

CHAPTER SEVEN

PEARL HARBOR

Nestled in the center of Oahu's south coast is the inlet of Pearl Harbor with Ford Island at her heart. The navy's carrier planes and seaplanes were housed at hangars, aprons, and airfields, while her carriers anchored to the island's northwest, and battleships lay to its southeast. December 7, 1941, counted ninety-six ships, including cruisers *Detroit*, *Baltimore*, and *Raleigh*; seaplane and aircraft tenders *Tangier*, *Swan*, and *Curtiss*; repair ships; minelayers; leftovers from Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet good only for target practice; and the queens of Pearl, the mighty tenants of Battleship Row: *Pennsylvania*, *Nevada*, *Arizona*, *Tennessee*, *West Virginia*, *Maryland*, *Oklahoma*, and *California*.

The first light of a Sunday morning started with the loading of perishables—USS *Chew* received ten gallons of milk; the *Conyngham*, six gallons of ice cream; the *Maryland* hauled in two thousand pounds of ice. Along with Pearl City, the harbor was home to forty thousand soldiers and sailors on December 7; most were looking forward to a relaxing day far from chores and commanders. Many sat around in their cabins, in pajamas, robes, or kimonos, just starting the Sunday comics. A number were sleeping off a Saturday-night tour of Honolulu's red-light Hotel Row. Signalman John Blanken on *San Francisco* planned on swimming at Waikiki; Ensign Thomas Taylor, on *Nevada*, had a tennis game scheduled; the marines of *Helena* were going to play softball; a group of old navy hands on *St. Louis* were looking forward to a round of checkers. Yeoman Durrell Conner spent his morning on *California* wrapping Christmas presents; there were, after all, only seventeen shopping days left.

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Flying toward the harbor, Lieutenant Commander Shigeharu Murata ordered his torpedomen to assume attack formation at 0751. Just northwest of Ewa, they split in half, with two groups of eight planes each descending to Pearl Harbor from the west and two groups of twelve planes each flying southeast in an arc over Hickam to attack Ford Island from the east. "A faint haze of kitchen smoke from houses preparing breakfast hung over the water," pilot Zenji Abe remembered. "It was a peaceful scene. Fuchida was observing through his field glasses, and as the wave drew nearer, the basket [crow's nest] and tripod masts of the battleships *Nevada*, *Arizona*, *Tennessee*, *West Virginia*, *Oklahoma*, *California*, and *Maryland* appeared through the haze."

Worried that smoke from the dive-bombing attacks on Hickam and Wheeler might prevent his men from hitting their targets, at 0757 Murata ordered his crews to as quickly as possible drop their torpedoes against the dreadnoughts anchored east of Ford Island. In formations of twos and threes, *Akagi*, *Kaga*, *Soryu*, and *Hiryu* airmen descended to the attack altitude of fifty feet, preparing, as instructed, to risk their lives closing in on their targets. The dive-bombers and torpedo planes flew so low that it often looked as if they were about to crash into the American ships' superstructures.

Raleigh Ensign Donald Korn saw a line of planes coming in from the northwest. *Arizona* Seaman "Red" Pressler noticed another string, coming over the mountains to the east. Helm Quartermaster Frank Handler saw a group coming in from due south, flying directly into the harbor's entrance and coming up the channel known as Southeast Loch, only a hundred yards from where he stood. One of the pilots gave Frank a wave, and he cheerfully waved back. *Helena* Signalman Charles Flood thought their approach was strange, but it reminded him of something. He'd been in Shanghai in 1932 when the Japanese had invaded. Their planes had dived and glided in this exact same manner.

"It must've been about seven forty-five, seven fifty, we saw a bunch of airplanes coming in, but they were coming in from all over the place," *West Virginia* marine bugler Richard Fiske said. "So we thought this was going to be a regular drill like we normally had. And nobody got too excited about it until we saw these planes start forming around. The torpedo planes went around the mountain, and they were coming right down the channel there, and they were aiming right for the battleships."

At 0755, the Ford Island Navy Yard's signal tower atop the water tank raised a blue flag meaning "prepare," and the men assigned to each ship's morning colors took their places, fore with the navy's jack flag—the USN's first official jack had as its insignia a rattlesnake and the legend DON'T TREAD ON ME—and aft with the Stars and Stripes. At 0800, the blue flag fell, and the two flags rose to the sound of a boatswain's whistle, or a bugler's colors, or a band of horns and woods playing the national anthem.

Even after a Japanese plane screamed above their heads to drop a torpedo against *Arizona*, the USS *Nevada*'s brass band continued playing to the very last note of "The Star-Spangled Banner." After its sole torpedo missed, the Japanese returned to strafe the band, tattering its flag. One sailor on *Arizona* watching the whole thing smiled in appreciation, telling his friends that surely "This is the best goddamn drill the Army Air Force has ever put on."

Aviation Metalsmith 2nd Class Adolph Kuhn had spent the night playing poker and drinking with some friends and his cousin Andy Herrman at their barracks in the cane fields just outside the Pearl Harbor gates. Andy and Adolph woke up to bullets whizzing through their roof and assumed it was just another daredevil pilot from Hickam. They started playing poker again. Andy said, "Adolph, I wonder what it would be like to be in a real war." Another strafing came by, some of his bullets hitting their score pad.

Ford Island's Bloch Recreation Center, which had hosted "The Battle of the Bands" on Saturday night, was the site of a Catholic mass at 0800. Those waiting outside for the service to begin heard a popping sound, then watched planes flying a bare two dozen feet over their heads. For some reason, a sailor, and then a woman, fell to the ground, bleeding and screaming in pain. While some ran to hide, others ran to help. Ripping a strip from the woman's petticoat to make a tourniquet, Pharmacist Mate 3rd Class Joseph Honish stanching her leg wound and got a man with a car to take her to the Naval Hospital.

Ford Island not only housed airstrips and command centers, but also neighborhoods of officers' wives and kids. At naval housing next to Bloch Recreation, the family of Lieutenant Robert Littmann, the communications officer for minelayer *Oglala*, was getting ready to attend services downtown at Honolulu Cathedral. They heard a big blast. A sixteen-year-old cousin went out to see what had happened. A plane went right over his head, and he knew what its red circles meant;

he ran inside to tell everyone. Littmann's thirteen-year-old daughter, Peggy, then went out to see the excitement for herself. Another big plane went right over her, and a piece of metal fell out of the sky, and landed a few feet away. She ran inside to find her mother and her aunt on their knees, saying the rosary: "Hail Mary, full of grace, blessed be thy name and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death . . ."

