

# Hickam hospital named after brave doctor

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When the newly-completed Hickam Hospital opened in November 1941, little did its doctors and nurses know that within weeks it would become a front-line clinic and receive America's first casualties of World War II.

Today officially named the William R. Schick Clinic, Hickam's "station hospital" was open a few weeks before the Day of Infamy, Dec. 7, 1941.

As its acting commander of the time, Flight Surgeon Dr. (Capt.) Frank Lane recalled, "Our little hospital ... only had a capacity of forty beds, and seriously ill patients were normally sent to Tripler General Hospital, a few miles away." Lane remembered the new clinic only had seven medical officers, five dentists, seven nurses and forty enlisted men assigned.

On the morning of Dec. 7, 1941, 13 B-17s were approaching Oahu, concluding a 14-hour flight from Hamilton Field, California. As fate would have it, some 350 Japanese fighters and bombers were also approaching, aiming to disable Oahu's military installations and destroy the American naval fleet at Pearl Harbor. Among the passengers on one of the B-17s was Dr. (1st Lt.) William Schick, flight surgeon assigned to the 38th Reconnaissance Squadron bound for Clark Field in the Philippines.

The B-17s were supposed to land at Hickam Field, but their timing couldn't have been worse. The airfield was already under attack by Japanese fighters as base operations tried to land the incoming American bombers. Dr. Schick's aircraft was hit by a stream of tracer bullets, igniting some magnesium flares and wounding the doctor in the leg. Almost immediately, the B-17 was a blazing torch from mid-fuselage to tail section. Miraculously, the pilot managed to land the plane



Courtesy photo

**Hickam Hospital "William R. Schick Clinic," as it looked in 1944. The clinic named after Dr. (1st Lt.) William Schick, a doctor who was killed in action Dec. 7, 1941 during World War II.**

on Hickam's runway, only to have it break apart upon impact. Fortunately, the crew survived the landing and began scattering from their exposed position in the middle of the runway.

Unfortunately, as Dr. Schick's group dashed across the runway, they were spotted by a Zero pilot strafing the airfield. Dr. Schick was hit in the face by a ricocheting bullet. Somehow he made it to Hickam Hospital, where he was found by Dr. Lane. The clinic's commander offered to take care of him. Dr. Schick declined, saying he was alright. Pointing to the numerous casualties on litters all around, Dr. Schick said, "Take care of them."

Although Dr. Schick was transported to Tripler General Hospital later that day, he died from his wounds.

Dr. Schick had married Lois Richmond, a nurse, in June 1941. Just five months later, he received orders to join the 38th Reconnaissance Squadron bound for the Philippines. Fifty-six years later, Dec. 7, 1997, the 15th Medical Group clinic at Hickam was dedicated in honor of Dr. Schick in a ceremony. The guest speaker at the dedication was the doctor's son and namesake, William R. Schick of Chicago, who was born eight months after his father's death.