



BAYWATCH HAWAII



"The Last Rescue"

USS Utah tragedy adds 'real-life' drama to Baywatch script

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HNN EDITOR

"She was a valuable ship. Those boys out there need to be remembered. They were the heroes, every blessed one of them." - Closing lines from Baywatch 'The Last Rescue' episode.

Fifty-eight gallant Sailors are still entombed aboard USS Utah (AG 16) after the ship was bombed in the attack on Pearl Harbor Dec. 7, 1941.

Where the Arizona receives more than 1 million visitors every year, Utah's remains lie silent in an active military area on Ford Island, where only a handful of active duty servicemembers and former crewmembers pay their respects to the fallen Sailors and former shipmates.

An elegant, white pier extending into the waters in front of Utah's partially exposed hull marks the site where she was struck and sunk in the surprise attack on that December morning. A polished brass plaque commemorating the ship and crew's service stands watch at the base of a flagpole. An American flag proudly flies over the site where Utah came to rest.

Recently, cast and crewmembers of one of Hollywood's hottest television shows, Baywatch, paid the Utah a visit. Celebrating its 10th season, Baywatch - seen in 140 countries by more than 1 billion viewers (according to Guinness Book of World Records) - will take viewers through the tragedy and triumph of the attack on Pearl Harbor. The episode will also mirror real life by telling the story of a fictional veteran who still lives with the scars of that fateful day.

"The Navy helped us create this story [The Last Rescue]," said David Hasselhoff, Baywatch producer and star who plays the character of 'Captain Mitch Buchannon.'

"When we heard the story of the Utah, the Sailors lost on that ship and how it was almost a forgotten tragedy of the attack on Pearl Harbor, we wanted to honor those men by giving them some of the recognition they deserve."

"The Baywatch Hawaii cast and crew is like Ohana or family - like on a ship - pulling together to get the job done," said Brooke Burns who plays Baywatch's Jessica 'Jessie' Owens. "This episode talks about survivor's guilt and how it affects some servicemembers. I can understand some of pain those veterans are going through."

"I've been on Oahu for many years, but I was never able to see this historic site," said John Yates, who played the lead guest

character, Charlie Owens - grandfather of Jessica Owens - the Utah survivor returning to his ship and shipmates.

"I'm glad the Navy opened its doors for this ship's story to be told. It is kind of an unknown memorial and I think it's special that Baywatch Hawaii agreed to tell this story."

Part of the team responsible for bringing the Utah to Baywatch producer's attention is Senior Chief Journalist (SW) Philip Eggman, from Navy Region Hawaii's public affairs office.

"Baywatch approached us about Navy related stories and about the USS Arizona in particular," Eggman reported. "One of the things we wanted to do was promote all of the various memorials here, not just the Arizona."

There are countless stories of heroism that fateful day, but many are seldom told any many more forgotten.

"One of the lesser-known memorials is the Utah Memorial. We told Baywatch location scouts and producers Utah's story, how it was an all-but-forgotten memorial, and they wanted to do her story."

"They wrote an entire storyline around a survivor of the Utah who lived with the guilt of surviving the attack when his buddies didn't."

"We emphasized that those brave Sailors who died are still there and that it's an important memorial to those who survived that ordeal."

Some real-life Sailors selected to appear in the episode are attached to Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit One.

"We're in a scene where we are supposed to do a search inside the skin of the Utah," said Boatswains Mate 1st Class (DV) Eric Dewitt. "We're glad to have the opportunity to highlight what Navy divers do. Our primary task is underwater ship's husbandry for surface ships and submarines, deep-sea salvage of downed aircraft and working with some of the SEAL programs. If a situation like this were to occur, we'd be the ones to call."

"This was a profound moment being out here on the site of the Utah Memorial," said Hull Technician 2nd Class (DV) Martin Oliver. "I'm glad she and her crew are getting the recognition they are due. This storyline would make the former crew proud and I'm proud to be part of this episode."

"It's important for generations to come to remember that there was more to World War Two than the Arizona and the Missouri - the beginning and the end of the war. We have to remember the other sacrifices that were made in defense of our great nation, like the sacrifices made by the crew of the Utah."



Baywatch star David Hasselhoff, seen here performing his own stunts, jumps into Pearl Harbor waters during a rescue scene filmed in front of the Battleship Missouri.

(Below from left to right) MDSU-1 divers EM2 (DV) Chris Pederson, BM1 (DV) Eric DeWitt, BM3 (DV) Brandon Hamilton and EN2 (DV) John Theriot make their Hollywood debut in a scene filmed on Ford Island. The remains of the USS Utah (AG 16) lie behind them.

"The Last Rescue" will air during the show's 10th season.