Patrol Wing 2 commander Rear Admiral Patrick Bellinger—of the Martin-Bellinger Report warning of a aerial attack on Hawaii, and the winner of the Navy Cross in 1919 for his epic transatlantic crossing from Newfoundland to the Azores—had a thirteen-year-old daughter, Patricia. She had arrived in Hawaii the year before, thrilled to have elaborate flower leis draped over her neck as she walked down the plank of the luxury liner *Lurline*. Living on Ford Island was so isolated, but Patricia quickly made friends, such as Joan and Peggy Zuber, whose dad, Adolph, commanded the marine barracks (and whose mother, Alice, didn't think Hawaii was a safe place to raise a family), and sixteen-year-old Mary Ann Ramsey, whose father, Lieutenant Commander Logan Ramsey, worked as Bellinger's operations officer. The Ramsey house was so close to the *Arizona* that when the battleship projected movies on her deck, Mary Ann could sit in her front yard and follow along to the dialogue and music. The house's other unusual feature was that it was built over a Great War gun battery, which had been turned into a garage, next to which was a cave that had once been a military dungeon, which the little girls thought spooky, and fun. In the spring of 1941, when the island began running air-raided drills every week, their neighborhood's assigned shelter was the cave dungeon. The Zuber girls thought that if an attack came and they were forced to live there, it would be good idea to have fudge and lemonade.

Mary Ann Ramsey: "On Saturday night, 6 December, we had dinner guests. As our friends were leaving, Dad called out, 'Well, let's hope the Japs wait until after Christmas before they start raising hell in the Pacific.'" Miriam Bellinger and her daughters had spent that day at the circus in Honolulu. Coming home to Ford and passing the fleet, Miriam said, "Isn't it beautiful? There are so many ships in the harbor."

On Sunday morning, Mary Ann woke to a ringing phone. Her father answered and in a shocked voice asked, "Are you sure?" Mary Ann Ramsey: "Within a few minutes, I caught just a glimpse of Dad,

dressed in an aloha shirt and slacks, rushing past my bedroom door. He was gone from our carport before I could reach my parents' room, where I found Mother sitting up in bed, confused. Incredulous, she told me a submarine had been sunk just outside the harbor net, and before she had finished speaking, the first bomb fell. We looked at each other in disbelief."

Lieutenant Commander Logan Ramsey: "Approximately five or ten minutes after I reached the Command Center, I saw, together with the staff duty officer, a single plane making a dive on Ford Island. The single plane appeared at the time to both the staff duty officer and myself in the light of a young aviator 'flathatting' [flying low in a reckless manner], and we both tried to get his number to make a report of the violation of flight rules. He completed his dive, pulled up and away. We were commenting together on the fact that it was going to be difficult to find out who the pilot was when the delayed-action bomb which he had dropped, and which we had not seen drop, detonated, and I told the staff duty officer, 'Never mind; it's a Jap.'

"I dashed across the hall into the radio room, ordered a broadcast in plain English on all frequencies, 'Air Raid, Pearl Harbor. This is No Drill.'" Sent out under the name of his commander at Patrol Wing 2, Rear Admiral Patrick Bellinger, some of Ramsey's radiogram versions were famously printed as "This is Not Drill," perhaps from a transcription or Morse code error.

The Zuber family was making pork roast for Sunday lunch when Joan saw a rising column of smoke outside. She told her mother, "Look out the window! Please look out the window!" Adolph ordered his wife and daughters to get to the shelter as quickly as they could. As Alice in her nightgown ran down the street with Joan and Peggy in their bathrobes, a Japanese airman fired his machine guns at them. "They're strafing us!" Alice screamed, and tried using her arms to shield her daughters. A man gestured to the loading dock by the bachelor officers' quarters and yelled at them to get inside. They hid under tables and behind the kitchen sink. A huge blast shook the whole building. Alice began to pray silently, *Dear God, please let my children die instead of being maimed.* Then she told her frightened daughters, "Don't cry. Marines don't cry. Don't ruin the morale of the men." Finally, a man herded them into a truck and drove them to the safety of the dungeon cave.

Military families in the Pacific were well aware of the Imperial Japa-

nese Army's reputation for raping and murdering women and children. Before medical officer Lieutenant Commander Cecil Riggs sent his wife and German shepherd, Chief, to the cave, he gave her a pistol and said that, faced with any Japanese soldiers, she needed to shoot the dog first and then herself. One military wife told the marine guarding the dungeon that he needed to save some bullets so that "when I am sure my children are dead, then you will shoot me."

Twelve-year-old Thompson Izawa had biked with his dad that morning to Pearl Harbor where the two were fishing, using tiny shrimp as bait, right next to the USS *Utab*. "It sounded like the hum of bees swarming," Thompson said. "Hundreds of airplanes were speeding toward us. They came over the Waianae Range like bees and all hell broke loose. At first, I thought they were making a movie. We saw a torpedo bomber come right overhead—with a long torpedo. I wish I had a machine gun—I could have shot some of those planes down—seriously! They were so low, especially the torpedo bombers. As my dad and I sat there, we heard a high-pitched whistle and then saw the torpedo that slid through the water and blew up the battleship *Utab*. Not one American gun fired back.

"My dad grabbed me by my earlobe. 'Get home, boy. We are in big trouble—those are Japanese airplanes!' I wanted to stay and see the action, but my father took off pedaling for home."

"When I looked up in the sky, I saw five or six planes starting their descent," *Utab* Pharmacist's Mate 2nd Class Lee Soucy remembered. "Then when the first bombs dropped on the hangars at Ford Island, I thought, 'Those guys are missing us by a mile.' It occurred to me and to most of the others that someone had really goofed this time and put live bombs on those planes by mistake. In any event, even after I saw a huge fireball and cloud of black smoke rise from the hangars on Ford Island and heard explosions, it did not occur to me that these were enemy planes. It was too incredible! Simply beyond imagination! 'What a snafu,' I moaned."

The torpedoes were carried naked below the plane's fuselage. Their clamps released, they crashed into the water and began to run, their wooden fins jerking away and left behind, the froth of their wakes visible to those about to die. As some ships exploded from torpedoes below, others were set ablaze by machine-gun fire from above, the bullets' trails bursts of color from arcing tracers.

"The torpedo bombers released their torpedoes, which splashed

into the water,” Zero pilot Yoshio Shiga wrote. “The bombers were like dragonflies skimming over the surface of the water. When I saw all this, I knew the attack was going to be successful.” The blurred white splashes of torpedoes hitting the bay, followed by the flurried wakes of their runs, soon filled Pearl Harbor. “It was lovely,” pilot Tatsuya Otawa said. “We were about to change an island of dreams into a living hell.”

Squadron leader Lieutenant Heita Matsumura had specifically ordered the men of his torpedo squadron not to waste their ordnance on the old battleship *Utab*, which was sitting in a berth usually taken by an aircraft carrier. *Utab* had been pulled from service and was now used for target practice, her decks shielded in timber to deflect Betty Crocker practice bombs made of flour.

But excited young Japanese airmen on that morning ended up torpedoing everything in their path, perhaps mistaking *Utab* for a prize due to her location and to what looked like a teak deck. “The *Enterprise* was slated to tie up next to the *Utab*,” *Northampton* marine Ernest Phillips explained. “That’s why the Japanese threw twenty-seven torpedoes into the *Utab*. Their information said that the *Enterprise* would be tied right beside it. Apparently their information was pretty good, but it just wasn’t current enough.”

