcello: So, in other words, if you were the enemy and you were planning an attack on American military installations on the Hawaiian Islands, a Sunday would have been a good time to do it.

Matula: That is correct.

Marcello: Okay, this more or less brings us up, I think, to the day immediately before Pearl Harbor, and what I want you to do at this point is to describe in as much detail as you can the routine that you followed on Saturday, December 6, 1941--from the time you got up until the time you retired or whatever you did on that particular day.

Matula: On Saturday morning, I was on a regimental football team, and the 35th Infantry and the 21st Infantry were scheduled

to have a football game at 2:30 in the afternoon on Saturday of December 6. Of course, all the football players got up, and we had a training table, and, of course, we had to be at our training table at eight o'clock in the morning. Then at ten o'clock we had skull practice for an hour, and then we went to the barracks, and we were ordered to sleep for an hour. At one o'clock we were suited up, and we boarded a truck and, of course, went to the football field.

At 2:30 the big ball game of the island was on at Schofield Barracks. The 21st Infantry and the 35th Infantry had a championship football team. The 35th Infantry were the island champions for four, five or six years, and the 21st Infantry . . . being that the 24th Infantry Division was organized and the number of new people reassigned to all these organizations, the 21st Infantry came up with a lot of ex-college football players, and this was the team that we had to beat to be island champions again.

Marcello: By this time were there a lot of reservists and draftees coming into the service?

Matula: That's right. Our first reservists and draftees came in October, and we were brought up to full strength in the two divisions.

Marcello: Okay, continue from this point.

Matula: And so that afternoon we had our football game, and I would say that there probably were 15,000 soldiers altogether because they came all the way from Honolulu, from the Naval Base, and from the Marine Corps. The island championship football game was just like a professional football game here. I would say that we probably had 30,000 people at the football game. Had the Japanese decided to drop one there, they could have probably eliminated 30,000 of us right there.

After the football game, of course, all the football players in my regiment and from the 21st Infantry Regiment were given ten-day passes. So about eight o'clock that night, after the football game, we . . . I might say this for the benefit of my buddy that's over there in the room, we lost the football game 13-6. But anyway, all the football players from the 21st and the 35th Infantry had a ten-day pass, and they all wound up down in Honolulu. Of course, we fought the football game all over again inside the Honolulu streets, and about four o'clock in the morning, things started to close down out there, and three or four of us boys from my company that were football players, we

forgot that we were supposed to make reservations, so we thought it was about time we went back to Schofield Barracks. So we caught a taxi and each one took an extra fifth of whiskey along with us so we'd have something to start off the next day with because we had ten days to go.

Marcello: I was going to ask you, other than your physical condition as the result of the football game, what sort of shape were you in on your way going back to Schofield Barracks?

Matula: Well, we were in pretty fair condition because as we got to the barracks, and we went to sleep and there was no fights or no arguments. The charge of quarters didn't have any trouble with us, and we got to bed in good condition, I would say.

Marcello: And what time was it when you got to bed? If everything closed down in Honolulu at four o'clock, what time did you get to bed?

Matula: We got home about five o'clock or 5:30, something like that. We had to hire a taxi. Six or seven of us got into one taxi and got home. We went to bed and about 7:45 or eight o'clock that morning I woke up. My bunk was jumping up and down with me, and I rolled over and I couldn't figure out what was going on.

Marcello: You thought that musht have been a pretty wicked night the night before (laughter).

Matula: Yes. I said, "Well, Claude, what's going on?" I woke my buddy up next to me.

Marcello: Claude?

Matula: Claude Borne, yes. And I said, "Claude, what's going on?" He said, "Matula, hell, go to bed!" So we reached under the pillow and took a shot and went back to sleep, and about five minutes later, this thing just rocked a little bit more. About that time . . . about the second time that this bunk shook with us, well, we . . . the whistle went off and the charge of quarters, he yelled, "Everybody out of the barracks! It's an earthquake!"

Marcello: Is this what he really said--earthquake?

Matula: "It's an earthquake!" Of course, anytime that your barracks shook, well, it was supposed to be an earthquake, you know. That was the first alert we got, was earthquake.

Marcello: Were earthquakes relatively common on the islands?

