

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
NUMBER
257

Interview with
Hershel E. Fansler
December 5, 1974

Place of Interview: Anaheim, California
Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello
Terms of Use: Open
Approved: Hershel E. Fansler
(Signature)
Date: Dec 5, 1974

COPYRIGHT © 1975 THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF NORTH TEXAS STATE
UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF DENTON

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording or by any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Coordinator of the Oral History Collection or the University Archivist, North Texas State University, Denton, Texas 76203.

Oral History Collection

Hershel E. Fansler

Interviewer: Dr. Ronald E. Marcello

Place of Interview: Anaheim, California Date: December 5, 1974

Dr. Marcello: This is Ron Marcello interviewing Hershel Fansler for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on December 5, 1974, in Anaheim, California. I am interviewing Mr. Fansler 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. Fansler, to begin this interview, would you just very briefly give me a biographical sketch of yourself? In other words, tell me when you were born, where you were born, your education--things of that nature. Just be very brief and general.

Mr. Fansler: I was born April 22, 1920, in Schofield Barracks. My father was a master sergeant. I went to school there--the school right outside Schofield Barracks--in a little town called Wahiawa. The name of the school was Leilehua. It was a first grade to a twelfth grade school. Since my

father was an enlisted man, at that time before the war they could homestead. So he stayed there until I was sixteen years old. In 1936, he was transferred back to Fort Benning, Georgia. I finished high school at Columbus High School, Columbus, Georgia. Like father like son, I joined the service.

Marcello: Why did you enter the service? Was it because of the influence of your father?

Fansler: I believe it is. That's practically all I knew. Being born and raised and spending most of my life in an Army post, I knew it backwards and forward. I was the paper boy in Schofield Barracks, which had a population of over 50,000 people. It was considered the largest populated Army post under United States jurisdiction. I joined the service, and I went back to Hawaii in 1938 as a recruit and joined the . . . was assigned to the 11th Field Artillery.

Marcello: Now you mentioned that you went back to the Hawaiian Islands as a recruit. You did not take any basic training in the United States?

Fansler: I took a little bit at Fort McPherson, Georgia, for a few weeks before they shipped us to Charleston, South Carolina. From Charleston, South Carolina, why, they

moved me over there, and I completed the rest of my training over there in the 11th Field Artillery at Schofield Barracks.

Marcello: This was a common procedure, was it not?

Fansler: Yes.

Marcello: In other words, basic training in those days didn't operate the way it does today.

Fansler: No, it didn't. It was strictly voluntary, of course.

Marcello: A lot of times you went to your permanent station and took your basic training at the permanent station.

Fansler: That's right, yes.

Marcello: What did you think about returning to the Hawaiian Islands? Did you look forward to it with a great deal of eagerness and anticipation?

Fansler: Oh, yes, I did because, naturally, I knew so many people there--not only military personnel but also had several civilian friends that I palled around with that I knew there in school that lived in Honolulu and Wahiawa. I was anxious to get back there and join them because I had spent most of my life there.

Marcello: At the time that you joined the service, I'm sure that you had no idea whatsoever that the country within a couple of years would be plunging into a world war.

Fansler: None whatsoever. To me, there was no other life except service life. It was all I knew. I didn't know anything about civilian life.

Marcello: So you got to the Hawaiian Islands, and I gather that you were assigned to Schofield Barracks. What was basic training like there at Schofield Barracks?

Fansler: Well, it was very routine. Everything was cut-and-dried. You were assigned to an organization, and you were placed in a battery. In that battery, of course, why, you had squad leaders, and you had platoon leaders. You had squadron commanders, and you went through different routines. Being in the field artillery, we had 155 millimeter howitzers which we had to learn how to do cannoneer's hop on. That means that you learned all the different aspects of firing that gun. Also, of course, you had your routine foot drills that you had to go through. You had your guard duties to perform, and, naturally, your KP's, your fatigue functions.

All of this was a snap for me, and I want you to understand that. To give you a good example, since I knew the service, I knew just what to expect. In fact, I did the unusual things. Like, I would buy uniforms that I never wore and hung them in my foot locker . . . I mean,

hung them in my wall locker for inspection. For inspection, I shellacked my shoes which I never wore. All I had to do was wipe them off with a cloth. I had toilet articles which I never used. I had socks in such-and-such a way with my serial number exposed, which was required by regulations. All I had to do anytime there was an inspection was to open my locker, wipe my shoes off, open my foot locker, and everything was ready. Consequently, I never got gigged or reprimanded or punished for any inspections. Besides that, I was . . . many times, I was a supernumerary. When guard duty came off, I got a special job at regimental headquarters running messages instead of having to pull guard duty because I had stepped into a uniform that was specially creased and all that kind of stuff.

I knew all of the angles. For example, my bed. You could drop a quarter on it, and it would bounce eight feet because I had special slats made which I ran down the sides of the bed and tightened the bed up. I knew all of these angles because I had learned them from the soldiers, having lived there all my life. I saw how they pulled these little things. I had little wooden blocks shaped like eggs, which my socks were wrapped around and which made them all look exactly the same. See what I mean?