In a bare four minutes, *Utab* was listing forty degrees. The crew struggled to save her, and each other. They had nothing to fight back with since, as a radio-controlled target ship, *Utab*’s AA guns were covered in housing, and her machine guns were dismantled.

Can there be a more ignominious death for a sailor than to be bombed and torpedoed while in port? When you are supposed to defend, but instead are defenseless? Carl Johnson decided he could at least dog down the bilge manhole cover and was going to do that when the second strike threw him onto *Utab*’s deck. The crash broke sixteen of Johnson’s teeth, but he was in such shock that he felt nothing and continued heading toward the bilge. A voice over his head asked, “Where you going?” When Johnson tried to explain about the bilges, the man above said, “Don’t go down there. You will be killed!” This snapped Johnson out of his shock and saved his life.

Mess Attendant 2nd Class Clark Simmons: “Things were breaking loose. Furniture was sliding around. We heard the bugler blow the call for ‘Abandon ship.’ The ship was beginning to list when I was in the captain’s cabin with two officers. We felt the ship lifting and begin-

ning to roll over. We had picked up life jackets, but we didn't put them on. So, we could squeeze through a porthole about eighteen inches in diameter and jump into the water.

"We all were frightened. We didn't know what was going on, but we knew the ship was taking water and there was no way to close the watertight doors. And we knew it was just a matter of time before the ship was going to sink.

"In eight minutes [at 0812] the ship was history. She had turned turtle in eight minutes.

"We began to swim toward Ford Island. They were machine-gunning us from two directions. I saw fellows yelling and screaming. I really didn't know what was going on. I got hit in the head, a shoulder, and a leg. But I got to shore, and a navy medical corpsman gave me first aid. Every year, December seventh feels like my birthday. I feel like I was reborn on that day, because it was such a miracle I wasn't killed."

Lee Soucy: "After a minute or two below the armored deck, we heard another bugle call, then the bosun's whistle followed by the boatswain's chant, 'Abandon ship. . . . Abandon ship.' We scampered up the ladder. As I raced toward the open side of the deck, an officer stood by a stack of life preservers and tossed the jackets at us as we ran by. When I reached the open deck, the ship was listing precipitously. I thought about the huge amount of ammunition we had on board and that it would surely blow up soon. I wanted to get away from the ship fast, so I discarded my life jacket. I didn't want a Mae West slowing me down.

"I was tensely poised for a running dive off the partially exposed hull when the ship lunged again and threw me off-balance. I ended up with my bottom sliding across and down the barnacle-encrusted bottom of the ship. After I bobbed up to the surface of the water to get my bearings, I spotted a motor launch with a coxswain fishing men out of the water with his boat hook. I started to swim toward the launch. After a few strokes, a hail of bullets hit the water a few feet in front of me in line with the launch. As the strafing banked, I noticed the big red insignias on his wingtips. Until then, I really had not known who attacked us. At some point, I had heard someone shout, 'Where did those Germans come from?' I quickly decided that a boat full of men would be a more likely strafing target than a lone swimmer, so I changed course and hightailed it for Ford Island.

"I reached the beach exhausted, and as I tried to catch my breath, another pharmacist's mate, Gordon Sumner, from the *Utah*, stumbled

out of the water. I remember how elated I was to see him. There is no doubt in my mind that bewilderment, if not misery, loves company.”

Though he knew the ship was capsizing, Chief Watertender Peter Tomich, a Slavic immigrant, stayed below, making sure the boilers were secure and that all of his crew had evacuated. Finally, it was Tomich’s turn to leave. It was too late. He was trapped. Peter Tomich was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor and joined at least fifty-three other men, either trapped in the overturn like Tomich or strafed by Japanese machine guns, who died on *Utab*.

Having gone to bed at eleven the night before, General Walter Short and his wife were eating breakfast and reading the Sunday newspaper that morning with nothing more on the calendar that day than the general’s twice-a-month golf game with Admiral Husband Kimmel. Hearing the roar of propeller planes and rocketing explosions—the sound of torpedo strikes against *Utab* and *Helena*—Short strolled to his back porch for a look. He then ran as fast as possible to his office. Even so, he couldn’t see the explosions, only the rising pillars of smoke. One of the first men he found on the base was intelligence officer Lieutenant Colonel George Bicknell. Short asked, “What’s going on out there?”

“I’m not sure, General,” Bicknell said, “but I just saw two battleships sunk.”

“That’s ridiculous!” Short erupted.

At about 0803, after chief of staff Colonel Walter Phillips told Short “that it was the real thing,” Short “immediately told him to put into effect Alert No. 3. That’s all the order we needed. And by 8:10 that had been given.” His troops were now to switch from defending against saboteurs to defending against an armed invasion. His Alert No. 1 had been so directed at the enemy from within that it handicapped his army in fighting the enemy from without. Alert No. 3 also meant that Short and his command staff evacuated to the army’s underground post at Aliamanu Crater.

Axis spy Takeo Yoshikawa was having breakfast when the first bombs fell. He and Kita rushed to the consulate to destroy their codebooks and classified documents. The spy remembered smoke “pouring out of the chimney.”

A mere five hundred yards away from Robert Littmann’s *Oglala*, Third Torpedo Attack Unit commander Lieutenant Takashi Nagai released a torpedo. *Oglala*’s crew watched its wake as the missile

charged straight at them. Then, as they all expected to die, nothing happened. The torpedo had plummeted under *Oglala's* fifteen-and-a-half-foot draft to hit her moored neighbor, *Helena*. *Helena* exploded on her starboard in a blast so strong it blew out some of *Oglala's* plates. Nagai rose over the two ships' superstructures so his rear gunner could strafe the decks with his machine gun. "The plane's canopy was open, and the pilot was hanging his head over the side to look at us," *Oglala's* Robert Hudson said. "On his approach, we saw red flashes from his wings. I thought that it was a drill and that the flashes were from a camera taking pictures of the harbor. When the bullets started ricocheting off the bulkhead around us, I knew the plane was not there to take our picture. Looking out from the steel sheets after the plane had passed, I saw a man dressed only in tennis shorts come running down the dock, yelling for volunteers to man a destroyer. He had a tennis racket in his hand, so I assumed he was a junior officer. It was truly a nightmare to see shipmates from both the *Oglala* and *Helena*, in anger and frustration, throwing potatoes and wrenches at low-flying planes." One master sergeant was seen following the *Zeros* on his bicycle, shooting at them with a pistol.

Robert Littmann had thrown on his uniform and raced to his ship. On the same road to Pearl Harbor, *Arizona's* Ensign Malcolm was driving hell for leather with Captain D. C. Emerson. When the speedometer hit eighty, the captain calmly said, "Slow down, kid; let's wait'll we get to Pearl to be killed."

