

If you are under 30, December 7, 1941, is probably only another date in your history book. The day the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Ho-hum.

If you are over 40, the date is one you may never forget. And like everyone else in that age group, you probably have your own story of "what I was doing when I got the news that winter Sunday 30 years ago."

While nobody remembers the event like those who were actually there, it is still almost impossible to visit the Air Force bases on Oahu today without seeing visions

Material evidence of the attack still remains. More impressive, however, is the instant replay of memories now 30 years old.

# those aging ghosts of Pearl Harbor

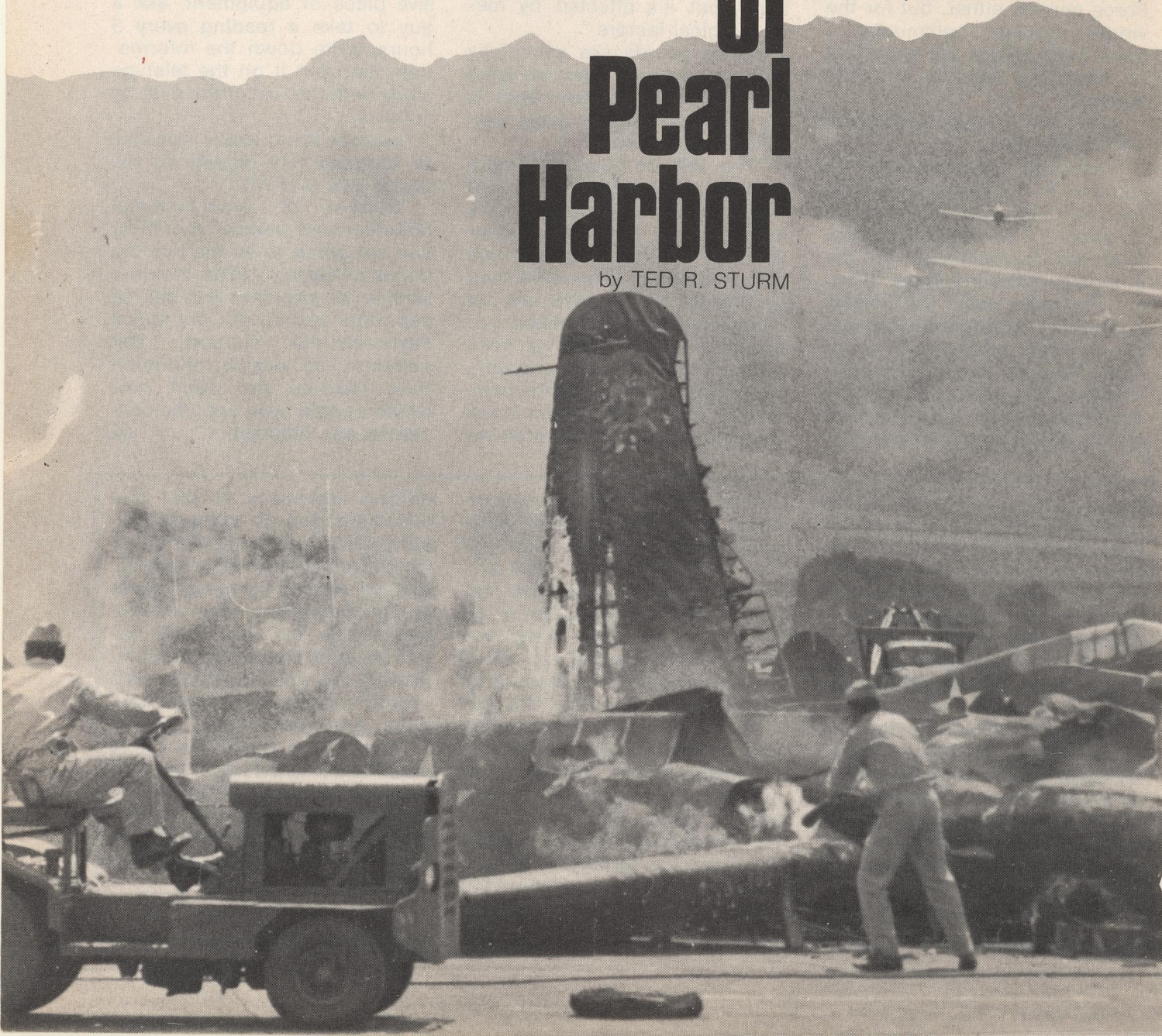
by TED R. STURM

of what it must have been like when the bombs rained down.