So to me it wasn't a difficult job getting ready for inspections and working hard to do it. I knew the little things like what to polish with my brass, my webbed belts, my little open holes in my webbed belts. You could shave in them and all those kinds of things. Consequently, military life to me was a racket because there was nothing new and I didn't have to work hard for it.

Last, but not least, I was an athlete. That helped a great deal in the organization at that time because before World War II, why, Schofield Barracks was like a big college.

Marcello: You might go into the athletic activities just a little bit because I think it is an important part of your Army life prior to Pearl Harbor.

Fansler: Well, when I went over there I had a main desire to go to West Point. Although I never studied hard when I was in school, grades came easy for me. I wish I had studied. I could have done much better. I went over there, and while I was in the 11th Field Artillery, I took an examination to go to what they called the West Point Prep School over there. Over 300 people took this examination. Not only were there military personnel, but also civilians could take this examination. Out of the 300, they selected

thirty. We differentiated from the rest of the troops by wearing campaign hats that had yellow one-inch ribbons wrapped around the hatband.

I was twenty-sixth or one of the thirty they accepted. We went to this particular classroom every day to study. They started cutting them after one month's time. It was very difficult. Those who were able to finagle a congressional or a senatorial or a presidential appointment, all they had to do was make a 66 $\frac{2}{3}$. But the rest of us were advised that if we didn't make 97 or 98, we didn't have a chance because West Point was a political school. It was mostly political appointments that made it. Only twenty-five each year were accepted for West Point. That's all over the entire United States. So you can imagine how stiff the competition was.

Well, I was one of those that lasted and I studied. I never studied so hard in my life. I made 94 on the final exam. It wasn't enough. I had written my father previously and asked him to see if he could swing a congressional appointment for me. He sent me a telegram and told me to make it the hard way because I'd appreciate it. But I didn't make it.

I could have gone back the next year. I was still young enough to go. But I was so disappointed and didn't want to go through that again. I guess being basically lazy, as I am, why, then I decided to specialize in military administration. I went to first sergeant and company clerk school, and I took shorthand.

Marcello: Now you were still part of the 11th Artillery Regiment at this time?

Fansler: Right. I took shorthand and I took typing. Then I completed that course, and I transferred to the 8th Field Artillery, which was my father's old regiment. Then I joined Battery E. The first sergeant happened to be a Sergeant Luke, who was a good friend of my father's.

While I was there, even though I got along fine with the first sergeant . . . I was a battery clerk, and I made private first class. But at that time they had specialist ratings from first and sixth, fifth, fourth, third, second, and first. I wasn't getting any higher than the "first and fourth." I had heard rumors that down in the 3rd Engineers that they were looking for a clerk down there. If I could transfer down there,

I had a better chance. Well, I transferred to the 3rd Engineers. No, before that . . . I'm getting ahead of myself. I transferred to the Hawaiian Division Pack Train, which was also a unit in Schofield Barracks--a special troop organization. I made "first and first" in that organization. I was making all the payrolls and doing the paperwork as a clerk, a company clerk.

Marcello: What does this mean when you say you made "first and first?"

Fansler: I was private first class--specialist first class.

Marcello: I see.

Fansler: You're a PFC. But you get a specialist rating, which means each one of them got about twenty or twenty-two dollars more. Of course, at that time we were getting twenty-one dollars a month as a private.

Then I heard there was an opening in the 3rd Engineers as a corporal and a clerk. I was able to swing a transfer into the 3rd Engineers and became a corporal.

Well, at that time I went out for athletics. Now a military child, incidentally, does not have advantages of a civilian child because, naturally, you've got to keep your yard clean, and the home where you live has to be meticulous because MP's are constantly checking for

the beauty of the military post. So practically the only thing a military child can get involved in is athletics. Well, I loved athletics anyway. I played football, baseball, and knew practically every athlete at Schofield. So I went out for baseball in the 3rd Engineers and made corporal. Besides being a clerk in Company E, I also made All-Schofield, which was a very high rating.

Then I heard that there was an opening in the 804th Aviation Engineers, which was just being activated, for a staff sergeant to be personnel sergeant major. Well, I was able to transfer from the 3rd Engineers to the 804th Aviation Engineers. In a few months' time I was made staff sergeant. I was personnel sergeant major, which means I was the ranking non-commissioned officer. I had under me junior enlisted men who maintained all the records and files and the correspondence and the pay records and so forth of the personnel in the 804th Aviation Engineer Battalion. That brings us up to the time of what I was doing at the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Marcello: Was it very hard for you to get all of these transfers?

Fansler: No, it wasn't because I knew how to go about it, you see.

Marcello: You were still playing the angles.

Fansler: I was still playing the angles, yes (chuckle). I knew who to see and how to see and what to see.

Marcello: Okay, so let's go back and talk a little bit more about your athletic career. How much of your time did this take while you were in the Army in those pre-Pearl Harbor days? In other words, were you able to devote a great deal of time to athletics?

