

December 7
“A Day That Will Live in Infamy.”
Harry Zirkelbach 12-14-2009

When in any year that December 7 falls on the Writers’ Monday, members my age imagine writing about little else. It’s the memories.

Today, there remains little new to relate about that day in Pearl Harbor.

**The Japanese aircraft attacked in two waves,
and in two hours the bombing and shooting was complete.**

What change did those hours bring about? Everything was immediately different.

The Battleships of the American Navy had been decimated. The American Navy, missing the message, that the Battleship was obsolete as a military weapon, savaged what they could. Both Japan and the US Navy continues to build larger battleships throughout the war.

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The Aircraft Carriers the enemy had hoped to destroy, were at sea, safe from the attack. Aircraft from the Enterprise were flown to Pearl Harbor later that day to bolster defenses against a possible Japanese follow-up.

Five of these were shot down by nervous American gunners.

Oahu, site of Pearl Harbor, had a sizable Japanese population. None interned.

**In 1940 there were 455,365 military personnel.
During the war, more than 16,000,000 served. 35 times than of prewar.
Most added were Reservists.**

The military budget (in billions) 1940 was 2.2 of a 10.1 Budget.

In 1945, 93.7 of 106.9 budget went to the military.

45 times more.

Each year, the Billions increase increase in federal spending went to the military. America at war.

The Briggs Body plant in Detroit converted from auto bodies to aircraft parts. I worked here in 1943, 44. There was a large wall chart, maybe 40 ft by 10 ft, in an assembly area. This chart pooled of employee guesses on a date for the end of the war.

There were as many guesses in the 1950s as there was for late 1940s. No guesses for 1945.

And none predicted the war would have two separate final dates.

Long after the war, I happened met another military retiree. He had graduated from Annapolis in 1940. He chose to become a Marine Corps Officer. Fought in the South Pacific early in the war, and after a leave back home, fought at Iwo and was preparing for the Japan invasion when the war ended. In these deployments and later life, he had never touched Hawaii. He left the military after the war, stayed in the Reserve, as had I.

He and I stood aboard the Oklahoma (BB-39) Monument in Pearl Harbor east of Ford Island, as tourists. This ship had exploded when a bomb hit the forward munition magazine. It sank rapidly when both sides forward, were blown out.

The ensuing fire burned for two days.

Half the the Americans who died in that attack on Pearl Harbor, perished on the Arizona. Over 1100 Navy personnel died here, are buried in that hull.

More than 40 Ensigns rest here. They were all the Colonel's Annapolis classmates from the Cadets of 1939, 1940, 1941. Naturally, he was emotional. Cried.

And on this day had a further aggravation. He had little contact with any Japanese since the war, and today he was sharing his loss with tourists. And that group included many smiling Japanese, having their photo taken against each backdrop.

He remained outwardly calm, silent until we returned to quarters at Kaneohe on the northern part of the Island. He then could tell us how furious he had been.

A gentle man, he could never forgive the Japanese.

For some of the 16 million who fought in American forces in W.W.II, they quietly take their war everywhere they go.

The attack

The memorial



**55 Navy
Cross
awards
were
given to**



Americans as a result of this assault. One was given to Lt. Draper Kauffman, USN. He had been in Washington Dec 7, was flown to Hawaii to dispose of unexploded Japanese munitions. Completed, he returned to Washington, where he founded the US Navy Bomb, Mine, Underwater Demolition Organizations, my command WWII.

Five miniature Japanese Submarines launched by their mother subs outside Pearl Harbor. Four were destroyed inflicting no damage. One was never discovered, presumed lost. It appears to have entered Pearl Harbor, launched a torpedo that hit the Battleship West Virginia, inflicting little damage. This was never confirmed, nor that fifth sub heard from. This may yet be a story, but not for today.