It's not just the physical evidence, although some of that remains. It is more of an atmosphere, a still-vivid state of mind originally created and perpetuated by the concentrated, detailed accounts drummed into you by the press and radio during the weeks following the attack. Instantly you remember things like, "*They strafed Hickam's Hale Makai, the 3,000-man consolidated barracks.*"

And there it is before you, today the headquarters for the Pacific Air Forces (PACAF). You still see the bullet holes on the outside walls and on the metal stairways within.

You remember, "*The hangar line is in flames,*" and there it sits,





many of the original buildings now restored but still carrying above the main hangar doors the painted-over emblem of the old Air Corps.

*"B-17s of the 18th Bombardment Wing were destroyed on the ramp."* No B-17 *Flying Fortresses* there now. Several C-141s, a C-5, a couple of F-4s, some C-130s. No B-17s. Still, you can close your eyes and see the ghosts—once proud birds, the elite of the force, backs now broken, the distinctive dorsal fin obscured by smoke.

The ghosts are there if you look for them, all right, though Hickam AFB today bears little resemblance to the Hickam of 1941. Oh, the obvious landmarks, buildings and general layout are the same. But the original runway has been closed for years, and today's jets share the main runway of adjoining Honolulu International Airport with the constantly arriving and departing commercial jetliners. Once in awhile an F-102 of the Hawaii Air National Guard roars out of the alert hangars across the base on the ocean side and disappears into Oahu's blue skies. And almost daily, the dawn is shattered by C-141 transports departing for SEA or other parts of the world.

The four main Air Force installations in the Hawaiian Islands are on Oahu. They include Hickam, Wheeler and Dillingham AFBs, and Bellows, now only an Air Force Station. All the bases

except Dillingham were active in 1941. Altogether, there are about 13,000 USAF military and civilian personnel in Hawaii. Add dependents, and you kick the total of Air Force people to more than 33,000.

For years now, Hickam has been known as the crossroads of the Pacific. The base services several tenant organizations and has a maintenance capability that boasts spares for every USAF aircraft in the inventory that can make the long, overwater flight from the mainland. Although there are only 85 aircraft assigned, some 13,000 transient aircraft go through Hickam each year.

