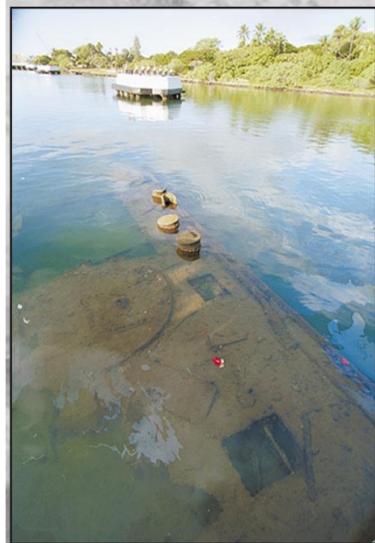


59TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1941-2



The remains of the mooring bits from the USS Arizona break through the surface of the water in the early morning of Dec. 7, 2000, right before the 59th commemoration of the Pearl Harbor attack.



Above: A group of F-15 fighters (above) from the Hawaii Air National Guard based at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii, fly in a missing man formation above the USS Arizona memorial on the 59th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor.



Right: A bugler plays Taps during the sunset ceremony at the Arizona Memorial Visitors center on December 7. The visitors center hosted the ceremony for more than 100 people on the back lawn. Commander Navy Region Hawaii/Commander Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific, Rear Adm. Robert T. Conway, Jr. was the keynote speaker during the ceremony held in remembrance of the over 2,000 Sailors, Soldiers, Marines, Airmen and civilians that died in the attack.

PH2 Chad McNeeley photo

Dec. 7, 1941: Pearl Harbor remembered

By Karen Spangler
NAVY REGION HAWAII PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Fifty-nine years have passed since the devastating attack on Pearl Harbor - but for many of those who attended the December 7, 2000 memorial service, it seemed like only yesterday.

That "day of infamy" held vivid memories for many of the guests in attendance - themselves survivors of the Pearl Harbor attack. It was an especially meaningful time - as they gathered from all parts of the country to remember former friends and shipmates who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Some were confined to wheelchairs; others stood humbly, silently, heads bowed, as the sacred ceremony unfolded. And there were tears - for the 1,177 who died and the more than 1000 still men who remain entombed in the sunken hull of the battleship USS Arizona and the many others who were lost during the attack.

Hues of pink and gold painted the morning sky and a slight breeze danced across the water, wafting through openings on each side of the Arizona Memorial. It brought reflections of a day much like this one - when the U.S. Navy received its worst defeat in history.

The roar of aircraft engines, machine gun fire, explosions, gut-wrenching screams of agony and the cries from the Navy's proudest ships, crippled and devastated by the Japanese attack, shattered the silence of that long ago Sunday morning.

Through the apertures of the Memorial, guests watched as the USS Hopper passed in review, its officers and crew members at attention and saluting the Arizona as the guided missile destroyer slowly glided by. A single long blast signaled a moment of silence at 7:55 a.m. - the exact moment that the Japanese zeroes swooped down from the skies to launch the attack on the Pearl Harbor fleet on a day never to be forgotten, Dec. 7, 1941.

Hawaii Air National Guard F-15s streaked overhead in a "missing man" formation and, with perfect timing, Mother Nature contributed to the occasion - splashing a multi-hued rainbow across the sky.

As the Pacific Fleet Band played the national anthem and a Navy color detail raised the flag aboard the

Arizona, Navy Sailors in dress whites and other service members in dress uniforms sharply saluted.

Somber, yet stirring words from Adm. Dennis C. Blair, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Command, keynote speaker for the event, and Rear Adm. Robert T. Conway Jr., Commander, Navy Region Hawaii and Commander, Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific, spoke of the symbolism of the Arizona Memorial and the sacrifices made by America's men and women in uniform - ever ready to fight for their country and to uphold the freedoms which America embodies.

Adm. Blair also mentioned each Pearl Harbor veteran in attendance by name and extended thanks for their contributions to their country.

Wreath presenters from all branches of the armed forces, the governor from the state of Hawaii and representatives from approximately 50 organizations came forward to drop a flower into the memorial well. Some wore brightly-colored aloha shirts and caps displaying the pride of being a veteran, a retiree, or a survivor.

There were those who walked down the center aisle to the memorial well with the helpful assistance of a Navy Sailor or a family member. But for each, it was a time for a personal tribute to those lost - fathers, brothers, friends. Standing at the well, they tossed a flower into the opening - then paused briefly or saluted before returning to their seats.

As the service concluded, a 21-gun salute and the melancholy notes of taps echoed through the air in the morning calm.

And so they return - the Pearl Harbor survivors - to pay respects, to honor, to remember. For some - their last wish embraces the desire to join lost shipmates for eternity, an interment of cremains in the hull of the sunken battleship for former Arizona survivors, a scattering of ashes in the waters of Pearl Harbor for other Pearl Harbor survivors.

And from the depths of the ocean beneath, oil continues to seep from the remains of the once mighty Arizona battleship and mingles with the floral blossoms floating on the surface of the water - a constant reminder of the legacy that is Pearl Harbor, an ever-present memory of the day that tragedy struck Pearl Harbor and the nation.

