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I support the nomination of Ewa Plain battlefield to the National Register of Historic Places.

My family has resided in Ewa for over a century – my grandfather Kaichi and grandmother Wakayo Sawamoto worked for the Ewa Plantation Company (EPCo) as did my Uncle Takumi Sawamoto and other members of my family.

In regards to December 7, 1941, and the attack on Pearl Harbor and various other bases on Oahu, including Ewa Marine Corps Air Station – members of my family and family friends were eyewitnesses.

My father, Akira Sawamoto, watched Japanese Imperial Naval aircraft flying over Ewa and saw smoke over Pearl Harbor. My Uncle Takumi saw the same thing. One or both were watching from the area of the waste ditch. My uncle said the planes were flying so low that they could clearly see the faces of pilots and aircrew.

Later in the morning my father and his friends were standing around by the long store building across from the Japanese Social Club. A GI came running by – threw bandoleers of rifle ammunition into the door of one of the stores and told my father and others to pass out the ammo to any GIs who came by.

My friend's father, Mr. Ogawa, said the Japanese planes flew low over Ewa as they lined up to strafe the Marine airbase. He saw dust flying up from the road and heard things hitting the sheet iron, totan, roofs of houses and buildings. Though some reported that the Japanese machine gunned the road – Mr. Ogawa's recollection was that it was actually ejected shell casings from the Japanese aircraft which caused the puffs of dust on the road.

Mr. Ogawa – after the attack – went to dig out a bullet he had seen hit the edge of a house roof. He said he was surprised when his hoped for “Japanese souvenir” turned out to be an American .45 ACP bullet.

Mr. Abe – another friend's father – recalled seeing the Japanese dive bombers diving to strafe the Marine base and the dive bombers pulling up at a steep angle, nearly vertical, after their initial strafing run. This maneuver gave the dive bomber

rear gunners a clear field of fire to continue strafing with the rear gun. The Aichi Type 99 “Val” dive bombers thus strafed while diving with their forward guns and then again as they pulled up with their rear guns.

Mr. Abe also said machine gun fire continued into the night as nervous troops fired bursts at the sugarcane fields when the wind caused the leaves to rustle.

Ewa was clearly a battlefield in every sense of the word. Witnessing the attack – my Uncle Takumi Sawamoto told me he felt scared. When asked why – he said he fully expected the Japanese to invade. He said that: “America not going stand for that and everything going get bus’ up” – meaning that a Japanese occupation would be answered by an American counterattack which would cause widespread devastation.

Takumi enlisted in 1943 when the call went out for volunteers for the 442nd RCT and served in Italy and France. Mr. Ogawa served in Hawaii with the 1399th.

Many Ewa men were drafted before or right after the attack – the Nisei among them mostly served in the 100th BN. My Uncle Takumi was supposed to be drafted in early 1942 – I still have a notice telling him to report to Washington Intermediate School for his draft physical. He did not get drafted even though he passed his physical as he was held back as an “essential worker” by the sugar plantation. One year later he enlisted – telling the plantation he was going: “I have to go – don’t hold me back this time.”

Perhaps soldiers from Hawaii and especially people who had witnessed the December 7, 1941, attack on Oahu had a personal reason for wanting to go to war. They saw the beginning of the war and many, no doubt, wanted to help end it.

Ewa – after all – had been an actual battlefield as the Marines and Army aircraft fought against the Japanese naval attack planes flying over Ewa and Ewa Beach.

Again – I support the nomination of Ewa Plain battlefield to the National Register of Historic Places.

Thank you.

Sincerely;

Michael W. Sawamoto