Fansler: Oh, yes, because I wasn't too popular--no athlete was--in any of the regiments because you sort of lived like a king. At that time--I hate to admit it--but the regimental commander's primary desire was to win the athletic supremacy trophy, which meant that their organization was the best athletic organization at the time. I like to refer to Schofield Barracks as being like a big college. There were eleven complete regiments. Each regiment had its own band and had cheerleaders composed of the daughters of the non-coms and officers and so forth. Each one had its mascot. They had parades. It was a requirement for each athletic contest--and they were generally on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays--for every individual, even including all of the officers and the regimental commander, to march to where the activity was--that particular football field, baseball field, boxing bowl,

track field, or wherever it was. You marched behind the band. You wore your Class A uniforms, spit-and-polish, and you sat up in the stands, and you rooted whether you liked it or not. Well, at that time your esprit de corps and competition was highly keen to such an extent that in the evenings it wasn't uncommon to have fist fights break out all over the post in different organizations over the results of the previous athletic contests. So besides being placed on what they call a Class B special duty at the gymnasium, which meant that you do nothing but report to the gym for practice, you also had a special training table where you ate special good steaks and so forth and the rest of the men didn't. Then, too, the regimental commanders at that time could appoint certain enlisted personnel up to the highest rank of master sergeant. Well, it wasn't uncommon to find that in almost every organization your top athletes were master sergeants after they'd made themselves.

Marcello: Keeping in mind that rank in that pre-Pearl Harbor Army was very, very slow, how long did it take a normal person to make master sergeant?

Fansler: Oh, ten or twelve years or so in some cases, and you had good men, too. But I've got to say this--and I'm not

referring to myself particularly--your athletes, it seems to me, were good soldiers, also, and they proved themselves, especially during the war--many heroic deeds that I heard about later on.

But as a good example, the 35th Infantry would win the football championship almost every year. Practically every one of them, the first string eleven men, were master sergeants. The 3rd Engineers, the outfit that I did belong to at one time, they had the best basketball team almost every year, and their top five were master sergeants. Then your championship boxers in your different organizations, your track stars in your different organizations, and your other athletes--they could be in baseball, football, also--that were good in a particular outfit, they were all up in rank, you see, your first string men. In fact, athletics was such a big part of Schofield Barracks that organizations would send certain men back to the States on a vacation to proselytize. They'd visit high schools and colleges just like your other schools through the day and find a fellow and say, "Look buddy, if you'll join the service and go back to Hawaii and come in my outfit, I can swing a deal and see that you'll make corporal right away and so forth if you'll play ball for us." As a result, they got a lot of terrific athletes.

It's known history throughout many of the colleges that many of the known athletes that are turned out of some of the colleges were previous athletes in Schofield Barracks who got college scholarships and came back and got their education that way before the war.

Marcello: How would you describe the military part of your training in those pre-Pearl Harbor days? In other words, was it excellent training? Was there plenty of time to train you? Was it thorough?

Fansler: Yes. When you had your military training, it was thorough. When you took it, when you went on Class B special duty . . . and, of course, other men just didn't sit around there and do nothing. They were learning their guns. Naturally, every piece of equipment you had, you were able to field strip it or detail strip it. You constantly were undergoing drills and exercises and reconnaissance and operational procedures and military activities and bivouacs and all those kinds of things. The training was excellent. There's no doubt about it. It's just that when you were an athlete preparing for your contest and you're on special duty, that's what you naturally concentrate on. But when that was over . . . say you just played baseball. When that was over you went back and you did your soldiering. But, of course, you had that rank. But you had to keep it up. It somehow--not that I'm glorifying athletes--seems that the military athlete

was looked up . . . well, he had the distinction of having that rank and so forth and the fact that the regimental commander and officers thought enough of him to put him in that position. When he was an athlete he got back and really dug into it, and because of the esprit de corps the rest of the fellows were sort of proud of him. Naturally, they didn't like the special treatment he got during the time.

Marcello: How would you describe the morale of the troops in that pre-Pearl Harbor Army?

Fansler: It was beautiful. Not just an Army. Naturally, we had All-Schofield contests between Schofield organizations. Then we had our departmental activities where the best team in Schofield would play the best team at Fort Shafter or Fort Kamehameha or Fort DeRussy. They would play the best Air Force organizations. They had their intramural things. Then they'd play the best Air Force for the All-Service championship. It wasn't uncommon for the best military team over there to come back to the States and maybe play the best team at Camp Lejeune or the best at Camp Pendleton Marine team or military teams in the States. They got a lot of publicity, you got a lot of fun, and you saw some of the best athletes in the world who . . . some of them wound up playing professional baseball.

Marcello: Are you saying, in effect, that, generally speaking, the morale of the troops in the Hawaiian Islands at that time was relatively high?

Fansler: Oh, yes.

Marcello: You had your normal griping, of course.

Fansler: You were proud of belonging to an outfit. You wore an insignia, a metal insignia which they don't have now in most organizations, which you were proud of. It was strictly a competitive thing. You were proud of your band. You were proud of the history of your organization in previous wars. There was always some type of activity, whether it was athletic or not. Just like the service is today, you could make out of it what you wanted to make out of it. If you wanted to just lolligag along, you could. If you wanted to take advantage of the education activities, you could attend courses at night and so forth, just like you have today. You could make something out of it.

