"Navigator"
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Hickam Field child survivor visits former home after 69 years

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As Dec. 7 grows closer, stories of heroism, friendship, horror and pain make their way to the headlines. Lawrence "Larry" Bush, was eight years old when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. After 69 years, this child-survivor is finally able to share his account of what happened on that fateful day in his own back yard at what was then Hickam Field.

"I remember looking out the kitchen window with my parents and my sister to see the Japanese attack planes bombing Pearl Harbor," Bush stated.

Bush and his five-year-old sister Delores had sailed with their parents from Brooklyn N.Y. just two years earlier through the Panama Canal into the Pacific Ocean, arriving in Honolulu where their father had accepted orders at Hickam Field as a Signal Corp master sergeant. They moved into quarters 416, the second house on the right, closest to the water tower.

Bush spoke with fond memories of life on Hickam. "We were a close knit family and enjoyed doing things together. Every weekend we went exploring the island as my dad drove us around in an old Ford convertible with a rumble seat," he remembered.

Bush started school in first grade at King Kamehameha School. In second grade, he moved to the brand new Hickam Field Elementary School just two weeks before the attack occurred.

Bush clearly remembers the details from that historic Sunday.

Newspaper clipping about how Bush's sister broke her leg while helping her father unload telephone wire from the back of a truck on Dec 7.

He ran outside to grab the funnies he and his sister loved to read. After returning to the house where they were enjoying their Sunday morning ritual, all of a sudden there was an incredibly loud noise. The house started to shake. He and his younger sister ran to the kitchen where his father looked at him, placed his hand on the shoulder of his only son, and said, "Son, the Japanese have finally attacked."

Bush remembers his dad leaving immediately to go to work while he and his sister, watching from their bedroom window, could see the smoke billowing from the oil tanks and Soldiers getting shot.

"We got dressed and my mom ran outside to tend to wounded Soldiers. I remember one in particular in front of our house. He was shot up pretty bad in the thigh and shoulder, and my mom applied first aid," Bush said.

What happened next is not spoken of in many history books, but Bush said that seeing a Japanese Zero plane fly through his neighborhood is permanently etched in his memory. "The Japanese pilot flew right by our house.

He was so low we could see his face. He held his hand up and waved to us and did not shoot. But my father was already at work and was shot at by another plane," Bush remembered.

This photograph was taken in 1939 when Master Sgt Gerald Bush and his wife arrived in Honolulu with their children, Larry and Dee. They were living on Hickam Field during the attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. Gerald Bush was soon promoted through the ranks to lieutenant while stationed in Europe. Bush died one week before the end of the war.

"My neighbor took my sister, my puppy and me into her house and hid us in the closet. We were in there a long time. Then she took us into the garage where we thought it might be safer," Bush continued.

"My dad came home and sent us off base.

As we drove, we saw smoldering cars all over the road. There was a bulldozer at the front gate to keep the entrance open. Then a call came for all those with medical experience to return, and my mom dropped us off with a Navy family in a ditch. A Navy truck came and took us to the Salvation Army House," Bush shell-shocked after the attack, but we did not know what that was back then. When we had to evacuate Hawaii, we moved to New Jersey with my aunt. I remember when they used to ring the school bell for lunch, it scared me so much I would run home."

Bush visited Hawaii the last week of October with his own son who is named after his dad, Gerald Bush. The trip brought back memories that had long been forgotten.

Bush served in the United States Navy and was a proud Sailor, "I was honored to serve my country like my father did. But it was never the same as when I was a little boy living on Hickam," Bush said.

Escorted by Jesse Higa, volunteer historian and liaison for Dec. 7 survivors on Hickam, Bush and his son were able to tour the grounds where Bush once lived and played. "Jesse was wonderful. I cannot say enough about her professionalism and dedication to remembering. I never thought anyone would care about those of us who lived here then. Her caring has made this trip so healing," Bush said of his recent tour of Hickam.

Higa presented him with the newspaper that featured an article about how Bush's sister broke her leg while helping her father unload telephone wire from the back of a truck on Dec 7. She was called the "bravest little sergeant of J-Day" in the paper and was given an "honorary sergeancy" in the Signal Corps in which her father was a master sergeant at the time. His father, Master Sgt. Gerald Bush was responsible for laying most of Hickam's telephone wiring, Bush explained.

Bush encouraged others to return as well. "Our father was well-liked and remembering our wonderful life has really meant a lot to me."

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