

Excerpt from Oral History Interview with Eugene Bulac

Eugene Bulac was interviewed by Denise Bulac and Diane Finney for the Cities of Destiny Oral History Project. He was born in Hawaii in 1931 to Filipino parents, and grew up in employee camp housing on a sugar plantation before moving to the mainland as a teen for better education and job opportunities. In this oral history he recounts his experience witnessing the 1941 bombing of Pearl Harbor as a child.

Transcript:

DB: Um—imagine that you had witnessed the bombing of Pearl Harbor can you describe what that was like?

EB: Well, around 6:30 uh when I got up and I had just gotten a, a real nice gift toy with a uh army crank up thing you know where it had, Well, it was actually a tank.

DB: Uh-huh.

EB: You crank it up and the thing would and I wanted to play with that toy you know that morning so I got up really early and I was out playing with this toy and all of the sudden I saw a group of uh very large airplanes and they looked like bombers and it was flying towards Pearl Harbor.

DB: Uh-huh.

EB: And the thing that struck me was that there was a big red insignia on the wings.

DB: Uh-huh.

EB: Well, uh at that time I didn't recognize uh, that it was uh a Japanese airplane. Anyway, they were flying towards Pearl Harbor and I didn't pay too much attention I saw a large— I saw a several groups of airplanes. In the first group and then the second group came uh closely after. And then I started to uh hear some uh thundering sounds like you know explosions even though it was only about eight miles away.

DB: Where were you living then—on a hill(??)?

EB: Uh—yeah. It's kind of like on a hill where you'd next would see the harbor. You know you could actually see the, the uh—harbor area where all the ships were tied up and uh—next thing you know the whole sky was just full of uh what they call it puffs of smoke. Black smoke where the ships were actually firing their uh their cannons and their—and the aircraft guns at these planes that were coming in and uh dropping their bombs in (??). And the whole place seemed like it was just uh in flames. Totally in flames. And the smoke was all the way up in the air and from where I was at, it looked like the whole Pearl Harbor was on fire.

DB: What was your reaction to it?

EB: Actually, nothing. I just looked and stared at it.

DB: Uh-huh.

EB: Uh—it didn't mean anything to me because I was only eleven years old, I had no idea that uh what war was.

DB: Uh-huh.

EB: Uh I had heard on the—I heard some people running around uh—saying that the uh Pearl Harbor was being bombed. That didn't mean anything to me at that time.

DB: How old were you? At that time?

EB: Uh—I was eleven years old.