Then there was the class system which I liked in the service, which, unfortunately, they don't have today. You had your officers, and you had your non-commissioned officers, and you had your enlisted men. There was respect. A salute meant something. When somebody gave an order, it meant something. Today there's more fraternization. As a

result, that respect for authority and esprit de corps and morale isn't there today that was then. I don't think it'll ever be recreated. But I think it was a wonderful thing. There was a lot of morale and esprit de corps.

Marcello: What sort of liberty routine did you have at Schofield Barracks during those pre-Pearl Harbor days?

Fansler: If you kept your nose clean and didn't get in any trouble and got along with the first sergeant, almost anybody could have off at night if you had completed your basic training and you weren't assigned to a particular assignment. Just as long as you were back in time for reveille. It wasn't difficult for anybody to get a pass when they wanted to. Honolulu was twenty-one miles away. There was always taxis, or you could hitchhike or have friends to go down with. At that time it didn't take much money if you know your way around. We also went to Wahiawa, which was right outside Schofield Barracks. There was the dance halls, and there was taverns. You made your own friends and were invited to their homes and things like that. It was a very wide open and very free. You could get liberty or get a pass very easy whenever you wanted it.

Marcello: How often would you perhaps get into Honolulu, let's say, in a month's time? You'll have to estimate this, of course.

Fansler: Well, I went quite frequently. I was one of those that didn't like to hang around the barracks. I love music and I like to dance. I had a buddy named Jack Dando. Jack lives now in Hanalaupa, Maui, over there. He's married and he's got eight children. We were buddies and stuck right together. Jack had a beautiful tenor voice. At that time I played the piano. We could go into town without a nickel. We always had nice clothes, and we hardly had a cent on us. We'd go into town and wound up with people buying us drinks and taking us out to dinner and having a ball because Jack could sing and I could play the piano. We were popular because we could do those things. We'd hitchhike down and hitchhike back and get back to the organization in time to stand reveille.

Marcello: What were some of the places you would normally frequent when you would go to downtown Honolulu? I assume that you went to downtown Honolulu.

Fansler: Most of the time, right. Well, you name it--practically anyplace where there was dancing and music. The names would be too many for me to mention. We liked Lai Chai's a lot. It's a very popular Chinese restaurant there. It had some of the best entertainment you could have. We

liked to go to dance halls of which there were a lot. Anyplace where there was music and singing, that's generally where you'd find Jack and I.

Marcello: How did this liberty routine change as one got closer and closer to December 7, 1941, or didn't it change?

Fansler: It didn't change at all. I am covering a span now of my active military service which is about three years from '38 to '41. It was still the same right on up to that time. In fact, at the time of the attack, I was returning that morning from Honolulu with a friend of mine when it occurred.

Marcello: Now as one gets closer and closer to December 7, how did your training routine change at Schofield? In other words, were there more alerts or maneuvers or things of that nature?

Fansler: I didn't notice it.

Marcello: You had just come off an alert, had you not, right before December 7, or a great many of the units did? They had been out in the field and this sort of thing.

Fansler: Yes, it's one thing that I did notice, now that you mention it, that I never gave a thought before. There were more diversified organizations being activated. They were getting ready to activate a 367th Special Service Engineers, which

was a combination of a combat as well as a construction engineer organization which I eventually wound up in as sergeant major, as a master sergeant. The 804th Aviation Engineers, the organization I belonged to at the time of the attack, hadn't been organized but about eight months, which was a specialized type of engineer battalion constructed primarily for laying airfields quickly with chain-type fields on rough terrain and able to move in equipment and so forth quickly. I did notice new organizations being activated and personnel being shifted.

Marcello: Now were you getting an influx of either reservists or draftees at this time yet? I'm speaking now of the time immediately prior to Pearl Harbor.

Fansler: Yes, I noticed that, yes.

Marcello: Did these in any way affect the morale or the routine of the Army? In other words, you know, for awhile there everybody was a volunteer. Then all of a sudden you get perhaps some reservists and draftees coming in. Did you notice this having any effect at all on the morale on the troops . . . any effect on the routine?

Fansler: No, and I blame that on the fact that . . . from my own personal viewpoint. I didn't pay too much attention to it because I was so involved in things. I was the type of person that was involved, and I loved people. I loved

music. I played the piano, and I was what you called a six-to-five o'clock soldier. After five o'clock I liked to get out and do my own thing. I'd mingle with the civilian personnel in town and had many friends over there because I could play music and because I was an athlete.

Your question brought back to me these changes which, at that time, I didn't pay any attention to as having any particular military significance. But that isn't saying that there wasn't any significance behind it. It was just my own viewpoint. I was involved in other activities and didn't pay any attention to it.

Marcello: Do you remember that particular maneuver that occurred right before December 7? In fact, I think you went off maneuvers that Friday or that Saturday.

Fansler: Yes, I remember.

Marcello: Do you remember anything about that particular maneuver and what you did during those maneuvers?