By the time Littmann reached her, *Oglala* was already capsized, dead in the water, but at least none of her men were lost. His wife and daughter watched the horror from their living-room window. Thirteen-year-old Peggy Littmann would forever remember the bodies flying. They reminded *Helena's* Ensign David King of the circus, when cannons shot clowns through the air. This time was different, he thought; no one would land, happily, in a safety net.

Even after taking a torpedo hit and losing all of her power, the first American ship to fire back against the Japanese was *Helena*. Below-decks, Warren Thompson found himself in shock and flailing about in the pitch black. Suddenly a light came straight at him; it was three men, with their hair on fire. The emergency bought Thompson back to the present, and he quickly found a blanket and used it to smother their flames.

By 0755, the .30- and .50-caliber machine guns of USS *Tautog*

and *Hulbert*, moored at the island's submarine base, were firing even though *Tautog*, having just returned from a forty-five-day patrol, had only a quarter of her crew aboard. Within three minutes, an aircraft estimated to be 150 feet to the stern of *Tautog* exploded in flames, and later in the attack the subs' guns brought down at least one more enemy plane.

USS *Breeze*'s Horace Warden: "The plane we had shot down landed right near us in the water. The pilot was still alive, so they got a whale-boat to go rescue him. Apparently he made a move, put his hand under his vest or something, and so they killed him and then didn't have a live pilot to question. The sailor who shot him was told that he was going to get court-martialed. But later that all was quashed and there was no court-martial."

Oiler *Ramapo* was in the middle of ferrying brand-new PT boats to the Philippines. Ensign Niles Ball gave orders to fight back by running the air compressors, firing up the power of their .50-caliber machine-gun turrets. *PT-26*, sitting on the dock waiting to be raised aloft onto the tanker, was empty on gas for her compressors. So that crew yanked off the hoses, and one man pushed the turret while another triggered the guns. One of the grand old men of the navy, Commander Duncan Curry, stood on the *Ramapo* bridge, firing away at enemy planes with a .45, sobbing uncontrollably.

A Japanese high-altitude bomb fell to the south end of Ford Island, missing its target, the concussion making Lieutenant (jg) Howell M. Forgy, chaplain of heavy cruiser *New Orleans*, imagine a tug was nudging his ship. *New Orleans* was having her engine fixed, and Forgy, a hearty six-foot-two athlete from Philadelphia, was still in his bunk, contemplating the sermon he was to deliver at church that morning. Next Forgy heard something that sounded like a kid "running a stick along one of those white picket fences back home." This was followed by the shriek of the bosun's pipe and the uproarious clang of the ship's general alarm. The chaplain "wondered why the officer of the deck could never get it through his head the fact that the general alarm was not to be tested on Sundays," and when he next heard, "All hands to battle stations! All hands to battle stations! This is no drill! This is no drill," he thought it "must be some admiral's clever idea of how to make an off-hour general quarters drill for the fleet realistic."

Edward Sowman explained that both *New Orleans* "and her sister ship the USS *San Francisco* were tied up across the dock from each

other in the navy shipyard when the Japanese made their first attack. Both cruisers were undergoing machinery repairs and were taking all utilities from the dock, which included water, air, electricity, etc. Our antiaircraft battery had begun firing immediately after being manned, but suddenly all power from the dock was cut off and the gunners had to go to local control. This meant they would aim and fire from the mount itself without any additional assistance. At the same time it meant that the ammunition hoist would not operate, and on-deck ammunition was in limited supply.” Between a gunner’s mate shouting, “Get those goddamn lines down the hatch to the magazine!”—and Lieutenant Edwin Woodhead ordering the men, “Get over by that ammunition hoist, grab those five-inch shells [each weighed just under a hundred pounds], and get them to the guns!”—the cruiser’s men formed into ammo trains to hoist shells from their magazine storage belowdecks through their handling quarters to their batteries above. While one faction of gunners raised and lowered the guns with hand cranks to follow a target, another loaded, fired, and cleared them by hand, both groups having to dodge strafing fire and shrapnel.

Chaplain Forgy’s battle station was sick bay, which meant he had to force his way down the ladders against a tide of marines rushing up to the deck to their eight .50-caliber machine guns and their nine eight-inch and eight five-inch antiaircraft batteries. He saw a “tiny Filipino messboy, who weighed little more than a shell, hoist it to his shoulder, stagger a few steps, and grunt as he started the long, tortuous trip up two flights of ladders to the quarterdeck.” Forgy wanted to help defend the ship, but as he explained, “A chaplain cannot fire a gun or take material part in a battle,” so the man of God would instead become an epochal figure in Pearl Harbor history. Lieutenant Woodhead: “I heard a voice behind me saying, ‘Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition.’ I turned and saw Chaplain Forgy walking toward me along the line of men. He was patting the men on the back and making that remark to cheer them and keep them going. I know it helped me a lot, too.” In 1942, this memory would inspire Frank Loesser to write “Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition,” one of the great anthems that inspired Americans to win the war.

USS *Argonne* crewman Charles Christensen: “I was in my Skivvies—that’s sailor slang for underwear—and putting on my white uniform. Next to my bunk was a small suitcase that I kept my roller skates in. Friends had introduced me to a young Japanese woman the night

before. She said she liked roller-skating, so we made a date to go skating. I was supposed to meet her at nine Sunday morning. An explosion slightly shook the ship and I thought, 'Oh! That was a bad explosion!' I wondered what had happened. And I opened my porthole and stuck my head out. And, oh, boy, was there ever a fire on Ford Island! I thought, 'Wow! I'd better go take a look.' . . .

"Shrapnel was just bouncing all over. . . . I tried to pick up a piece. It was still hot! I dropped it. The only time I got scared was when a high-altitude bomber came over and dropped a bomb. When you look up, you don't know that the bomb is traveling the same speed as the plane, and you think it's coming straight down. And I thought my time had come, right then. But where are you going to run? You just have to stand there and watch it. And it misses.

"I just couldn't believe all of this was happening in this short length of time. With all of these planes coming in, it looked like bees coming back to the hive. There were so many of them in there at one time it was amazing that they didn't collide."

In all the horror, there were some remarkable moments. "We had a first-class electrician's mate on the *Worden* named Charles Ross, from Baltimore," John Beasley said. "While in East Asia, Charley had been living with a Japanese girl he called Peachy. Peachy had a brother in the Japanese naval air force. During the Pearl attack, whenever a Japanese plane would come very close, Charley would point at it and say, 'Don't shoot that one down—he might be my brother-in-law!'"

One example of Kimmel's command failure in the face of the November 27 war warning was that on nearly every ship in the harbor, only one boiler was kept lit, which meant a strike in the right compartment would destroy electrical power and, in turn, firepower. The thousands of man-hours of drilling at sea, with war games and task forces and gunnery and zigzag and the insistence of the navy for bigger guns and bigger battleships—all of that, in this moment, meant nothing. The most helpless of Pearl Harbor's ships were those in dry dock. Not only could they not move, but various of their power systems were shut down, meaning nearly the whole of their defenses were out of commission.

