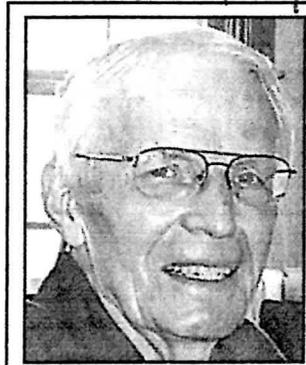


Washburn During The War Years —Day Of Infamy

Sailors aboard the ships of the United States Pacific Fleet in Pearl Harbor on the quiet Sunday morning of December 7 1941, who happened to glance northward over the hills surrounding harbor and saw the sun glinting off many rapidly approaching aircraft, perhaps thought that the planes were on a training flight. But as it was famously said, "Air raid Pearl Harbor this is no drill," and these airplanes with the red orbs on their wings were soon dropping bombs and launching torpedoes against the battleships and other vessels moored in peacetime array in the harbor.

The surprise Japanese attack was carried out by 353 aircraft launched from six carriers which, along with supporting vessels, had sailed undetected from Japan to a position northwest of Oahu Island. The attack began at 7:48A with a first wave of 182 aircraft composed of torpedo bombers to attack the battleships and dive bombers to attack the airfields. A second wave of 171 aircraft continued the attack on ships and airfields. Meanwhile, five midget submarines, transported from Japan by large fleet submarines, were launched in the vicinity of Oahu. Their mission was to enter Pearl Harbor and torpedo as many ships as possible, but as far as is known only one managed to get into the harbor and its two torpedoes missed their target. All of



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these submarines were sunk, with one young submariner ensign captured, the first Japanese prisoner of war.

The objective of the attack was to neutralize the U.S. Pacific fleet so that it would not interfere with plans to conquer Malaya, Indo-China, and the Dutch East Indies to obtain access to oil, rubber and other natural resources. At first the attack appeared to be a success: eight battleships heavily damaged or sunk, three cruisers and four destroyers damaged, many auxiliary or service vessels damaged or sunk, and 350 aircraft destroyed. The only Japanese losses were 29 aircraft. But in fact the attack failed to achieve its objective. Six of the eight battleships were repaired and returned to duty, four in 1942 and two in 1944, almost all of the smaller vessels were soon repaired and rejoined the fleet, and the destroyed aircraft were quickly replaced.

The repair shops and oil storage tanks were not destroyed because a third wave for which they were the targets was not launched. And the aircraft carriers, which should have been principal a target of the attack, were at sea so escaped destruction.

On Monday morning December 8th the President Roosevelt addressed a joint session of Congress and the nation, confirming the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7th—"a date that will live in infamy"—promising that "No matter how long it may take the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory." That afternoon Congress declared war on Japan and the following Thursday on Germany and Italy, who had declared war on the United States to fulfill their obligation to Japan under the Tripartite Pact. These three so-called Axis Powers had calculated that they could complete and consolidate their programs of conquest before the United States could make a meaningful contribution to the war. They were to pay a dreadful price for their miscalculation.

The quasi-war that the United States and Germany had been waging for months in the North Atlantic now became a full-scale "Battle of the Atlantic" that would rage for another three years before German submarines were driven from those waters by American, British,

and Canadian naval forces. In the Pacific the United States immediately took the offensive. Beginning in February 1942, naval forces attacked Japanese Pacific island bases; on April 18, 16 bombers launched from the carrier USS Hornet raided targets in Japan, a small foretaste for the Japanese of the massive raids that would begin in June 1944; in early May the Japanese were turned back from their advance south to Australia at the Battle of the Coral Sea; and in early June the navy extracted a measure of revenge for the Pearl Harbor attack at the Battle of Midway, where Japan lost four irreplaceable carriers along with the cream of its corps of naval aviators, plus one cruiser.

The broader objective of the attack on the Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbor was to so demoralize the American people that they would not consent to going to war against Japanese expansion in the western Pacific. But rather than demoralizing the American people the "sneak" attack, which destroyed the pride of their navy and killed 2,400 military personnel, infuriated and energized them, unleashing the enormous manpower and industrial resources of the nation to avenge the treachery. The people of Washburn would fully participate in the great crusade to defeat Japan and Germany.