Fansler: Yes, I remember. I remember that my outfit was sent out in a . . . down in a particular . . . what they called "Third Gulch." There were a lot of gulches over there. On the island of Oahu where Schofield is, there is the Koolau Range of Mountains and the Waianae Range of mountains. We were assigned to a particular section which we called

the "Third Gulch." We were at the Waianae Range of mountains and the "Third Gulch" down from them. In that particular area, we bivouacked and performed certain sentry duties. Some of us slept in sugar cane fields and reeds and around that area.

Marcello: I assume that, of course, while you were on those maneuvers, liberty had been cancelled. You didn't get liberty until you came off the maneuvers.

Fansler: Right.

Marcello: So I would assume, therefore, that on that Saturday night of December 6, you were all ready to go.

Fansler: Yes, sir. I sure was.

Marcello: How closely during this period prior to Pearl Harbor were you keeping abreast with world events?

Fansler: I never paid much attention to it. As I said, I was involved with my own little activities. I had a ball. The service wasn't a rigorous activity to me as it was to other people. To me it was a way of life that I had already known through my family connections. I just lived it to the fullest extent and day-to-day.

Marcello: Did you ever give any thought at all to the possibilities of the Hawaiian Islands ever being attacked by the Japanese or any other foreign invaders?

Fansler: No, I was under the impression . . . I always heard through my father and his friends and other people--having lived

there most of my life--that the islands were impregnable because I knew that Diamond Head and the mountains were flooded with coast artillery guns. I knew of the complete regiments there. I knew, generally, the strength of the islands as far as the big 16-inch coast artillery guns, the field artillery units that had 155-millimeter howitzers, the field artillery units that had British 75-millimeter guns, the complete infantry organizations, the special unit organizations. I assumed that it was impregnable and impossible to be hit, and I'm sure that my view was very common.

Marcello: I'm sure that the matter of distance would have influenced your thinking. After all, the Hawaiian Islands were several thousands miles away from Japan.

Fansler: Yes.

Marcello: Probably, if there would be a war against Japan, the Philippines would be a likely target rather than the Hawaiian Islands, since the Philippines were much closer to Japan.

Fansler: Right. That's exactly the way I thought.

Marcello: When you thought of an individual Japanese during this pre-Pearl Harbor period, what sort of a person . . . what sort of an image was conjured up in your own mind?

Fansler: Well, I want you to remember now, Dr. Marcello, that I went to school over there as a boy. In Hawaii, it's a hodgepodge of nationalities. I had Japanese friends in school that I grew up with and that I played with. There were all types of nationalities--Portuguese, Chinese, Hawaiian, Filipino. You name it; it's all there. In fact, the biggest percentage of the population in the Hawaiian Islands even today is Japanese. I had many friends. I just never gave it any thought of . . . I didn't think in terms of racism. I didn't think in terms of national antagonism--never gave it a thought. To me, a Japanese person was just like any other person. They were friends and were a lot of fun to play ball and to run around with.

Marcello: You mentioned this little town on the outskirts of Schofield Barracks that you frequented from time to time. What was the name of that town?

Fansler: Wahiawa.

Marcello: Wahiawa is the one that I was thinking of. Is there a particular bar there named Charlie Hasabe's?

Fansler: Not there in Wahiawa. Now that's in the northern part of Schofield Barracks. It's called Hasabe's. It was up in the northern part just outside. It wasn't over in Wahiawa.

It's sitting north of the island, and it was just outside the northern gate as you started to go up Kole Kole Pass. Hasabe's had a big store. I've seen Charlie Hasabe many times. Not only do I remember him as a kid, but I also remember him as a man running his place. He had members of his family and a big store and sold all types of curios and activities plus having a bar up there and a place to eat as well as a large general room with a big curio store.

Marcello: There were rumors--and I've heard several of the other Pearl Harbor veterans talk about this--that Hasabe was actually a Japanese agent. Have you ever heard anything to that effect or anything about that?

Fansler: The thing that I have heard is that he and his son manned the radio that guided the Japanese planes in. Now I am speaking from hearsay. I want you to understand that. I also heard that he and his son were executed by a firing squad at the main guardhouse at Schofield Barracks.

Marcello: Did you ever hear of a possibility that these Japanese did represent some sort of a threat in terms of fifth columnists or saboteurs or anything of this nature?

Fansler: No . . .

Marcello: That is, you know, in your general bull sessions around the barracks and this sort of thing.

Fansler: Not until after the attack. Before that I never heard anything like that. It was so unexpected, so inconceivable. You never gave it a thought, so you weren't on the alert for it.

Marcello: Okay, I think this more or less brings us up to the actual period right before Pearl Harbor itself. What I want you to do at this point is to give me in as much detail as you can remember your routine on Saturday, December 6, 1941. Then after you go through that, we'll go into and discuss December 7, 1941. But let's talk about the 6th first of all. I assume you were coming off maneuvers. Pick up the story from there.