In Dry Dock One lay flagship *Pennsylvania* and two destroyers, *Cassin* and *Downes*. *Downes* took three bombs to the aft; *Cassin*, two to her stern and two at her superstructure; and *Pennsylvania's* hull was collateral-damaged by one of the hits on *Cassin*. Then at 0906, a bomb

crashed through *Pennsylvania's* deck, killing twenty-eight men. Medical Corpsman Hank Lachenmayer: "The events about to be related here are still somewhat vague. Perhaps due to the fact that one could and would not imagine them in one's most horrid and imaginative nightmares.

"We, the band on the *Pennsylvania*, proceeded to the quarterdeck in preparation for morning colors. At exactly three minutes of eight, looking over toward the naval air station on Ford Island, we could see a group of planes proceeding gently from a high altitude and then leveling off about 150 feet from the ground.

"A plane that looked half like a Stuka and half like one of our own dive-bombers was just leveling off, and I could see the bombs dropping out of its bottom. It was a silver-gray plane with a reddish gold ball or sun painted on its side. I still don't know how I got my instrument in my case and back to the shelf in the band room, but I must have made Superman's speed look amateurish. By this time all hands were manning their battle stations, and I proceeded towards mine, stopping on the way to get my gas mask.

"A fire had broken out on the second deck and had to be attended to with haste. The fire was precipitated by the bursting of a five-hundred-pound bomb in the casemate [a warship's armored chamber for guns] and the main deck. The havoc created by this one bomb hit can never be exaggerated. The one bomb hit pierced the boat deck abreast of No. 7 AA gun and tore through the No. 9 casemate and down to the main deck. All this area exploded with vigor. The marine division suffered the severest losses. First Lieutenant Craig, standing near the three-inch gun, had both legs blown off and received other injuries; he died almost on the spot. Dr. Rall, a lieutenant junior grade, and a pharmacist's mate were mangled and killed instantly.

"I wandered around the dressing station, my eyes not believing what they saw. I gave a drink here and loosened an article of clothing there; there was not much else I could do. Many were badly burned and screamed for relief of pain; they had already received drug injections, and a glass of water to the lips was in many cases the only human assistance possible. Later in the day I assisted in taking the dead off the ship and in bringing on board many rounds of ammunition."

There was no water pressure to fight the fires that erupted everywhere, but *Pennsylvania* quickly got her foremast AA machine guns blasting. She was also helped in defense by yard worker George Wal-

ters, a crane operator working fifty feet in the air over the dry dock when the Japanese arrived. The dreadnought's enormous guns were designed to shoot at enemy ships over the horizon line, not fast-moving aircraft over a sailor's head. The best defense would be other planes but in the wake of the attack, few of these remained. Instead, George Walters marshaled his beast to block low-flying planes while American gunners followed his movements to target against an enemy they couldn't actually see. A record player in one of the ship's repair shops was left on to play over and over, during this early-morning nightmare, the rousing melody of Glenn Miller's "Sunrise Serenade."

Shaw was having just as much trouble in her floating dry dock to the west. A bad hit around 0912 started a massive fire, which spread toward the forward magazine. In fifteen minutes, it made contact, unleashing a tremendous explosion with a huge ball of fire ballooning into the air. Bits of flaming material arched and snaked across the sky, trailing white streamers of smoke.

At that moment, *Downes* and *Cassin* both ordered their men to abandon ship, while in the *Curtiss*'s transmitter room, four radiomen stayed tethered to their battle phones and transmitters, hearing the nightmare outside, but knowing little of what was happening. Suddenly a hole appeared right in front of James Raines. It was so confusing. Then he realized that the crewman sitting behind him, Benny Schlock, was dead, while Dean Orwick was seriously injured. R. E. Jones came over, and while the two were trying to help Orwick out the door, Jones asked, "My foot's gone, isn't it?" Raines nodded, but he assured the man that everything was going to be okay. Later, Raines found out Orwick died, and that his own back had been broken in the explosion.

An officer phoned Admiral Husband Kimmel at home with the news that Japanese planes were attacking his fleet. The admiral was still buttoning his white uniform as he ran out of his house and onto the neighboring lawn of the district's chief of staff, Captain John Earle, which had a panoramic view of Battleship Row. Mrs. Earle said later that Kimmel stood "in utter disbelief and completely stunned," his face "as white as the uniform he wore."

"The sky was full of the enemy," Kimmel said later. He saw the *Arizona* "lift out of the water, then sink back down—way down."

Mrs. Earle saw a battleship capsize and said, "Looks like they've got the *Oklahoma*."

"Yes, I can see they have," the admiral numbly responded.

Arriving at his base, Kimmel radioed the Pacific Fleet and CNO Stark that “hostilities with Japan commenced with air raid on Pearl Harbor;” and at 0817, he ordered Patrol Wing 2 to “locate enemy force.” One officer remembered, “I ran over to my offices and I happened to be standing alongside the commander in chief himself, Admiral Kimmel. We were glumly watching the havoc, the carnage that was going on. And suddenly he reached up and tore off his four-star shoulder boards, which indicated his rank and title as commander in chief, Pacific Fleet. He stepped into his adjacent offices and, realizing he was going to lose command, donned two-star rear-admiral shoulder boards.”

According to other accounts, at this moment an errant bullet ricocheted against Husband Kimmel’s chest and fell to the floor. He picked it up and said, “I wish it had killed me.”

As vast as Pearl Harbor and her sister military installations then were, in many ways the US Navy was a small town. Sailors might spend an entire thirty-year career aboard one ship; officers would meet as young men at Annapolis, then work together for decades. All were bonded by that special tick of the heart that marks a life of duty. After seeing thousands of his men perish, so many of whom he knew personally, when Admiral Husband Kimmel said he wished that he, too, had died, it couldn’t have been more heartfelt.

Twelve days before, Admiral Kimmel had asked naval war plans officer Rear Admiral Charles McMorris, “What do you think about the prospects of a Japanese air attack?” McMorris had categorically replied, “None, absolutely none.” Now, running into intelligence officer Edwin Layton in the office halls—Layton having been one of the few naval officers in Hawaii who insisted they needed to prepare for just such an attack—McMorris whined, “If it’s any satisfaction to you, you were right and we were wrong.”

West Virginia’s Ensign Roland Brooks thought he saw an explosion aboard *California* and set off the alarm for Away Fire and Rescue Party, sending hundreds of men running to the decks. Though Brooks had made a mistake—it wasn’t *California* but a Ford Island hangar—his mistake saved hundreds of lives, since now arriving overhead were *Hiryu* torpedo planes led by Lieutenant Heita Matsumura, with their primary targets the American aircraft carriers anchored to the west of Ford Island. Since the flattops, as reported by Yoshikawa, were missing,

the squadron instead attacked its secondaries. Pilot Takeshi Maeda: “We saw the water channel and we turned left. And right in front of us was Battleship Row. We aimed at the battleship. Our original order was to hit a *California*-class battleship, but at the time we didn’t know we hit the *West Virginia*.”

