

FLEET FOCUS

Former Nevada Sailor returns to the past

By JOCS(SW/AW) Darrell D. Ames
COMSUBPAC Public Affairs

When Woodrow "Woody" Wilson Derby enlisted in the Navy on Dec. 7, 1938, in his hometown of Wapello, Iowa, he, as everyone else, was completely unaware how significant the date would become. "I spent my third anniversary in the Navy fighting for my life and fighting alongside my shipmates," said Derby.

Derby, now 82 years old and in Hawaii to participate in the December 7th ceremony on the USS Arizona Memorial, just happened to be stationed aboard the USS Nevada (BB 36) in Pearl Harbor when Sunday, Dec. 7, 1941, rolled around.

"My battle station was below gun turret two," he said. "We were hit by a torpedo and started taking on water, so there I was, in the magazine a few decks below the gun turret, wondering if we were going to make it."

Derby and most of his mates "made it" that fateful day, as the Nevada was able to survive the attack.

On Dec. 7, 1941, Nevada was moored singly off Ford Island, and had a freedom of maneuver denied the other eight battleships present during the attack.

As her gunners opened fire and her engineers got up steam, she was struck by one torpedo and two, possibly three, bombs from the Japanese attackers, but was able to get underway.

While attempting to leave harbor she was struck again. Fearing she might sink in the channel, blocking it, she was beached at Hospital Point. Gutted forward, 50 Sailors were killed and 109 wounded.

Today's USS Nevada (SSBN 733), a trident submarine stationed in Bangor, Wash., also happened to be in Pearl Harbor and provided Mr. Derby an opportunity to tour his namesake ship. "This submarine is fabulous," said Derby. "I can't get over the size of this baby. Our battleship was huge too, but it was above water and you could see everything."

"It was certainly a joy hosting Chief Derby," said Cmdr. Walt Luthiger, commanding officer of today's Nevada. "His devoted service to the Navy is his legacy and his place in history is stamped forever. I simply enjoy sitting around listening to his recounts of what happened here almost 60 years ago," Luthiger

added.

Derby retired as a Chief Storekeeper in 1958 and resides in San Diego, Calif. with his wife Christine. The couple met in Los Angeles following the war and have been married for 54 years.

His old ship, however, wasn't so lucky. Nevada (BB 36) is resting on the bottom of the Pacific. "They fixed her up in the yards after Pearl Harbor and we went back to war," said Derby. "Then after the war they took her out for target practice one day and sunk her somewhere off the coast of Hawaii."

Built between 1912 and 1915 at Fore River Ship Building Co., USS Nevada (BB 36), it was completely modernized in 1929 at Norfolk Navy Yard. After repairs following the Pearl Harbor attack she rejoined the Fleet in 1943. Nevada then sailed for Alaska where she provided fire support for the capture of Attu in the Aleutian Island chain.

In June 1943 she sailed for further modernization at Norfolk Navy Yard, and in April 1944 reached British waters to prepare for the Normandy Invasion.

In action during June, her mighty guns pounded not only permanent shore defenses on the Cherbourg Peninsula, but ranged as far as 17 miles inland, breaking up German concentration and counterattacks. Shore batteries straddled her 27 times, but failed to diminish her accurate fire.

"We were the only battleship that was attacked at Pearl Harbor and was also a key figure in the war against Germany," said Derby.

Between August and September, Nevada fired in the invasion of Southern France, dueling at Toulon with shore batteries of 13.4-inch guns taken from French battleships scuttled early in the war. Her gun barrels were relined at New York, and she sailed for the Pacific, arriving off Iwo Jima on Feb. 16, 1945 to give Marines invading and fighting ashore her massive gunfire support.

A month later, Nevada massed off Okinawa with the mightiest naval force ever seen in the Pacific, as pre-invasion bombardment began.

She pounded Japanese airfields, shore defenses, supply dumps, and troop concentrations through the crucial operation, although 11 men were killed and a main battery turret damaged when she was struck by a suicide plane. Another two men were lost to fire from



U.S. Navy photo

Sailors look at USS Nevada (BB36) from the shore. USS Nevada was moored singly off Ford Island, and had a freedom of maneuver denied the other eight battleships present during the attack on Pearl Harbor Dec. 7, 1941.

a shore battery.

Serving off Okinawa until June, she ranged with the 3rd Fleet which not only bombed the Japanese home islands, but came within range for Nevada's guns during the closing days of the war. Returning to Pearl Harbor after a brief occupation duty in Tokyo Bay, Nevada was surveyed and assigned as a target ship for the Bikini atomic experiments.

The tough old veteran survived the atom-bomb test of July 1946, returned to Pearl Harbor to decommission August 29, and was sunk by gunfire and aerial torpedoes off Hawaii July 31, 1948.

Nevada received seven battle stars for World War II service.

"My old ship is gone," lamented Derby, "but this submarine is a fine vessel and more than capable of carrying on our tradition as a strong force," he added.

"Strategic deterrence is the primary mission of my ship," said Luthiger. "Since its inception in 1960, the trident submarine provides

the nation's most survivable and enduring nuclear strike capability."

"All seven warships that have carried the name Nevada have established a history of service to the nation that even predates the statehood of their namesake state," added Luthiger.