Matula: Well, they would come maybe once or twice a year where the earth shook, actually. Of course, the drill for the earthquake was for everybody to get out of the barracks because the barracks were concrete, and for the safety of the soldiers themselves, everybody was ordered out of the barracks onto the quadrangle. So when we got this order

to get out of the barracks, everybody went out in the quadrangle, and there we were, in the middle of the quadrangle with the earth shaking. Of course, at that time we didn't know what was going on.

Marcello: Had any Japanese planes hit the barracks at this time?

Matula: At that time, no.

Marcello: Where were these explosions coming from? Wheeler Field?

Matula: These explosions were coming all the way from down at Pearl Harbor. The Japanese were, of course, bombing these Navy installations in Pearl Harbor--Ford Island and Hickam Field and Fort Shafter and all those installations in there. At the same time, when they got through . . . when they'd make that bomb run, they would come out to Wheeler, and they would strafe Wheeler Field. Wheeler Field they would strafe with incendiary bullets.

I might mention this. At Wheeler Field, all the planes, of course, on Saturday were lined up for inspection, and there was at least 150 planes lined up wing to wing in a straight line in two different rows. Of course, all of these planes went in flames because the incendiary bullets set them on fire.

But anyway, getting back to the getting out of the barracks, we were standing in the middle of the quadrangle,

and the first knowledge that we had of an attack was when these planes came over the top of the thing, and we looked upstairs and we saw the rising sun. That was the first time that we really knew what was happening.

Marcello: What was your reaction when you saw this?

Matula: Well, by that time--about the time that we looked up and saw this rising sun--one of the Japanese dropped a bomb on the flagpole in the general quadrangle, and at that time it hit everybody. Of course, to myself I said, "My God, this couldn't happen to the United States or the American Army!" It was just unbelievable to think that all the precautions that were taken and all the guarantees that we had that we would have at least thirty minutes or maybe an hour knowledge of any attack that might be coming in as previously given to us in our training, that this could happen.

Marcello: How far from you did the bomb explode?

Matula: I would say that the bomb was about 150 feet from us. It was in the general quadrangle, which we were the last barracks in the series of infantry barracks, and the quadrangle . . . the general flagpole was just about halfway between Wheeler Field and Schofield Barracks itself.

Marcello: What happened from this point?

Matula: From that point, we finally decided that this was an attack, and, of course, we all headed into the barracks and got dressed. The first thing we, of course, needed was our guns--to get the guns into action. We got down to get the guns at the supply room, and the supply sergeant was gone, and there were no keys available. The charge of quarters didn't have the keys. They were locked up in the supply sergeant's quarters. So we took fire axes and chopped down the doors to the gun storage room. After we got into the gun storage room, we had to chop open the machine gun . . . the machine guns were under lock and key in the machine gun racks, so we had to break all the locks on them. Then after we got the machine guns, we had to break down the ammunition storage room to get to the ammunition.

Marcello: Was there ever any hesitation about doing any of this?

Matula: Once we got the alert that this was an attack, there was no hesitation. When the order was given that the attack was on, everybody knew what to do. We got the machine guns out, we got the machine guns up, we got four or five guns up on top of the barracks, but we only got to fire at the tail-end of the last squadron of Japs that come to strafe. Outside of that, that was it.

Marcello: About how many bombs were dropped?

Matula: At Schofield Barracks, in the section that I was in, there was only one that I know of. However, the strafing, I would say that they made a least six or seven passes at us. After they got through strafing and bombing Wheeler Field, then they would strafe the barracks--the infantry barracks.

Marcello: In other words, most of the damage done at Schofield Barracks was done by fighters which were strafing, rather than by planes actually dropping bombs.

Matula: That is correct. They had already unloaded their bombs, and they used the last resort of what they had in their planes to do as much damage as they could.

Marcello: Now what did you personally do during this attack? Were you with this group that went to the ammunition and weapons storage area, and did you draw out a weapon and this sort of thing?

Matula: Yes, I was . . . of course, at that time I was a section leader in the mortar platoon, and I think there were only three sergeants that were in the barracks at that time, and I was one of the sergeants that gave the orders to break down the doors. That's the only way that we could get to the guns, and, of course, when you're under attack, you start fighting for your life.

Marcello: What did you grab?

Matula: I had my BAR. Of course, it didn't do me any good to have the BAR because they weren't very effective against airplanes.