Marine bugler Richard Fiske had just finished playing for *West Virginia*’s raising of colors. He and his best friends from high school, Charles Jones and William Finley, had joined the marines together; Finley and Jones were assigned to *Arizona*, barely a hundred yards away. When the first planes appeared, Fiske was thinking about the girl he was going on a date with later that day in Honolulu. Guessing they were army pilots from Wheeler, Fiske told his friend Stanley Bukowski, “I guess we’re going to have an exercise. We’d better get to our battle stations.” “No, wait,” Bukowski said. “They’re going to drop some dummy torpedoes. Let’s go over to the port side and see them.”

“I saw two objects fall from their craft making a tremendous splash,” Fireman 3rd Class Ed Carstens remembered. “Suddenly I spotted two wakes heading for the ship and surmised they were torpedoes. By the time I got the word *torpedoes* out of my mouth, they had hit and exploded. . . . I learned later that we had been hit with eight, plus two bomb hits.”

“After they dropped their torpedoes, they would have to climb to clear the superstructure of the battleship,” Fiske said. One flew so close with his canopy open that “we made eye contact, and I’ve dreamed about that son of a gun for more than fifty years.”

Joseph Paul: “I was sleeping in the plotting room. That is the control center for all gunfire systems, especially the main battery of sixteen-inch guns. I was shaken by a tremendous explosion followed by six or more in close succession. The ship began to list badly. I tried to make my way up to topside. I heard water coming in huge amounts above me and the ship began tilting worse and worse. I tried to get back to the plotting room where my friends were, figuring out that I was not going to get out this way. As the water continued to rise, someone at the watertight door yelled, ‘Anyone else?’ I yelled right back, ‘Wait for me!’ He said, ‘Hurry, I have to close the door!’ . . . He managed to help me get through and close the door just in time. We’re now in a sealed compartment with no air or lights. . . . We went into the control center, which was in the next compartment, and climbed up a ladder inside an escape tube that emptied into the conning tower

on the bridge. I thought how lucky I was and how smart the designers of the ship were to install such an escape tube.”

In *West Virginia's* conning tower, Ensign Victor Delano was looking for someone to help him fight back with two .50-caliber Browning machine guns. He came across a man with no gunnery experience, Mess Attendant Doris Miller. A fullback on the Moore High School football team in his hometown of Waco, Texas—his friends called him Dorie—Miller worked on his dad's twenty-eight acres of sharecropper before signing up in 1939 at the age of nineteen. The kitchen was the only part of the US Navy where an African-American was allowed to serve, but Miller liked it better than farming in Texas. He was stationed to the *West Virginia*—known by her crew as WeeVee—in 1940 and became WeeVee's heavyweight boxing champion, as well as spending a month at Secondary Battery Gunnery School. He was gathering laundry when general quarters struck and ran to his battle station—the midship AA battery—to find it destroyed by torpedoes. Doris Miller's courage would in time make him a civil rights hero.

Victor Delano thought the right thing to do at that moment was for Miller to pass him the ammo, and he would shoot the guns. Doris Miller thought the right thing to do was for each of them to take a gun and let the Japs have it. Doris Miller: “It wasn't hard. I just pulled the trigger and she worked fine. I had watched the others with these guns. I guess I fired her for about fifteen minutes. I think I got one of those Jap planes. They were diving pretty close to us.” Delano later said that this was the only time he'd seen Miller smile since the day he'd won a boxing match.

Lieutenant C. V. Ricketts: “The captain had a serious abdominal wound, a large piece of metal or other similar object apparently having passed through his abdomen. Leak, chief pharmacist's mate, arrived with a first-aid kit and dressed the wound as best he could. We put the captain on a cot and moved him under shelter just aft of the conning tower. He remained here during the second air attack. We had no stretcher but we obtained a wooden ladder about eight feet long and put the captain on it and lashed him to it and tied a line on each corner intending to lower him over the port or starboard side of the conning tower down to the boat deck. By that time however a serious oil fire had started, apparently in the galley, and heavy black smoke poured up over the bridge and boat deck forward. The boat deck had to be evacuated, so we could not lower the captain there. Neither could we lower

him aft of the bridge because it was covered with fire. By this time the fire had spread to the life-jacket stowage under the after part of the bridge, and flames were coming up through the bomb hole in the port side of the flag bridge deck.”

Nearly disemboweled and in great suffering, Captain Bennion ordered everyone to forget about him and save themselves. They succeeded in getting him to the safety of the bridge, but soon after, he died.

Marine bugler Richard Fiske had joined the rescuers, pouring buckets of sand on men who were on fire. The next day, he would have to play taps for his captain’s burial.

Signalman Gene Merrill: “I volunteered to join the ten-hand rescue party to go below and rescue those wounded by the torpedoes. I have no idea how many we rescued. With no instructions, each of us used his own discretion. My modus operandi was to quickly examine the body for signs of life. If none was apparent, I moved on to the next one. However, questionable cases I rescued. . . . I stayed below until the flooding salt water and oil forced me to evacuate. When I emerged to the topside, the battle was over. The ship was sitting on the bottom with the port listed as burning. . . . The motor launch took us across the channel to the submarine base, where we boarded a flatbed truck that took us to the receiving-station barracks. I went into one of the buildings that seemed to be overrun with women wearing Red Cross armbands. I was naked as a newborn chicken, covered with oil, and practically surrounded by these women. Under normal circumstances, I would’ve been greatly embarrassed, but in this situation, not at all. None of these ‘angels of mercy’ seemed to pay me any attention. Under normal circumstances, I might’ve been insulted.”

Lieutenant Commander T. T. Beattie, *West Virginia*’s navigator: “Just then the USS *Arizona*’s forward magazines blew up with a tremendous explosion, and large sheets of flame shot skyward, and I began to wonder about our own magazines and whether they were being flooded. I got hold of a chief turret captain to check immediately on the magazines and to flood them if they were not flooded at this time. Large sheets of flame and several fires started aft. Burning fuel oil from the USS *Arizona* floated down on the stern of the ship [then] a large oil fire swept from the USS *Arizona* down the port side of the USS *West Virginia*. We had no water on board as the fire mains and machinery were out of commission, and we were unable to do any firefighting at all. I

got into a motor launch to go to the stern of the ship to investigate the fire. The smoke was so heavy that I could not see aft of the bridge. As I got into the boat, a sheet of flame swept on top of us and we barely managed to get free of the fire. I realized then that the ship was lost.”

Between five and eight eighteen-inch torpedoes detonated against *West Virginia's* port, while two armor-piercing bombs crashed through her deck. With an inclinometer marking list at fifteen degrees, Commander Roscoe Hillenkoetter and Lieutenant Commander John Harper gave orders for counterflooding to keep her from turning turtle. She had lost so much power, that no one could hear their commands; however a team of shipfitters, led by senior gunnery officer Lieutenant Claude Ricketts and Boatswain's Mate 1st Class Garnett Billingsley, did it on their own. Saved by her men, *West Virginia* sank on an even keel.