"The citizens of this nation and Nevadans in particular can take great pride in the selfless, valorous service of all Nevada Sailors, past and present."

"We all serve in the Navy for similar reasons," said Derby. "I was proud to serve my country because I was motivated by values that included more than earning a living. I was also motivated by honor, patriotism, integrity, and, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, a fighting spirit."

It's that spirit that helped us win the war and keeps us going today. We have the best Navy and the best submarine force in the world and I don't see that changing any time soon," he added.

Honolulu wives, girlfriends gather to celebrate holidays



COMSUBPAC Public Affairs photo

Wives and girlfriends of USS Honolulu (SSN 715) crewmembers gathered at a dinner sponsored by the Honolulu Sunset Rotary Club. The dinner was held at a local steak house. The club has partnerships with both the USS Honolulu and the USS Chosin (CG 65). They celebrated the holidays even though their loved ones were deployed. Beside the food, the woman also had some entertainment. A local magician performed for the woman at the dinner.

By JO3 McClain Shewman
COMSUBPAC Public Affairs

Wives and girlfriends of the USS Honolulu (SSN 715) crew got together recently to celebrate this holiday season despite being separated from their Sailor husbands and boyfriends who are deployed to the Western Pacific.

"It's important for the wives to get together while the boat is deployed not only for camaraderie's sake, but for general morale and also a feeling of 'togetherness'.

Our husbands, boyfriends, fiancés are all out there together working hard and to feel a part of that it's important for us to get to know one another," said Dana Richardson.

Richardson set up the event, and whose husband John is the submarine's commanding officer.

Gathering at Buzz's Steak House in Aiea, the ladies' event was sponsored by the Honolulu Sunset Rotary Club, who maintain a partnership with both the Honolulu and the USS Chosin (CG-65).

"It's always important to help these families, especially when the crew is deployed and it is the holidays," said Al Drinan, one of about eight Honolulu Sunset Rotarians who helped with the gathering.

The night was full of surprises, including an appearance by Glen Bailey, an area magician. The group also enjoyed raffles, gift bags, and of course, dinner.

Most of all, it was a chance to get together and share their experiences and compare notes.

"That's the first time I've had to drag a tree into the house and string up all those lights. I never realized how tough that was!"

"I just wish he had told me where the lights were from last year," joked Tracy Garcia, whose husband Steve is a Mess Specialist aboard the submarine. Those attending seemed to really enjoy themselves.

"It is good that we can get together. As always it's always tough, but every day we get closer to them being home and I have to say that as a group we've stayed strong," said Terri Curtis, the Honolulu's

Ombudsman, whose husband David is an Electronics Technician on the submarine.

The Rotarians were equally enthusiastic, and "We're glad that we could contribute in some way. The crew always lends us a hand for our events when they're in, and we're glad we could return the favor."

"We really want to help to support the Honolulu," said Hans Kolb, another Rotarian who directly supported the group. Kolb videotaped the event and planned on sending it back to the crewmembers.

Richardson was grateful for the support, and noted the night's significance.

"The holidays make it even more important to form a bond with each other. We become a family, so to speak, and the spirit that we share with each other helps to foster a positive outlook amongst everyone."

In turn, our submariners are able to do their jobs knowing that their loved ones are not alone and this thought hopefully aids them in handling the challenging tasks that they encounter," said Richardson.

First class volunteer



PH2 Chad McNeely photo

GM1(SW) Jeff Maddrey of USS Hopper (DDG 70) delivers needed supplies to one of the many elderly patients at the Veterans Administration ?????? near Tripler Hospital Tuesday afternoon. Maddrey and his wife, ????, delivered the goods supplied by Hopper's First Class Petty Officer Association.

Holiday 2000 message from the Chief of Naval Operations

From Navy News Service

The following is the text of a message to the Navy from Adm. Vern Clark, Chief of Naval Operations:

In this season of holidays and family, please accept my warmest wishes and gratitude for your service to the Navy, the United States, and the world.

It is important to recognize that dedication to service drives our naval forces with a power stronger than the conventional and nuclear power that keep many of our shipmates forward-deployed during these holidays.

It is with great honor that our Navy shoulders the mantle of keeping the peace. Our forces at sea today protect our liberties for tomorrow and the New Year to come. Your dedication and commitment to these principles is what is so admired by the citizens of our nation.

The recent events involving USS Cole make this holiday season bittersweet. The courage of her crew exemplifies what this Navy is. We must remember our 17 shipmates who went before us. They answered the call to

service and made the ultimate sacrifice to the United States of America. Keep their families and friends in your thoughts.

Let me also remind you that eternal vigilance applies to each of us. A watchful eye and awareness of threats specific to your area are the first line of defense against actions by potential enemies. Look out for yourself and your shipmates. You are our greatest asset.

For those of you serving afar and away from family, know that your sacrifice is recognized, your mission is worthwhile, and your service is appreciated.

In the coming year, we will surely be called upon again to protect the interests of a grateful nation.

Because of your hard work, your commitment to service and your strength of character, this Navy will forever answer that call — "We are ready."

I am proud to serve with each and every one of you. Keep up the great work and have a safe and happy holiday season.

Vern Clark
Admiral, Chief of Naval Operations