



Sharing girl scouts stories of hawai`i

EVENTS PRIOR TO AND AFTER DECEMBER 7, 1941

By Barbara Dew

Saturday, 12/6/1941: **On Saturday afternoon, December 6, 1941, the annual Shriners' football game was held at the Honolulu Stadium.** Since my father was a Shriner, we always attended this festive event. The Shriners, at halftime marched and then let thousands of balloons into the air while the crowd sang "I'm forever blowing bubbles". I always enjoyed this event as it was a fundraiser for the Shriners. A mainland college team played the University of Hawaii.

My steady boyfriend, captain of Punahou's football team and Student Body President, was over on Maui this weekend playing Maui High so **I went, after the Shriner's game,** with my mother and dad to a party. **There were lots of military brass there and there was talk of the Japanese and USA relations that night.** There were a few young people my age and we stuck to ourselves and didn't pay much attention to the grownups.

The next morning, mother, dad and I were in the kitchen in our breakfast nook around 7:30 to 8 am eating breakfast. I was planning to go to church with my best friend, that morning. **We heard a lot of planes flying above us, but we were used to that so at first didn't pay much attention to them.** Finally, my dad decided to turn on the radio (remember there was no TV in those days). As soon as he turned it on, we heard the news **"we are being attacked by Japanese planes. This is the real thing, it is not maneuvers."** And the announcer continued to give us news.

I said to my folks, that I would call my friend to see if we would be going to church! Can you imagine my stupidity? When I called, the first thing she said was "get off the phone, Barbara. We are at war. Of course we won't be going to church!"

The rest of the morning, we listened to the radio, we heard the planes and occasionally a bomb go off. About 3 blocks away one of our shells accidentally went off on Dowsett Avenue and hit a guest cottage on a property and killed the person inside. There were other instances that an occasional shell hit a house or business in town, but most of the damage was at Pearl Harbor, Hickman Air Base and Wheeler Field (at Schofield in Wahiawa).

When the bombing stopped around noon on Sunday, the Japanese left and the ambulances, hospitals were doing what they could to help the injured, my mother [Margaret Fritschi] got a call from the executive officer for the Girl Scouts of Oahu. Mother was the President of the Girl Scouts (although as I recall she was called the "commissioner" at that time). The Girl Scouts of Oahu headquarters was located on the Bay of Pearl Harbor around where the Pan American sea plane was located. **The Navy had called the Girl Scouts Executive Officer to say that they had to come down to their office and remove their things as the Navy had to take over the space.**

The Executive Officer wanted mother to drive with her and help to remove the belongings. My father had a fit and told her he didn't want her to go; that he should be going not her. My mother was very determined, and in spite of my dad's objection, she went to the office.

Well, what did my dad and I do while she was gone? My dad, although he didn't say so, was afraid of an invasion. Where could we hide? Should we pack up our silver and bury it in the backyard? While we were trying to decide what to do, **the radio kept instructing us what to do. Military rule was declared**, Curfew was required, and everyone needed to cover their windows with curtains, or black paper. All buildings must not have any lights seen from the outside so this was a real challenge.

After several hours, **mother returned bringing the Hawaiian Flag which had been given to the Girl Scouts by Queen Lili'uokalani. She kept it until after the war then returned it to the Girl Scout headquarters.** As an aside, a few years ago the Girl Scouts bought an old home on Wyllie Street in lower Nuuanu. It was a beautiful property, close to the local bus line and across from MaeMae elementary school. The Hawaiian flag was placed in a prominent place with a plaque that named my mother for saving the flag. Incidentally, I found and sold the house to the Girl Scouts.

I was a senior in high school and attended Punahou School, a private school with grades from kindergarten through 12th grade. It has beautiful grounds, and in 1941 it had just celebrated 100 years old and is the oldest private school west of the Rockies. **The US Engineers had been instructed to go to the University of Hawaii and take over the University to set up their headquarters that Sunday. They never got to the University because when they passed Punahou School, they thought that was the University and settled in there.** There went our campus and we didn't get it back until after the war.

Punahou had to relocate and moved into residential homes for the elementary, and to the University high for the Junior and Senior academy. It took several weeks before we could go back to school so in the meantime many of us did volunteer work wrapping bandages or being nurse's aides.

Many residents left for the mainland and we lost about 50 of our classmates when they traveled with their parents to resettle. My parents decided we would stick together and hope for the best. It wasn't until the Battle of Midway in May of '42 that we were able to turn the tide and win that battle which saved the Hawaiian Islands. Until then we were at risk. We had gasoline rationing, but no food stamps as they did on the mainland.

To go back to the Punahou football team which was stuck on Maui, they came back about one week later. Of course, I was glad to see all of them but especially my boyfriend.

When we went back to school we were all given gas masks which we had to carry at all times, and we had trenches dug in case we needed to use them. **There wasn't much frivolity our senior year, but we managed to have fun.**



Margaret Fritschi and Barbara Dew



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