Of the 1,541 aboard *West Virginia* on December 7, 1941, 130 were killed and 52 wounded. Three of the dead were found, weeks later, in a sealed compartment, having lived in the dark without food or water until December 23, when the air ran out and they suffocated.

The USS *Oklahoma* had arrived at Pearl Harbor on December 5 after spending two weeks on maneuvers. With her crew of fifteen hundred, she was a true “city of the sea.” American engineers believed that her system of watertight bulkheads made her unsinkable, and they imagined that the thirteen inches of steel armoring her hull made her impenetrable.

On the morning of December 7, *Oklahoma's* Albert Ellis of Portland, Oregon, was in his bunk, playing “A String of Pearls” on his battle group's communal record player. Nineteen-year-old apprentice seaman Garlen Eslick, an actual Oklahoman from Bristow, was assigned to KP. Ensign Adolph Mortensen had watch duty the night before; relieved at 0345, he took the spyglass to his room, which marked his status as junior officer on deck—JOD.

Since senior officers lived ashore, most of those aboard that Sunday were junior in rank, and Admiral Kimmel had seen no reason to change this arrangement even in the wake of a series of alarming cables from Washington culminating in a war warning.

Ensign Mortensen had slept maybe three hours when the alarms went off. He ran out of his cabin shirtless, in pajama bottoms, with slippers and his hat, to designate he was an officer: “I felt foolish, but

didn't have much of a choice." He saw a sailor assigned to the forward boiler control running to his post: "As he opened the hatch and stepped into the air lock, I watched the spinner handle spin and lock the hatch. I wondered to myself, 'What is he going to find down there? What are the others doing down there? Can they possibly light off the burners, and even if they could, what good would it do? How could this ship possibly get under way?'"

Mortensen came across another sailor sitting where the bulkhead met the deck, "a good worker who usually came back from liberty with a split lip, bloody nose, black eye, or disheveled uniform with his friend from another division. They seemed inseparable. Here he was, sitting on the deck with his friend's head in his lap, his body stretched out on the deck. I couldn't see what was wrong, but he seemed to be unconscious. When our eyes met, I said, 'You better get out of here.' He gave me an anguished look as he answered, 'No. I'm not going to leave my friend. He's hurt.'"

Quartermaster Herbert Kennedy, a nineteen-year-old from Seattle: "I heard this noise, a popping noise, and I looked up and there was a Japanese fighter plane, coming in ahead of the torpedo planes, strafing the decks. The boy that was directly across from me, it just tore him in half. Blood spattered all over me and I didn't know what to think. I couldn't believe what I was seeing." Ensign John Landreth worked in anti-aircraft ops and summed up this strange feeling of shock: "What is this really? A dream, perhaps, or is it really me shooting at other men and they shooting at me? What is this really?"

Senior Reserve Ensign Herm Rommel grabbed the PA system mike on his way to his battle station to holler, "Man your battle stations! This is no shit!" Commander Paul Backus explained, "Only under the most unusual circumstances would an officer personally make an announcement in those days of formal battleship routine, and the use of obscene language by anyone over the announcing system was just unheard of. [And] right after the last word of the announcement, the whole ship shuddered. It was the first torpedo hitting our port side."

Adolph Mortensen: "The ship was lifted rapidly straight up a considerable distance. On reaching the B Division quarters, I found an incredible mess. . . . Berths attached to the bulkhead had come loose and were swinging on their chains, making walking difficult. The remainder of breakfast food, coffee, pots, dirty dishes and food trays, platters of uneaten sliced baloney covered with the usual tomato sauce,

had spilled and made an incredible slippery mess through which we had to walk.”

No one could man the antiaircraft batteries since “the boxes containing the ready ammunition were padlocked, and there was no compressed air for the rammers,” Backus said. “The padlocks were broken and the ammunition was hand-rammed into the breeches. There were no firing locks on the breech blocks. They had been removed and were down in the armory being cleaned for a scheduled admiral’s inspection. . . . Not a shot was fired from these guns before the ship rolled over.” As part of that inspection, “some of our blisters [bulges of dead-air space that take the hit of a mine or torpedo without letting it penetrate] were open when the attack took place. The manhole covers had been removed in some instances so that the blisters could be aired out for a later cleaning. Obviously, our resistance to flooding was minimal when the torpedoes hit. When the blisters dipped under, flooding had to be massive. [Then] lines securing the *Oklahoma* to the *Maryland* had started to pop as the list on the ship increased rapidly.”

Another torpedo slipped through the air and smashed into the bay. As marine Private Raymond Turpin of Waterloo, Alabama, and five others ran to their gun, the sound of a plane roared just over their heads; Ray looked up to see the Japanese pilot jerk her up to keep from colliding into one of the battleships’ superstructure. Just then the man running behind him yelled, “Were you hit?” Ray said, “No, why’d you ask?” And the man said, “He strafed us!”

The bomber was *Akagi* squadron commander Lieutenant Jinichi Goto: “I was about twenty meters above the water . . . when I released my torpedo. As my plane climbed up after the torpedo was off, I saw that I was even lower than the crow’s nest of the great battleship. My observer reported a huge waterspout springing up from the ship’s location. *Ararimashita!* [It struck!] he cried. The other two planes in my group also attacked *Oklahoma*.”

Sailor James Huston: “When a torpedo hits, that water goes up in the air way higher than the length of that ship! And that comes down on you—and you go onto your knees when that water comes down. You can’t stand up. Just tons of water. When the torpedoes hit, it just rolled over like that. I couldn’t walk across the deck. ’Cause the water and everything was over top of it—it was slippery. But they hung cargo nets up on this poop deck. I slid down those lines and swam over to the shoreline and crawled up and went on the *Maryland*.”

“The first alarm came and I immediately ran up the ladder to the starboard side of the upper deck to go to the conning tower after calling for the crew to go to battle stations,” USS *Oklahoma*’s Commander Jesse Kenworthy Jr. said. “As I reached the upper deck, I felt a heavy shock and heard a loud explosion, and the ship immediately began to list to port. Oil and water descended on deck, and by the time I had reached the boat deck, the shock of two more explosions on the port side was felt. In the meanwhile, general quarters had sounded and the crew had gone to battle stations and started zed closures [the dogging down of doors, hatches, ports, and valves marked with a Z].”