Wheeler, on the other hand, is

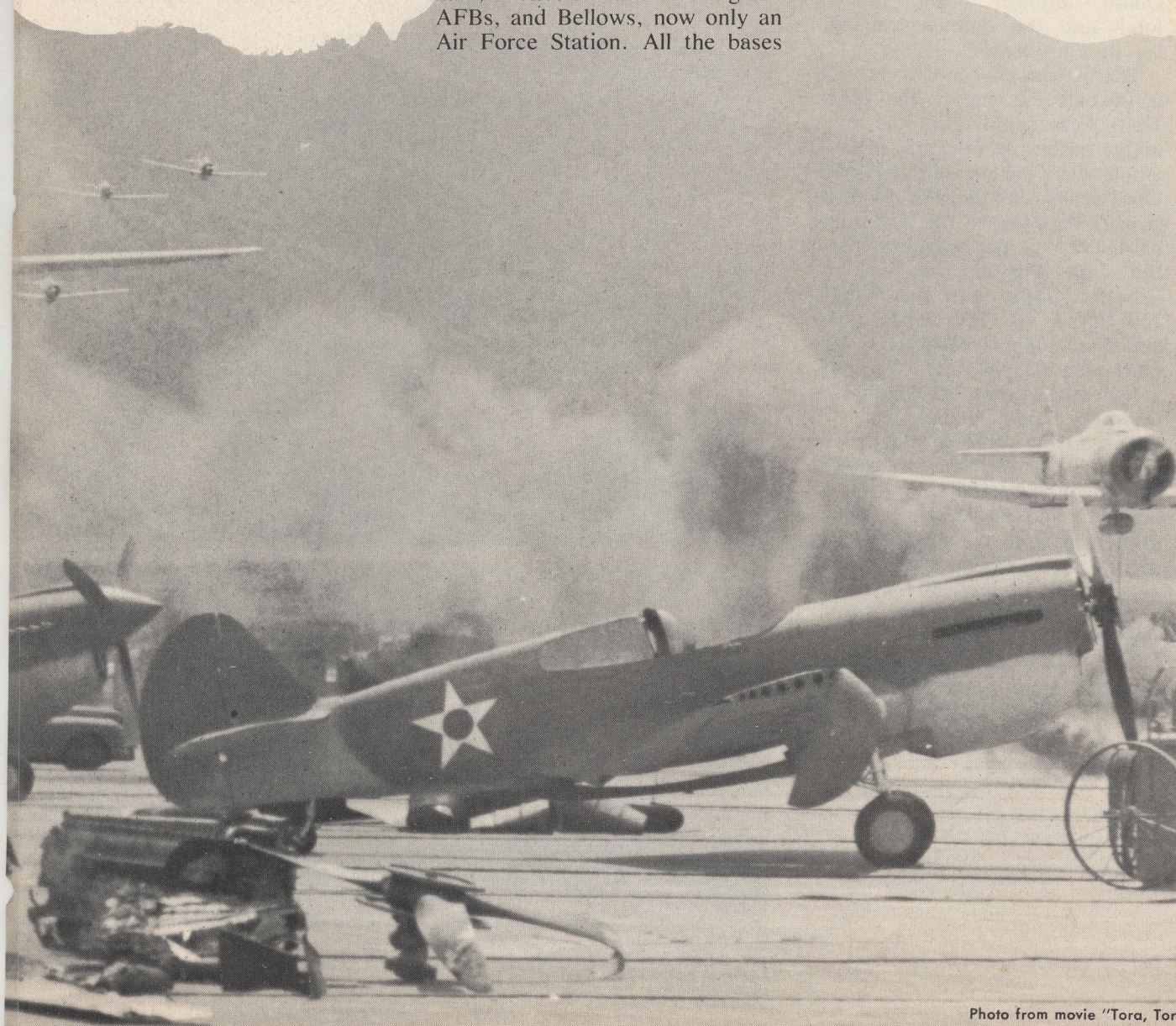


Photo from movie "Tora, Tora, Tora"  
Courtesy of 20th Cen



just a shadow of the base it was in 1941. There is no flying other than that by Wheeler-based US Army helicopters and several varieties of light aircraft. Wheeler is mainly a tenant base, run by an Air Base squadron that furnishes administrative and logistic support to the Hawaiian Air Defense Division as well as to other agencies.

Bellows today has no aircraft at all. It is mainly a communications site and a recreation area, and is used by the Marine Corps for maneuvers. It also houses an Army Nike missile facility.

It was different in 1941. Then, the old Hawaiian Air Force (HAF) boasted 231 aircraft, almost three times as many as the Air Force now has in Hawaii. To be accurate, however, it must be noted that Navy, Marine and Air National Guard aircraft bring today's total—and the defense capability—up considerably.

There were 745 officers and 6,706 enlisted men in the HAF. Units were deployed at the three major bases. At Hickam, for example, were the 5th and 11th Bomb Gps (Heavy) and the 58th Bomb Sq (Light), both part of the 18th Bombardment Wg. The headquarters of the 14th Pursuit Wg was at Wheeler, along with the Wing's 15th Pursuit Gp, 18th Air Base Gp and three support squadrons. Aircraft included P-40s and P-36s, plus a few other types. The 86th Observation Sq was at Bellows.

The enemy aircraft attacked in two waves. In the first, 50 fighters, 50 horizontal bombers, 40 torpedo bombers and 50 attack bombers droned in from the north. In the second wave, which came 45 minutes later, there were 50 horizontal bombers, 80 divebombers and 40 fighters.