Fansler: At this time I had a good friend who was a first sergeant in the 804th Aviation Engineers, and his name was Sergeant Williams. I was the personnel sergeant major, which meant that I was the administrative non-commissioned officer for the organization. We were good friends. I owned a '39 Ford. We had friends in town, and we visited them. It was awful easy to find what you called a luau among your friends, which is a party. We left that afternoon and visited these friends who had a beach home on the beach over at Kailua, which was the part of the island across from Waikiki. We spent the night there and went swimming with a crowd of our friends of mixed nationalities--

Hawaiians, Japanese, Portuguese, Caucasians. It was quite a large party. We went swimming. We roasted hot dogs and marshmallows on the beach. Practically everybody there over there played instruments. Even I could play the ukulele and tune a guitar. There was singing. We just had a ball all night long. We had to be back by eleven o'clock that morning.

Marcello: But you stayed all through that evening.

Fansler: All night long . . . all night right over at Kailua.

Marcello: What time would you estimate that you turned in that night?

Fansler: I don't think we turned in at all, to give you the facts. It was one of those parties where you stayed up all night and went moonlight swimming at night and . . . just singing and dancing, just partied all night long.

Marcello: Generally speaking, what sort of condition were you in the next morning? Had you had a lot to drink that night, or were you still in fairly good shape or just exactly . . .

Fansler: I never drank very much. I wasn't a prude. I took a drink or two, but I just enjoyed playing music. I played at the drop of a hat--ukulele and guitar and sing--and I loved to swim, and I loved to dance. So I wasn't inebriated. In fact, I don't recall having drunk at all.

If I did, I might have had a couple. I might have had a beer or two. But I was completely rational and in control of my senses when we left to come back to Schofield Barracks.

As we were coming back, we had to pass the main gate at Wheeler Field. Just before we got to the main gate at Wheeler Field . . .

Marcello: What time were you coming back? You mentioned that you didn't have to be back at Schofield until eleven o'clock.

Fansler: Right.

Marcello: You had apparently started back relatively early.

Fansler: We started back early, right. Now I'd say they attacked . . . I think they pinpointed the time about 7:55. About 7:50 we were just outside of Wheeler Field. We heard these airplanes overhead.

Marcello: Did you have to go through Wheeler Field to get to . . .

Fansler: No, we were right beside it.

Marcello: I see. You were skirting it.

Fansler: Right. The main street . . . you could cut off to the left and go right through the gate or keep right on going and go through one of the three different gates into Schofield Barracks. We were just about outside one of them. We heard the planes overhead and I remarked how strange they sounded. They didn't sound like ours. I remember him making that remark.

Marcello: Who made that remark?

Fansler: I think I did.

Marcello: I see.

Fansler: One of us did. I'm not sure. But one of us--I don't know if it was myself or Sergeant Williams--made the remark. It sounded like they were Marine planes. All of a sudden we heard the bombs drop. We saw the smoke billowing up over to our left. We slowed down and looked out of the car. Then we could see some of the planes flying over Wheeler Field and dropping their bombs.

Marcello: What was your reaction?

Fansler: I was surprised. It was a reaction of complete surprise. Then we saw the rising sun insignias on the airplanes and knew what they were. Well, immediately, I remember floor-boarding the Ford, taking off to my outfit as fast as I could. I remember going so fast--it stuck out in my mind--that I found myself sitting on top of him. He was sitting in the right seat.

Marcello: Now who was this?

Fansler: Sergeant Williams, the first sergeant. I was sitting on his lap, and I got back over. That's how I was tilting the car. Then I remember one time him sitting on top of me. I was driving so fast that I didn't realize. It's a wonder I didn't turn the car over because we were speeding so fast.

I got back to the outfit, and we ran in there. My outfit, I understand from talking to several other members of the services over a period of years, was typical in that there were very few there in the barracks. Most everybody took off during the weekend unless they had a special duty to perform like cooks and KP and stuff like that. I'd say there were approximately twelve men still in their bunks in the outfit.

I remember both of us going in there and shaking fellows and saying, "The Japs are attacking! The Japs are attacking!" They said, "Oh, you're crazy! Nothing is happening like that!" And they used a few four-letter words and things like that. "Go back to bed! You're drunk!" That kind of stuff. But finally, we grabbed a couple of them by the nape of the neck and led them up to the window and let them hear the explosions going on and hearing the planes droning, and they realized something was happening. So we charged down, and the commanding officer wasn't there and the supply sergeant wasn't there.

Marcello: By this time would you say there was still confusion yet, or had you now collected your thoughts, and were you acting in a professional manner? How would you describe your reactions? First of all, how long did it take you to get back to Schofield after you had realized that Japanese planes were attacking?

Fansler: I'd say about fifteen minutes.

Marcello: Okay.

Fansler: I'd like to reiterate a little bit and call your attention to the fact that we knew that as we were speeding to the organization that there were several people running. We saw people running and screaming throughout Schofield Barracks as we were going up to our outfit and knew what was happening. We heard the planes overhead, and we knew that people were excited. We saw women screaming and yelling, coming out of their houses. Troops were running around. It seemed like nobody was organized. Everybody was just running around in circles. That was the impression we got.