Marcello: So what did you do? You took your BAR, and you rushed outside.

Matula: That's right, and placed the guns . . . directed the guns into position.

Marcello: Did you actually fire at any of the planes with your BAR?

Matula: Yes, we sure did.

Marcello: How much did you fire?

Matula: Well, I would say that I emptied four clips, which would amount to . . . there were fifty rounds to a clip, so I fired approximately 200 rounds.

Marcello: Do you think that you did this mainly out of a sense of futility? In other words, you had to do something. You didn't want to feel helpless, so you had to do something.

Matula: I think that the reason I done it was because that was part of our training. In case of an attack we knew what we should do, and I think this was just a general . . . just an automatic response due to your training.

Marcello: How long did the entire attack last altogether?

Matula: At Schofield Barracks, I would say that it lasted about thirty minutes.

Marcello: How long did it seem as though it lasted to you?

Matula: To me, as far as I was concerned, it looked like it lasted an eternity.

Marcello: In general, how would you describe the reaction of the men when this attack suddenly occurred? Was their reaction one of confusion, panic, anger, professionalism? How would you describe the general reaction of the men?

Matula: I wouldn't say there was any panic because once the alert was given, all the men went up to their quarters. They automatically dressed themselves and automatically were directed by their squad leaders. Of course, the squad leaders as a general rule were in the quarters with the men. They slept with them. And I would say that the reaction was real good. Of course, like I said, these were professional soldiers and they knew what . . . they were trained for this purpose. I presume that the training that we always, for instance, bitched about or griped about and stuff like that because we didn't see that it was doing us any good in peacetime, it actually paid off on that day because everybody really went to town and cooperated and got things done.

Marcello: Awhile ago, you mentioned that after you saw the first Japanese planes, you rushed back in the barracks and got dressed. When you ran out there in formation, were you in your skivvy shorts or what?

Matula: In our shorts and our underwear, yes, because we didn't sleep in pajamas. We slept in our underwear.

Marcello: In other words, when you went outside, you didn't bother to put on your trousers or anything of that nature.

Matula: No, when the alert for the earthquake came, you got out in what you had on.

Marcello: During this entire thirty-minute period, were there any funny incidents that occurred that you think ought to be a part of the record?

Matula: I don't recall of any. Of course, I was too busy to see if any incidents occurred because everybody was busy trying to get to their . . . whatever they were trained in-- machine guns or the mortars. Of course, automatically the squad leaders and the mortar platoon sergeant and everybody had chores to do. The mortar sergeant, his responsibility was to go down to the motor pool and round up his drivers and get the trucks up to the company to load the guns and ammunition and what-not to take out to the field. I

wouldn't name any particular incident that would look funny to me because, like I say, we didn't have time for that.

Marcello: Did you see any individual acts of bravery during this period, that is, above and beyond somebody doing what was expected of him?

Matula: In our time of Army life, there was nothing that you could call that was beyond the line of duty because, like I said, we were trained soldiers, and everybody was expected to do one particular thing, and whenever an attack came, you were supposed to know how to get to your gun, how to man it, and how to put it into action. I wouldn't say that there was any extraordinary bravery. At least as far as I know, there were no extra medals awarded to anybody. Of course, those came hard in our outfit. They came a lot harder to us because we were Regular Army people, and they just didn't hand those out to Regular Army people.

Marcello: What did you do immediately following the attack?

Matula: Following the attack, I would say that it took fifteen minutes for these trucks to get to the barracks and forty-five minutes for us to get everything loaded and

on the trucks and within three hours, we were in our positions in Ewa sub-sector, which was our pre-arranged defensive positions.

Marcello: What did you do when you got there?

Matula: When we got to the Ewa sub-sector, naturally we went into alert precautions. In other words, we went ahead, we opened all the foxholes initially, and then, of course, from there on we strung barbed wire and communication trenches and what-not.

Marcello: Despite your lack of sleep the night before, were you still fairly alert later on in the evening and this sort of thing?

Matula: Yes, we were alert because the first three nights after the Pearl Harbor attack there was no sleep. There were around-the-clock fortification jobs to be done; there were patrols that went out twenty-four hours a day; there were so many crank calls coming in to the regimental CP; there were Japanese being parachuted all over our area, and everytime we got a call, of course, we had to send a detail out to check it out. Nine times out of ten, when we got there, it was nothing but a Filipino working in a cane field shaking a cane pole out there. I would say

this, there was quite a few trigger-happy people the first few nights because of the fact they didn't actually know what was happening. Whether the enemy actually had landed or hadn't landed, we didn't know.