Hickam and Wheeler were hardest hit. Pursuits and 28 bombers

launched the first attack on Hickam, a 10-minute raid on buildings of the Hawaiian Air Depot and the hangar line. After a 15-minute lull, 5 or 6 high-level bombers hit the baseball diamond; 6 to 9 others dropped to 150 feet and hit the water system, technical buildings, consolidated barracks and the planes parked wingtip to wingtip on the warming-up apron. Later, more airplanes attacked other technical buildings, dispersed aircraft, barracks, the parade ground and PX.

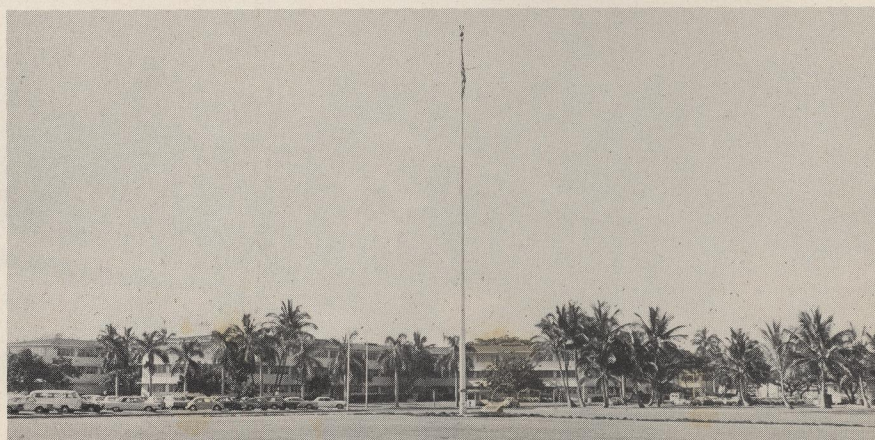
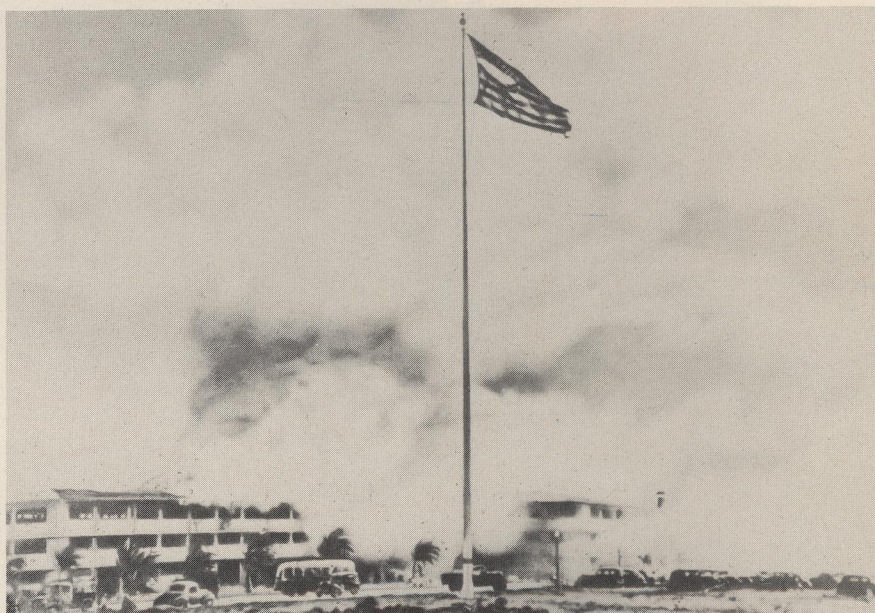
Wheeler was hit by 25 divebombers that spent 15 minutes making sure no aircraft would rise to challenge them. Despite that, four P-40s and two P-36s managed to get airborne 35 minutes after the initial attack. They flew 25 sorties in an hour. Other effective sorties were carried out by pilots of the 47th Pursuit Sq, a small Wheeler

detachment training at Haleiwa. An hour later, enemy planes again strafed Wheeler.

Bellows got off easy. Only one fighter hit the base in the first wave, although 9 more came in later for a 15-minute attack.

