



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 3, 2009

This week in history...

Army Engineers fought and lived through the attack on Pearl Harbor

(FORT SHAFTER, HI NR 33-09) Seven December 1941 was the opening scene of World War II, and the Army Corps of Engineers was there. At 7:55 a.m., two waves of Japanese warplanes from a naval task force about 250 miles north of Hawaii appeared over Oahu. Some headed for American warships at Pearl Harbor and the planes on the ground at nearby Hickam Field; others hit Schofield Barracks, Wheeler Field, and Bellows Field.

The Corps of Engineers in Hawaii consisted of Soldier-engineers in the Army's Hawaiian Department, and the Corps' Honolulu Engineer District, then part of the South Pacific Division.

Col. Albert K.B. Lyman, a native Hawaiian who later attained the rank of general officer, was the Army's Hawaiian Department Engineer with offices at Fort Shafter. He commanded the 34th Engineer Combat Regiment, the 804th Engineer Aviation Battalion, plus the 3rd Engineer Combat Battalion of the 25th Infantry Division.

All of Lyman's engineers were at Schofield Barracks. These military engineers were enlarging and modernizing facilities at Fort Shafter and Schofield Barracks, building anti-aircraft gun sites, and bomb-proofing coastal fortifications. Part of the 804th Engineers were building U-shaped dirt bunkers for aircraft dispersal at Wheeler Field.

On the civil side, Lt. Col. Theodore Wyman, the Honolulu District Engineer, had offices at the Alexander Young Building in Honolulu employing 10 officers and 400 civilians. Fourteen field area offices had three officers and 200 civilians. Many district team members were at work that morning; there had been a rapid increase in defense projects after France fell in 1940.

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Wyman's work force was building stationary early-warning radar sites on Kauai, Maui, and Oahu, although none were operational on Dec. 7. The transfer of Army Air Corps construction from the Quartermaster's Department to the Corps in early 1941 also increased Wyman's responsibilities. His district took over enlarging eight airfields and building two new ones, and began work on a gasoline and bomb storage site at Hickam Field.

In October, Wyman began his most important project – building an air ferry route across the South Pacific to Australia. By December, airfields were being built on Christmas and Canton islands, in Fiji, and on New Caledonia. In addition to defense work, Wyman remained responsible for civil works projects such as dredging Honolulu Harbor.

No district team members or engineers were killed when the Japanese struck without warning, but there were close calls. Paul J. Lynch, the area engineer in charge of construction at Bellows Field, watched with horror as Japanese planes strafed the field, destroying most of the P-40 Warhawk fighter planes. Lynch directed dispersal of his equipment, and because of his efforts none was lost.

1st Lt. Harvey R. Fraser was at Schofield Barracks that morning preparing to leave the next day, Dec. 8. Reassigned to the mainland, he had recently turned over Company A, 3rd Engineers, to his successor.

One of the first bomb blasts blew out a window of Fraser's house and he ran to get his pistol to shoot at the low-flying planes, forgetting he had already turned in his weapon. Fraser hurried to Schofield Barracks where the battalion commander gave him back Company A. He found his men in the street shooting at attacking planes. Fraser told the supply sergeant to give weapons to anyone who asked and to tell them to shoot at the Japanese planes. Later, Fraser almost had to pay for the weapons because in the haste to go to war no one had asked for, or given out, receipts!

That afternoon, the 804th Engineers began salvage operations at Wheeler Field. The 3rd Engineers moved with the 24th Division to the north shore to defend against the expected Japanese invasion, which never came. As eventful as Dec. 7, 1941 was, it was but the first of many days of war for the engineers in Hawaii. Honolulu District completed the ferry route in January 1942, and built more airfields, and port and base facilities for the war.

All the Hawaiian Department engineer units served in the war. The 34th Engineers served in the Central Pacific and landed on Kwajalein. The 804th Engineers, also in the Central Pacific, saw action at Saipan. The 3rd and 64th Engineers went to the Southwest Pacific and fought and built their way through the Solomons, New Guinea, and the Philippines.

