Pearl Harbor Attack Killed a Lot of Civilians Too
By Dr. Richard Kelley

There are fewer and fewer people alive today who personally witnessed the December 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor. According to the Honolulu Star-Advertiser, only about 200 surviving veterans attended this year's commemoration, which coincided with the inauguration of the exciting new $56 million Pearl Harbor Visitor Center and Museum.

Without diminishing in even the slightest degree my admiration for the thousands of brave men and women who defended Pearl Harbor, Hickam Field, Wheeler Field, Kaneohe Naval Air Station, Bellows Field, and Ewa Marine Corps Air Station, I want to point out that there were also explosions all over O'ahu that morning, which caused many civilian deaths and injuries as well as significant property damage. While civilian casualties were only a tiny fraction of the deaths and injuries among uniformed personnel, the sudden, violent demise of roughly 60 noncombatant bystanders would have triggered major headlines if they had not been overshadowed by military losses a staggering 40 times higher.

In fact, my sisters, Jean and Pat, our parents, Roy and Estelle Kelley, and I came close to being among the civilian casualties. Roy had dropped us kids off curbside at St. Clement's Church, near Punahou School in Manoa Valley, for Sunday School about the time the attack started at 7:55 a.m. Shortly thereafter, he probably heard Webley Edwards interrupt normal radio programming to urgently say, “Pearl Harbor is under attack. This is no drill!” Roy did a quick U-turn and picked us up from church a few minutes later.

My sister Pat was just four years old at the time but has a vivid memory of what happened next. Here’s what she wrote to me this week.

“I remember how close we came to being a part of the dead that day – when we drove past the corner of McCully and King streets, a building exploded and a fire started.

“And then, two blocks later, another shell landed on the Japanese school. There was no McCully Bridge in those years, so we had to cross the Ala Wai on the Kalakaua Bridge.

“Explosion at King and McCully streets December 7, 1941”

As we got to the intersection of Lewers Street and Kuhio Avenue, our car briefly stalled and then got going again. Suddenly, there was a big boom and a huge hole in the ground right where our car had been stalled. I remember watching out the back window of the car.

“Shrapnel from that shell ripped through the nearby apartment building on the makai-Diamond Head corner of that intersection and almost killed Mrs. Harry Good, who, with her husband, ran a liquor store on Kalakaua Avenue. Mrs. Good was in the apartment at the time. Fortunately, she had just bent over to tune in the radio, so the shrapnel missed her. If she had been standing, the shrapnel would have gone right through her. I vividly recall Daddy later showing me the holes in the walls of the apartment house where this happened.

“Then there was the shell that sent shrapnel between you (Richard) and me as we all watched more of the bombing from the top floor lanai of our home at 2270 Kuhio Avenue.”

Reading the newspaper reports from December 7, 1941, it is clear that no one was safe anywhere on O'ahu that morning. One shell fell near Washington Place, the residence of Territorial Governor Joseph Poindexter. An entire family of eight or nine people was reported killed “by a bomb” near the corner of Nu‘uanu and Kukui streets. A wood frame house was “split in half” at Fort and School streets. Five people died in an explosion at Palama Settlement. And on and on ran the breathless reports.

Summaries of the articles indicate that anywhere from 55 to 68 civilians were killed and approximately 35 wounded in the attack. (These figures compare to 2,402 dead and 1,247 injured military personnel.) It is not 100 percent clear, but it seems likely that most, if not all, of the casualties in civilian areas were inflicted by “friendly fire,” our own anti-aircraft shells falling back to earth and exploding after missing attacking planes.

We'll never know for sure, and it obviously does not matter today, as we remember and honor everyone who experienced those terrifying hours on O'ahu 69 years ago. 🙌
The Honolulu Marathon
We’re all Winners
By Dr. Richard Kelley

The 38th running of the Honolulu Marathon will kick off at 5 a.m. tomorrow, Sunday, at the Ala Moana Park starting line, just outside Waikiki. This event never fails to amaze me. Considering Honolulu’s small population, our marathon’s popularity is phenomenal. By any measure, it is Hawaii’s largest sporting event.

