

Pearl Harbor Day

Brothers,

“Yesterday, December 7th, 1941 a date which will live in infamy the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.”¹ The opening line from President Franklin D. Roosevelt's address to Congress the day after the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor that launched the United States into World War II. A day that started out as a beautiful Sunday, ended with 2,335 members of the US Armed Forces being listed as Killed in Action, 2008 US Navy, 218 US Army & Army Air Corps, 109 US Marine Corps, and 68 Civilians being killed for a total of 2,403 American lives lost on that infamous day.² These numbers would pale in comparison to the 405,339 American Servicemen that would be killed of the 16,112,566 Americans who served.³ This one day in history would go on to change the course of millions of lives and the country as we know it.

It is difficult to look back at the attack on Pearl Harbor and not think of the battles that followed, those like Midway, Guadalcanal, Sicily, Normandy, Market Garden, and Iwo Jima, and what those who fought went through. We have all known in one way or another a WWII Veteran, or our lives were touched by one and it is important on days like today to remember them and their sacrifice. It could have been our father, grandfather, great-uncle, neighbor or long-lost cousin that were exposed to the horrors of war and those that did come home, bettered our nation from the experiences they went through. If you are a veteran and have gone to post-secondary education because of the GI Bill, you should thank a WWII Veteran as this was created to help them transition back to civilian life, not just with education but with home loans and other benefits, some of which are still available to current veterans, just under different names.

Most of our thoughts of Pearl Harbor are of the beautiful USS Arizona Memorial, that sits above the wreckage of the USS Arizona, BB-39, that sits at the bottom of the harbor, where she was on that fateful day. We also think of one of her turret barbette's that is still visible, just a few inches above water. Her wreckage is now a grave for the majority of the 1,177 (of 1,512) Arizona crewmembers killed when a bomb penetrated her deck. Forensic evidence shows that the bomb penetrated her armored decks and detonated, causing the forward power magazines to ignite causing catastrophic destruction and loss of life.⁴ On board the Arizona were 38 sets of brothers and 1 father son pairing. Of those, only one pair would survive the day, Kenneth and Russell Warriner, Russell would be badly burned and Kenneth was on Temporary Duty at Fleet Signal School in San Diego and not present during the attack. 23 sets of brothers were completely lost during the attack as was the father son duo of Thomas, father, and William, son, Free.⁵ We must remember all of the brave men and women effected on that day, whether they were on the Arizona, or the Nevada, or enlisted as a result of the attacks and were at Midway, the Battle of the Bulge or any other location during WWII. Remembering the sacrifice of these men, is just a small way of thanking them for life as we know it today, because if it weren't for them, our lives would be vastly different. This in its self is a form of patriotism, and us ensuring that our ideals are carried on from generation to generation.

¹ Speech by Franklin D. Roosevelt to Congress 8 Dec 1941, Library of Congress Website

https://www.loc.gov/resource/afc1986022.afc1986022_ms2201/?st=text Accessed 4 Dec 2019

² Naval History and Heritage Command: Infographic on Pearl Harbor by Annalisa C. Underwood www.history.navy.mil Accessed 4 Dec 2019

³ US Veterans Affairs American Wars Fact Sheets: https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/factsheets/fs_americas_wars.pdf Accessed 4 Dec 2019

⁴ Naval History and Heritage Command: USS Arizona (BB-39) <https://www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/photography/us-navy-ships/battleships/arizona-bb-39.html> Accessed 5 Dec 2019

⁵ National Parks Service: Brothers Assigned to the USS Arizona; <https://www.nps.gov/valr/learn/historyculture/brothersassignedarizona.htm> Accessed 5 Dec 2019