



Remembering Arizona

The central gathering room offers views both fore and aft of the sunken hull of the Arizona. The openings above and to the side represent an eternal 21-gun salute and brings light to the somber mood that is inevitably present at the Memorial.



Visitors can view the 184-foot-long structure during the Navy shuttle boat ride to the Memorial. The trip prepares them for the experience by playing narrations by Pearl Harbor survivors giving personal accounts of the event.



Sunlight from the window in the shrine room casts upon some of the 1,177 names immortalized in remembrance upon the marble wall.

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Editorial note: As America continues to react and respond to the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, many people have looked to Pearl Harbor... to the memorial that marks the last time our nation faced such a tragic attack.

"Yesterday -December 7, 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..."

The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian islands has caused severe damage to the American naval and military forces. Very many American lives have been lost... Always we will remember the character of the onslaught against us.

No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory..."

Those words were spoken by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in a speech to Congress asking them to declare a state of war with Japan after its surprise attack upon the Pacific Fleet, stationed at Pearl Harbor, on that previous Sunday morning.

The attack began shortly before 8 a.m. At approximately 8:10 a.m., a 1,760 pound armor-piercing bomb hit the USS Arizona and exploded in the forward ammunition magazine, tearing the entire forward portion of the ship to pieces. Less than nine minutes later, Arizona sunk 40 feet to the bottom of the harbor, taking most of her entire crew with her.

USS Arizona is the final resting place for the ship's 1,177 crewmembers who were killed during the attack. Though many other ships were damaged and countless other Sailors, Marines and civilians were killed or injured during the attack, the loss of life sustained on Arizona became the focal point for a nation that was previously divided over the issue of involvement in the war.

The Memorial's beginning

In 1949, the first steps were taken to establish a memorial to those who died during the attack.

Initially, in 1950 then Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Fleet, Adm. Arthur Radford ordered that a flag be flown and a plaque be placed over the sunken hull of the ship.

In 1958 President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was the supreme allied commander of the forces in Europe during the war, approved the creation of a memorial for Arizona.

Construction began immediately and was completed in 1961 and dedicated on Memorial Day 1962.

Arizona Memorial today

Before departing to visit the memorial, visitors take part in an 'interpretive' program at the Arizona Memorial Visitors Center. The visitors are given a brief talk by a National Park Service ranger or a Pearl Harbor survivor, followed by a 20-minute documentary film on the Pearl Harbor attack.

Immediately after the film, visitors depart the theater for the boat landing where they board a Navy shuttle boat and begin their trip to the memorial, which is visible throughout the shuttle ride.

The ride, which prepares visitors for their experience, is narrated by Pearl Harbor survivors who give their personal accounts of the events of the attack that morning.

The design

Architect Alfred Preis designed the 184-foot-long memorial. It spans the mid-ship of the ship and consists of three sections: the entry and assembly rooms, a central area for ceremonies and viewing of the ship, and the shrine room, where the names and ranks of the Sailors and Marines who were killed with their ship are engraved on a marble wall.

The memorial itself - white, with a long, narrow design that crests on both ends and a significant sag in the center - appears to float upon the surface of the water. But no portion of the memorial itself touches the remains of the ship be-

low the surface of the water. Preis describes the center portion of the memorial as expressing initial defeat at the hands of the Japanese forces, but strong and vigorous at both ends, symbolizing the attitude of the Americans before and after the war. Preis also describes the overall effect as "one of serenity" and noted that "Overtones of sadness have been omitted to permit the individual to contemplate his own personal responses, his innermost feelings."

A "somber" tour

The mood is very quiet and somber during the self-guided tour of the memorial, which is viewed as a cemetery. The ships number three, 14-inch gun barbette and a support leg of the mast tripod are visible above the water line.

Additionally, during low tide, mooring chocks and the mounts for the removed forward number two-gun mount appear above the water.

In the main gathering area, there is a viewing well that peers down under the surface of the water and gives a visual idea of the remains of the stricken ship.

In the shrine room appear the names of the crewmembers who lost their lives onboard Arizona that fateful morning. A huge marble wall symbolically shows the immensity of the loss of life when the ship was lost.

There are a few small steps leading up the wall where leis, flowers and wreaths are usually placed in remembrance. To the left appear another set of names of Arizona survivors who have chosen to be interred with their fallen shipmates.

The USS Arizona Memorial is open daily 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Interpretive programs, including the documentary film about the attack and the boat trip to the memorial, begin at 8 a.m. (7:45 a.m. in summer). The last program each day begins at 3 p.m. The memorial is closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day.

This year, access to the Memorial on Dec. 7 will be limited to special programs for Pearl Harbor Survivors.