Marcello: I'm sure that the base was one big rumor mill.

Matula: Yes, there were Japanese who landed all around us (chuckle).

Marcello: And I'm sure that you believed every one of those rumors.

Matula: Well, you had to. You didn't know . . . you didn't . . . you couldn't take it for granted. You had to believe it until you found out for yourself that it wasn't so.

Marcello: You mentioned that during those first couple of nights there were a lot of trigger-happy soldiers around. I'm sure that sporadic gunfire occurred all during the night.

Matula: That is correct. If anything would move during the night, it got shot at.

Marcello: We mentioned awhile ago that there were several villages close to Schofield where Japanese lived. Were any steps taken to secure these villages or anything of this nature?

Matula: I could not comment on this because this was the job of the military police itself, and as I understand it, all Japanese were rounded up and put into security compounds and processed by the military establishment itself.

Marcello: What did Schofield look like in the aftermath of the attack? In other words, can you describe the physical damage that was done there?

Matula: Well, as far as Schofield Barracks itself was concerned, outside of some of the machine gun bullets that went into the barracks, it wasn't damaged very much. However, like I said, a couple of blocks from us . . . well, I say a couple of blocks . . . a half a mile from us where Wheeler Field was, as we were going out to the Ewa sub-sector, we passed by the Wheeler Field, and, of course, the main hangars of Wheeler Field where they repaired the airplanes were complete collapsed, and all the airplanes that were lined up for inspection on Saturday were all destroyed on the ground where they inspected that Saturday morning. Of course, what casualties were at Wheeler Field, we didn't at that time know because there were . . . if you heard rumors, that was it.

Marcello: What were your emotional reactions once you were able to see the damage and realize the extent of it?

Matula: Well, I don't think we had very much emotion there because the thing we were concerned with was to get into our positions and to be able to defend the island. That was our job. Actually, it shook me up to see all these airplanes destroyed, but it never even occurred to me in the second thought that these were the people that were supposed to be up above us protecting us. In other words, these planes that were destroyed on the ground were exactly the planes

that were supposed to give us the protection while we were out in the field.

Marcello: How did your opinion toward the Japanese change at this point?

Matula: Well, at this particular point, like I said before, I actually didn't have time to think. I actually didn't get the opinion, I guess you would say, of a Japanese until I really got into a battle at Guadalcanal with them, and that's where we really . . . of course, we weren't told about the casualty list for a long, long, long time, either. Had we known what the casualty list was, I'm sure that our responses would have been a whole lot different, and I presume the reason that they didn't tell us the list of the casualties was for the protection probably of the Japanese civilian population, too--hatred for them and so forth.

Marcello: How did you feel that the Japanese were able to pull off something like this?

Matula: It was just hard to believe that it could possibly have been done.

Marcello: Would you say that the base was unprepared, or would you say that it simply was not alert?

Matula: I would just say that somebody went to sleep, and it wasn't us because we were supposed to have . . . to begin with, we were supposed to have the Navy out patrolling the sea, and secondarily, we were supposed to have been protected by the Air Corps, which was supposed to reconnaissance the area for our protection; thirdly, we were supposed to have one of the finest communications systems in the Army because we were actually the only two Regular Army divisions that were up to full strength. I think that there was a division in the Philippines that was up to full strength at that time and fully trained for warfare. I think these were . . . the Philippines themselves, what they called themselves was the "shock troops." They were highly qualified soldiers. Of course, we were trained just as well as these "shock troops" were supposed to have been.

Marcello: This is the only question in which I will give you the opportunity to use the benefit of hindsight, but do you blame any particular individuals for what occurred on December 7?

Matula: Personally, I think that the breakdown must have come up from the higher echelons. I know that Admiral Kimmel and General Short took the rap for what happened at Pearl Harbor, but I sincerely do not believe that it was their fault. I believe that there was a higher echelon above them that didn't give them the correct dope and information as to what was going on. In other words, somewhere along the line there must have been a break in communications, possibly deliberately broken. I couldn't tell you.