Well, getting back to my organization, we went down to the supply room, and it was locked up. We took a fire axe and busted in the supply room door. We found that most of the weapons were not assembled. The rifles were full of cosmoline. Some of us, including myself, were able to grab .45's and a handful of clips. I remember standing behind a tree close to my outfit shooting at the airplanes when I saw them come close by with a .45 behind a tree, tears running down my eyes and scared to death. I remember that.

Marcello: Describe how these airplanes were coming in. They weren't actually doing very much bombing at Schofield, were they?

It was mainly strafing there, was it not? They were after Ford Island and Hickam Field and those places.

Fansler: Fortunately, at the time we hit Wheeler Field, they were concentrating on the military objectives, which was Wheeler Field. About the time we got up to the outfit and got our weapons, then they had accomplished their military mission, and you might as well say they were nuisance-strafing.

Marcello: They were leaving their calling cards.

Fansler: Right. Anything they saw move around, you could see them swoop down through the parade grounds and up through the buildings and so forth. Anything that moved . . . for example, they shot bullets into the hospital there and into the different headquarters, into the different buildings. Anything that moved, they were nuisance-strafing. They'd already accomplished their military mission, primarily, which was Wheeler Field.

Marcello: How close were these Japanese planes coming to the ground? Some people said that they came down so close they could actually see the faces of the pilots, and the planes actually just seemed to be gliding in.

Fansler: That's right. They were close enough where they would come and swoop over the rooftops. I would say that they

were flying at rooftop level because I remember seeing them swoop down and then pull up away real quick. Of course, naturally, I didn't hit anything with a .45 pistol, but I sure tried. I knew it was more of a reflex action than anything else. I was scared to death.

Marcello: It was a reflex action, and I think it was probably also an indication of your sense of futility. You had to do something, even as ineffective as shooting back with a .45 would have been.

Fansler: Sure. The way I felt then, I would have thrown rocks if I didn't have a .45.

Marcello: Well, how long would you estimate that you were actually firing back at these planes, or how long . . . what sort of a span of time are we speaking of?

Fansler: I'd say about ten minutes as far as I'm concerned.

Marcello: And then what happened at that point?

Fansler: It seemed to fade away. To me it seemed that I was personally involved in it for about ten minutes. It could have been longer. It's so hard to say. But I realized it wasn't very long. I don't think I got off more than two clips which, of course, is twelve bullets.

So you go back to your outfit, and here's the few of us just standing around practically amazed and talking

like mad. Everybody's talking about what's happening. So you have no orders or anything. You're just waiting. You go back and walk around, or you stand outside and you look. You hear screaming and yelling and so forth. You hear guns going off.

Finally, I'd say in about an hour, the commander and other officers start infiltrating back into your organization. In about approximately two hours, everybody was back. You asked your commanding officer or your other officers, but they don't know anything.

But somehow we put this particular alert plan into action, where we all get into our fatigue uniforms, put our packs on, and we go down to this particular area in the "Third Gulch" where we had been before on maneuvers. Our military objective at that time was to guard this particular area in a defensive movement. I remember that since I was a staff sergeant I had a pistol and didn't carry a rifle, but I remember having a certain group that I was responsible for to protect a certain area. We were stretched out. All along this gulch, all around the area of Schofield, we were connected with the 367th Engineers, with the 3rd Engineers, and then there's your different other organizations all along the line in the defensive unit. I realized that this happened in the morning, see.

I'd say about 10:30 we were being marched down to this area. You hear all kinds of rumors. You're assigned here. The commander's got everybody in position.

Marcello: What were some of the rumors that you heard?

Fansler: Well, you hear rumors that they're coming over Kole Kole Pass. They're marching in. You hear rumors that they're coming up from Honolulu. You hear rumors that they've landed at Kailua Beach, and they're coming up that way. Or you hear rumors that they've landed at Haleiwa, or they've landed at Nanakuli. How they developed, I don't know (chuckle). But naturally every one of them were just having an alert like that. Then your usual basic instruction orders were coming down to you--that you're not to make any sound, and you're supposed to watch a particular area, and you had a particular countersign you had to give and all of that kind of stuff. You got orders to full patrol a certain area for certain hours and for certain shifts and things like that.

Finally, that evening, why, they brought around the mess wagon from the kitchen. I forget what they fed us at the time. I didn't feel like eating. We were scared to death.

That wasn't so bad in the daytime, but the worst part of this whole thing, even more worse than seeing

those planes, I think, was at nighttime when night settled in. All day long you hear guns going off and you see smoke. But at nighttime it really is bad when it got dark because you're down here in the gulches. Okay, you have a particular area to guard. You hear all kinds of movement. It could be wild boars or wild rabbits or mongoose or anything in the gulches, see. People were shooting at anything that moved. You heard people screaming like they were getting shot. Around you you hear small arms. You hear big guns in the background going off. You can see the sky lighted up from Wheeler Field and even as far as down to Hickam Field. You can see flashes and lights and all things, everything going up around the mountains. You're hearing people cussing, "Turn out that light! Don't light that cigarette!" You heard all kinds of things, plus all of the rumors that you're hearing.

The worst part of it was that night. I had no idea how many people shot their own men. I had heard from talking to other people that approximately eleven of our own B-17's were shot down by our own anti-aircraft when they were trying to land after coming in from San Francisco to Hickam Field. But that was the terrible part, is what went on that night.