Registrations for this year’s race are expected to hit 23,000, about where they have been since the economy slumped in 2008. For the three years before that, however, registrations were typically around 28,000.

According to Dr. Jim Barahal, president of the Honolulu Marathon, some 14,000 of the runners and 3,500 walkers in the companion Race Day Walk will be from Japan. “This is remarkable in these tough economic times, and it reflects the strength of the yen,” said Dr. Barahal.

There are several other reasons for Japan’s support of and interest in the event. For the 26th year running (pun intended!), Japan Airlines is the lead sponsor. Other well-known Japanese sponsors, providing both financial and promotional assistance, include MUFG Card, NTT DoCoMo, SATOHAP, and Subaru.

The strong turnout from Japan also reflects the fact that in recent years, several Japanese women have been strong contenders, going head-to-head against the world’s elite runners, many of whom come from Kenya and Russia.

Japan’s Kiyoko Shimahara won the women’s division in 2008 with a time of 2:32:36. In 2009, she posted an even better time of 2:29:53, but was still one minute, 19 seconds behind the winner, Russia’s Svetlana Zakharova, who blazed across the finish line at 2:28:34.

Eri Hayakawa of Tokyo ran the third-fastest Honolulu Marathon in the women’s division in 2004 with a time of 2:28:11.

The women’s record time is 2:27:19, run by Russia’s Lyubov Denisova in 2006.

There is always a great deal of interest in the elite male runners. This year, six-time winner, Kenyan Jimmy Muindi, will be back for his 16th run for the Honolulu Marathon gold. Muindi holds the Honolulu course record at 2:11:12.

There are many other race-week activities. From Wednesday through today, there has been an exposition at the Hawaii Convention Center. Many years ago, we hosted the expo at the Outrigger Reef, but as the Marathon grew, we ran out of space. Usually, some 50,000 to 60,000 people attend and buy all sorts of sportswear, clothing, equipment, and Honolulu Marathon logo souvenirs.

There is also a carbo-loading luau and concert for over 5,000 people at the Waikiki Shell, with ukulele virtuoso Jake Shimabukuro and other Hawaii entertainment legends performing.

Outrigger and OHANA Hotels & Resorts are the official hotels of the Honolulu Marathon. We provide complimentary and/or deeply discounted accommodations for many of the elite runners brought in by the organizers.

Our Waikiki properties will run high occupancies all week, and we expect to be nearly sold out Saturday night! This is quite a contrast to the typical pre-holiday slump at our neighbor island properties.

The Honolulu Marathon has a huge economic impact on the entire state and in particular, on Waikiki.

Hawaii Pacific University students of economics have studied the Honolulu Marathon for several years. They estimate that because the runners and their traveling companions spend much of the month before or after the race in Waikiki’s shops and restaurants, the event brings over $100 million in visitor spending to Hawai‘i and generates approximately $3 million in taxes each year.

Those numbers do not include spending by local participants.

With the yen currently at a 15-year high, many expect even more spending by Japanese marathoners and their companions this year.

Moreover, the economic impact is not limited to Honolulu, but spreads throughout Hawai‘i, as roughly one in every five out-of-state registrants plans to visit neighbor islands too.

Dr. Barahal is rightfully proud when he points out that the Honolulu Marathon is self-supporting. Unlike some other major sporting events such as the Pro Bowl, the Honolulu Marathon does not ask for or receive any taxpayer money. It enlists private sponsors to help, and with registration fees, it pays for its operations, advertising and promotion, 435 special duty police, park use and cleanup, road barricading and cleanup, and the use of the Hawaii Convention Center.

At the finish line, only a handful of competitors are listed as winners, but in reality, everybody in Hawai‘i wins when the Honolulu Marathon races into town. Thanks to Dr. Jim Barahal and all of the staff and volunteers of the Honolulu Marathon for everything you do for our state year after year.