

Battery Pennsylvania

Our team worked on numerous radars at Hickam AFB and Wheeler. The best duty was installing new long range radars on Mokapu Point to aim a new sea coast artillery battery called Pennsylvania Battery. It was salvaged from the number three turret from the USS Arizona which was on the bottom of Pearl Harbor with these guns still above the water line. Civilian contractors worked to barge the turret and guns to Mokapu Point near the Kanehoe Naval Air Station. They used flat bed trucks and an inclined railway to place the turret on a barbette half way up the peak. Tunnels were carved into the mountain to store ammunition and lift the shells into the turret from below.

The new radar was to be placed near the top of the peak and inclined railway was built to lift us and the radar up as needed. The work went well except for the day the Hawaiian winch operator did not show up and I volunteered to operate the inclined rail\winch system. My friends climbed on and I ran them up the hill stopping fairly close the upper station. Coming down, I let the car roll freely while burning the brakes to stop at the bottom. I should have put it in gear and let the engine do the braking. No harm done except to the brake lining which the Hawaiian did not notice or mention to anyone.

We left the scene before VJ Day in Sept 1945. I learned later from a docent at the Pearl Harbor Memorial, the guns were test fired once when the whole thing became instantly obsolete. The foundation rock had fractured! Everything was hauled back down and sold for scrap metal. Mom and I visited the site in the 1980's using my military ID. We found the ring gear (barbette) still in place and the tunnels dark and wet with seepage. The area was made into a bird sanctuary.