When the Japanese left for good, the HAF took stock of the damage. Of the 231 aircraft, 64 had been totally destroyed and no more than 79 of those left were usable. Hickam counted 121 people killed, 37 missing and 274 wounded. Wheeler lost 37 killed, 6 missing and 53 wounded. At Bellows, 5 died and 9 were wounded.

The primary objective of Japan's attack was the destruction of the Pacific fleet. Hard-pressed by the embargo put on by the United States and desperately in need of oil, tin and rubber from Borneo and the Celebes, the Japanese knew



Top: Thirty years ago Hale Makai (House by the Sea) was a 3,000 man barracks that was hit hard in the attack. BOTTOM: Today Hale Makai houses Headquarters, Pacific Air Forces.



they must strike south. By destroying or crippling the fleet for six months, they hoped to have time to attack in the south, solidify their positions and prepare for American retaliation.

Naturally, Hickam, Wheeler and Bellows had to be hit to neutralize the air defense that might have caused the attack to fail.

From a military standpoint, the raid was a total success. Japanese losses were insignificant in comparison to the damage done to the United States' forces. Of the 360 planes that roared in from the Japanese Navy task force, only 29 failed to return to the aircraft carriers lying 200 miles to the north, and about 50 crashed while trying to land on the carriers.

While most Americans have heard time and again what it was like on the ground on Oahu that day, few have heard what it was like from the enemy's point of view. One man, the Rev. Mitsuo Fuchida, now of Seattle, Wash., perhaps knows better than any other man what it was like from the cockpit of a Japanese aircraft then.

It was *Captain* Fuchida of the Japanese Navy 30 years ago, when he led the attack on Pearl Harbor. In 1966, he paid his third visit since World War II to Hawaii, and was interviewed by the Honolulu Star-Bulletin. Fuchida talked about his role in the attack and revealed how he later became converted to Christianity.

In the first plane to reach Oahu that Sunday, Fuchida was flying a high-level *Mitsubishi* 97 bomber. His orders were to attack at eight o'clock, just 30 minutes after Japanese diplomats in Washington were to hand a note to the U.S. Secretary of State.

"My signal was a flare gun," Fuchida said. "I opened my canopy and fired. One flare meant the



Same flag that was flying at Hickam on Dec. 7, 1941 (see opposite page) is examined by Cadet Lester K. Katahara, US Air Force Academy. Katahara is from Hahului, Hawaii and the flag is part of an historical collection at the Academy.

bombers were to go in first, but the bombers didn't see it. I fired one more flare. Two flares meant the divebombers were to go in first."

The result of this, he explained, was that the divebombers and the horizontal bombers both went in together, five minutes too soon. The divebombers split up so that one group hit Hickam and one hit Wheeler, both at 7:55 a.m.

"Five minutes after the attack, we got the first return fire from Hickam. Very good," he said. "If it had been the Japanese Navy, I think it would have taken maybe one hour."

Despite rumors to the contrary, the Japanese never had any intention of invading the Hawaiian Islands, he said. Many American intelligence officers believed then, and confirmed later, that the Japanese lacked the shipping needed to support an invasion—estimated at half a million tons. Besides, the ground defenses of the islands were strong enough in spite of the damage inflicted by the attack to repel an invasion attempt.

Fuchida wanted to come back again that Sunday for a second major attack. In fact, he hoped to have the Japanese fleet move in to about 50 miles from the islands for a second attack.

"We had complete control of the air. I reported the rows of oil tanks and I wanted to hit them again. But the commander was frightened. Also, he was very satisfied. I reported four battleships sunk, four very badly damaged, and that the Pacific fleet could not move for six months."

Whether a second attack would have succeeded or not is academic. For one thing, several U.S. bombers did manage to get airborne with bombloads, and might have been able to hit the carriers.

That Fuchida lived through the war is a small miracle. In 1966, there were only 14 Japanese pilots still alive from the hundreds who participated in the Pearl Harbor raid. Most were killed during the long conflict that followed.

Fuchida had more than his share of close calls. After the Doolittle raid on Japan in April 1942, Admiral Yamamoto sent the Japanese fleet back to Midway. Six days before the battle that destroyed most of the fleet, Fuchida suffered an appendicitis attack.