Marcello: I would assume that you did not get very much sleep that night.

Fansler: No, no. My goodness, no! You expected them to come at any time, you see. Rifles had bayonets on them, and machine guns were all set up and so forth.

Marcello: From what a great many of the other Pearl Harbor survivors have told me, during this entire period they found that they became very, very thirsty. Did you find that you had cottonmouth or whatever you wish to call it? Did you have this inordinate desire to have some water or something to drink, some sort of a liquid?

Fansler: Yes. Yes, I think that's the result of the fear that's in you. I think that's a natural, normal, physical reaction to be that way when you're scared.

Marcello: In the aftermath of the attack, how did your attitude toward the Japanese change? Now you mentioned that before the Pearl Harbor attack you had very many close friends and associates who were Japanese ancestry. Did your attitude change any at all as a result of the attack?

Fansler: No, it didn't. It's difficult to change your attitude when for so many years, like, going to the first grade through the tenth grade with Japanese students who were your friends as little boys and see them grow up to tenth grade and having been swimming with them and having known them in town and attended parties with them and singing with them . . . I didn't think of it in terms of . . . to

me it was the enemy all right. But I didn't think of it in terms of Japanese. I never have. To me it could have been Norwegians or Filipinos or any other nationality. As far as the Japanese themselves, I didn't have that particular feelings, and I think it's the result of me having been raised with them, you know, and gone to school with them and partied with them and knowing them intimately.

Marcello: Did you have feelings of anger after the attack, that is, feelings of anger toward those who had perpetrated this disaster?

Fansler: I think that's natural. I think just like if I should strike you in the face that it's a normal reaction. Sure, I did. I thought it was terrible, especially when one of my best friends that I had known in the service, Bill Emerson, who was stationed at Hickam Field, was killed. It hurt me very much. Sure, I felt anger but not towards any particular nationality. It was just whoever was causing this hurt to me, and I wanted to do something about it.

Also, I guess I was highly imbued with patriotism to a greater extent than the average person by being a soldier's son and knowing the military from top to bottom. To me, I was thinking in terms of defending my

country and protecting my country and things like that. Not that I'm trying to brag about being patriotic. I think it's because of my background of being born and raised in the service that I felt very patriotic about wanting to do something to defend my country.

Marcello: Did you see any funny things that occurred at all during the attack, even as tragic as this whole affair was? Under a great many circumstances, something funny will happen whether intentional or unintentional. Did you witness anything of that nature?

Fansler: Yes, (chuckle) I did. I saw fellows get excited and have their rifles and pistols jam. I saw them shoot at bushes. It wasn't funny at the time. But when I think about it now . . . I saw fellows slip and trip over rocks and so forth.

Marcello: In other words, there was a great deal of what you might call slapstick comedy of a sort going on.

Fansler: Right. Especially being down in the gulch and not knowing what to expect. Many comical things were said, and people were tripping over certain things. Fright produces frustration. You lose control of your coordination of your body, you know, because you're worrying who's in back of you or what's going on in front of you. It wasn't funny at the time. Later on, when you get to thinking about it, you recall many funny things and things like that.

Marcello: Did you ever witness any individual acts of heroism that stand out particularly in your mind?

Fansler: No, not in my organization because we weren't close to people who were wounded. We were way up in the northern part of Schofield Barracks and stayed right there at the barracks, whereas concerning the people who were wounded and injured and killed and so forth in the actual attack against military installations was concerned, we were farther away from them. The closest to the actual action was the strafing of the barracks which lasted about ten minutes after we squared away to where I was.

Marcello: I would gather that Schofield really didn't put up a whole lot of resistance, that is, during the attack itself.

Fansler: No, we really didn't.

Marcello: Any defenses you had against enemy aircraft supposedly would have come from Wheeler Field. I'm sure that's one of the reasons it was close by there, was it not?

Fansler: Not only that, but our resistance was not so much Schofield Barracks along as that actual defensive resistance would have been away from the barracks themselves. The troops were deployed like we were--down in the gulches away from Schofield. Many of the organizations were deployed along the mountain ranges and along the beach areas.

I would like to add this comment even though I wasn't personally involved. See, I stayed there in the Hawaiian Islands until 1947. Naturally, in knowing many people in different organizations and activities and discussing this thing over that period, I've come to the conclusion that about six hours after that attack no military organization in the world could have taken the Hawaiian Islands. I personally feel at that time that they could have. But I believe that six hours later and with everybody in their position with their guns manned . . . I happen to know that iron stanchions had been placed way out and surrounding the different parts of the islands where boats could have landed. Barbed wire fences were constructed. Gun emplacements were manned, and equipment was moved in here and there. I would say from conversation with people of other organizations that in six hours time nobody could have taken the island.

But at that time I can't help but feel that they would have, and I can't help but feel that had the Japanese known that we were as lax as we were that they could have taken the islands. But, of course, their main objective was to bottle up the fleet so they could hit the Philippines. But six hours later, I think it was impossible for them to take it over. We were ready then.