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Editor's note:

Brig. Gen. Albert Kualii Brickwood Lyman, was born in Paauhau, Hamakua Coast, Hawaii, and was the first ethnic Hawaiian to attain the rank of general or admiral in the U.S. Armed Forces. This was achieved during World War II. Brig. Gen. Lyman attended schools in Hilo and the Kamehameha and Punahou schools in Honolulu and graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York. From a family of 15 siblings, Brig. Gen. Lyman was the grandson of David Belden Lyman, a Protestant missionary from New England who settled in the Hilo, Hawaii area. He is also the descendent of Kualii, high chief of Oahu. His nephew, Richard Lyman, Jr. was a trustee of Bishop Estate in Honolulu, Hawaii. The Lyman House Memorial Museum in Hilo, the repository of the history of Lyman family, is open to the public. Brig. Gen. Lyman also had a brother named Charles R. B. Lyman who also attained the rank of brigadier general. Brig. Gen. Charles Reed Bishop Lyman, was the first Asian-Hawaiian-Pacific Islander American (AHPIA) to attain the rank of general or admiral in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Brig. Gen. Lyman (May 5, 1885 – August 13, 1942) graduated from West Point with honors, No. 15 in his class of 103, with a major in engineering. During his 33 years in the US Army, Albert had 25 assignments in 12 states and four overseas posts. His overseas posts were Panama, France, Cuba and the Philippines.

Albert's assignment in May 1940 at Schofield Barracks, Oahu, Hawaii, where, as a full colonel, he was commanding officer of the 3rd Engineers. He had previously served there in 1913 as a junior officer. He was also responsible for construction projects, thereby virtually performing two full-time jobs. He was promoted to Brigadier General on Aug. 11, 1942, and died two days later. He was stricken at the home of his brother-in-law and died before medical help could reach him.

Among his numerous awards, Albert was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal posthumously for his service from July 1940 to August 1942 for completion of "construction of defense projects before the anticipated completion dates." On April 19, 1943, the Hawaii State legislature declared that the main passenger terminal of the Hilo International Airport be called the "General Lyman Terminal." The military schools he attended were the U.S. Army Engineering School and the Army Industrial College.

Brig. Gen. Charles R.B. Lyman (August 20, 1888 – April 15, 1981) graduated from West Point on June 12, 1913. During his 36 years in the Army, Charles had assignments in 9 states and three overseas posts, the latter of which were Australia, New Guinea and the Philippines. He was the second AHPIA to be accorded the rank of general or admiral. While he loved horses and participated in the U.S. Olympic Equestrian Team, his duty was almost wholly with the infantry.

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In July 1941, shortly after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, Charles, a full colonel, was appointed military governor of Maui, Lanai and Molokai. After 11 months in that position, he was deployed to Australia as assistant division commander of the 32nd Infantry Division. He was in the first group of troops which attacked Tanah Merah Bay, Dutch New Guinea. He personally directed front line units, which seized Hollandia.

Charles Lyman was promoted to brigadier general in 1944 and served as commanding general of the 32nd Army Division which, in June 1945, was deployed in Luzon and subsequently in the Leyte campaigns, Philippines. The war ended at this point, and Charles participated in the signing of the peace treaty in Baguio, Philippines. Charles' decorations included the Combat Infantryman's Badge, Silver Star for gallantry in leading his troops in the Dutch New Guinea invasion, the Legion of Merit with oak leaf cluster, the Bronze Star with oak leaf cluster, and 4 campaign ribbons.

In 1946, following his retirement, Charles and his wife moved to West Chester, Pennsylvania where they operated the Maui Meadow Farms, the oldest working thoroughbred farm in Pennsylvania, to raise thoroughbred horses. They had one son, Charles Jr.