"My second in command took over and never came back," he said. Fuchida was also at Hiroshima the afternoon before the atom bomb fell but had to return to Tokyo on the fateful day.

He was sent back to Hiroshima after the bombing to investigate, taking 11 men with him. "All died of radiation sickness within two years, but I lived.

"I believe the Lord spared me many times, so my life is now His," Fuchida said. "I have dedicated the balance of my life to Him."

It was after the war that Fuchida was converted to Christianity. He had gone back to farming but was occasionally called to Tokyo by General MacArthur to help fill in details of the war for historical purposes. One day he was standing on the platform in Shibuya Station when an American missionary



handed him a pamphlet. In the pamphlet were the words from Luke 23:33-34:

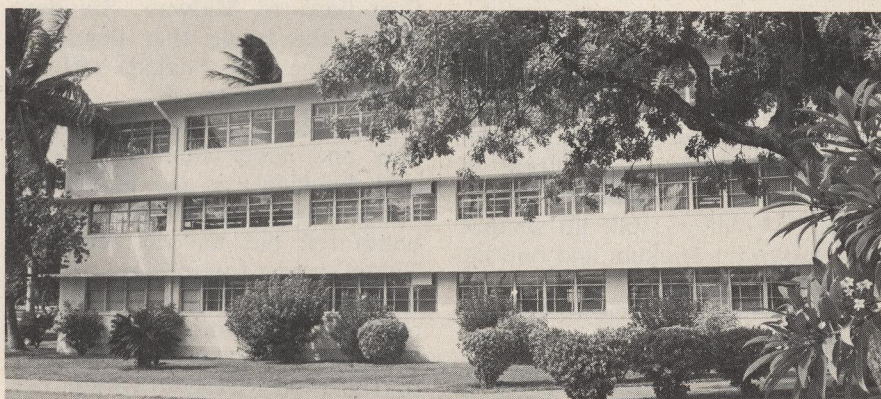
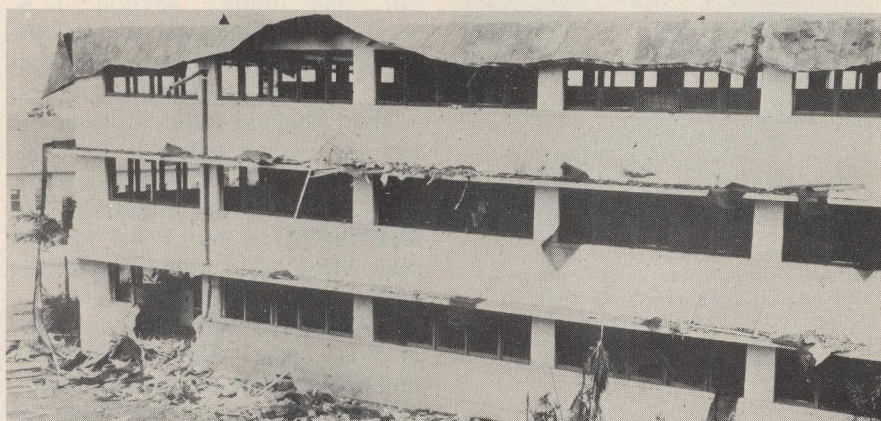
*And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left.*

*Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they*

*do. And they parted His raiment, and cast lots.*

"It inspired me to read the Bible," Fuchida said. "The pamphlet was written by a man who was on the Doolittle raid and was captured, beaten and starved by his Japanese guards.

"He had much hatred in his heart until he read the Bible. He



Closeup of most damaged wing of Hale Makai shows extent of destruction and how the wing looks today. Many bullet holes still remain in the PACAF Headquarters Building.

said that he realized then that Jesus Christ could change his heart from hate to love.

"He did the same for me," Fuchida said. "He made me realize that I did not know what I was doing for 47 years.

Many things and many people have changed in 30 years. Hawaii is beautiful and peaceful again, it's tropical serenity marred only by the knowledge that wars still plague our world. And perhaps, as America again remembers Pearl Harbor this month, it will imbue that memory with the spirit of a far more important anniversary—the birth of the Man who changed the heart of the man who led the attack on Pearl Harbor.