“I was five foot three and, at the age of seventeen, the youngest sailor on ship,” remembered *Oklahoma* crewman George Smith. “My battle station was a loader on a five-inch gun, and I was so small I couldn’t even pick up the shells. So they had me load the powder instead, because the powder bags didn’t weigh as much. Well, I was young, and I disobeyed some orders. The captain put me in the brig and told me to read *The Bluejacket’s Manual*, the navy’s book on how a sailor is supposed to behave. Now, on that Sunday I was out [on his fourth day after spending thirty days in the brig], and I was getting ready for a day off the ship—liberty we call it. Then over the loudspeakers I heard, ‘All hands, man your battle stations.’ I was really scared. Then I heard, ‘Abandon ship.’ The ship was already rolling over on us. We jumped into the water. It was only about a five-foot jump. I saw the ship and the big gun turrets coming down on me, and I began to swim as fast as I could.”

Robert West’s battle station was three decks below: “A torpedo hit, and then another one, and then another one. The ship listed a little bit more, and then a little bit more, and it got so bad you couldn’t walk over to the other side.”

Now listing at forty-five degrees, the unsinkable, impenetrable *Oklahoma* took one more missile strike right at her deck line—the fatal blow. Eslick was in the middle of trying to help the injured when “the lights blackened out and the ship completed its roll. And that’s the last I remember ’cause I was rendered unconscious.”

The commander gave the order to abandon ship. The crew running Turret 4 had pitched in to buy themselves a phonograph. A torpedo knocked the volume dial to full blast, and in another incongruous musical accompaniment, it played Gene Krupa’s “Let Me Off Uptown.”

Five more torpedoes slammed into *Oklahoma*. Power systems failed,

tanks exploded streaming oil across the floors, and seawater poured in. Sailor George DeLong: “The lights went out and water rushed in through the air vent. Furniture and equipment in the compartment started crashing around the deck. I realized my head was where my feet had been.”

On Ford Island, Chief Albert Molter watched as she rolled completely over in the water, exposing her belly, “slowly and stately . . . as if she were tired and wanted to rest.” It was eight minutes after the first assault of torpedo planes, and now this once-great ship of the American fleet was completely overturned, her mast dug into the mud. In her roll, *Oklahoma*’s ammunition handling rooms’ fourteen-hundred-pound, fourteen-inch shells went into free fall, crushing to death several of the men, pinning one against a bulkhead and popping out his tongue and eyes.

Of 1,353 men aboard, 461 were now trapped inside. Robert West: “The water came rushing in like a flood, coming up to your knees and then your hips, and all of a sudden it got to a point where you were treading water. And it stopped.” Garlen Eslick: “Evidently the cool water brought me to. I remembered hollering for help.” Albert Ellis: “We had four flashlights, which we used very sparingly until they all ran out of power. Thank God we knew the area as well as we did. We got to the highest point. And we were dogged in; we couldn’t get out. The hatch was armor plated and probably weighed in excess of two thousand pounds.” West: “There was some light coming from some place, I don’t know where, but we could see a ladder, and we could see the water was rising. So we went up to the top of the ladder and there was another door with a hatch on it, locked. So we just took the wrench and beat that lock until it broke. We opened the door. It was black in there, but it was dry.” They shoved clothes into the air vents, trying to plug the flood of water from coming in.

George Smith: “There were a couple of other sailors still in the brig, which was set up in the carpenter shop. I found out later that when one of the torpedoes hit, it broke the carpenter’s workbench loose, pinned the guard against the wall—the bulkhead—and he could not release the men in the brig. Everyone drowned.”

“I helped a partially incapacitated man [up] to the second deck and then joined in a line passing injured men along to the ladder by the dental office,” Assistant Pay Clerk Daniel Westfall remembered. “I lost all knowledge of time while here, but after some minutes, Ensign

[Thomas] McClelland, who was beside me in the line, said he was feeling faint and then collapsed. I noticed other men dropping around me. I stooped over to pick up McClelland but when I stooped over, I got dizzy and fell. I seemed to be paralyzed from the waist down, had great difficulty breathing, but had enough strength in my arms to drag myself to the ladder and up a couple of steps [toward the main deck] before collapsing completely [likely from breathing oil fumes]. After passing out I had only flashes of consciousness until midafternoon.”

Ensign Adolph Mortensen saw “Chaplain Schmitt pushing one person out [through a porthole]. Two more were beside him. I understand he tried to squeeze through but was unable to fit so came back inside and spent the last few minutes of his life helping others escape. I don’t think more than one more could have gotten out because shortly thereafter the ship rolled and he and the others were trapped in the rising waters.”

Ray Turpin was one of those helping the trapped men struggle to escape through that fifteen-inch porthole. He helped get five out, but the sixth was in bad shape; he was just too big to fit though and got stuck. As Ray and some others pulled on the man’s arms and chest and rocked him back and forth, Father Al was pushing as hard as he could from below. The men could hear the man’s ribs pop as they manhandled him through and saw the black marks of bruises on his body, but even though he was suffering, he shouted, “Don’t stop! Keep pulling!” Finally, he was free, but so injured by the effort it looked as if he’d been beaten. “I was amazed at his composure and jovial attitude, despite his horrible and painful wounds,” his friend Adolph Kuhn remembered.

Then came Ray Turpin’s worst memory of World War II as he had to watch through a porthole as a compartment flooded with water, and the man on the other side of that window, *Oklahoma* chaplain Lieutenant (jg) Father Aloysius Schmitt, refused his hand of help. “Someone tried earlier to pull me out and I couldn’t get through,” Schmitt insisted. “I’m going to see if there are others needing a way out.”

Four weeks later, at a Protestant church in California, a Jewish sailor would testify that he was alive because a Catholic chaplain had pushed him through a porthole.

Now it was time for Raymond Turpin to save himself. He slid into the harbor. The water around him was covered in three inches of oil. He found a mooring line from *Oklahoma* to *Maryland* and started shimmying up it to safety. But the force of *Oklahoma*’s sinking was pulling *Maryland* away from her quay, and just as Turpin neared the ship,

he heard an officer aboard *Maryland* yell, "Cut the line!" A chief petty officer approached with a fire ax. He looked and shouted back, "But, sir, there are guys on the line!" The order came down: "Cut the god-damn line!" With four whacks of the ax Turpin fell fifteen feet into the murk, the rope's coil landing on top of him. He came to the surface, sputtering for breath, and started swimming to the *Maryland* all over again. But he was exhausted, and failing, and then a big sailor pulled him forward to a line hanging near her bow and boosted him up so he could climb to the deck.

There he found a crew attacking the Japanese with a new 1.1-inch, four-barrel anti-aircraft machine gun, and he was thrilled to see that three of them were fellow marines he knew from *Oklahoma*. "Can I help?" he asked. "Yeah, grab some clips, load 'em, and drop 'em in the guns when the others empty!" It was thrilling to finally be able to fight back, to give those Japs just what they deserved.

There was a tap on his shoulder. *Maryland's* senior medical officer, Lieutenant Commander John Luten, had just come on deck since the attack's start and asked, "What happened to you?"

"Sir, I just came off the *Oklahoma*."

"*Oklahoma*? What happened to the *Oklahoma*?"

Ray pointed. "It's sunk."

"My God!" Luten insisted that Ray, covered in oil, go get checked at the primary aid station. There, Luten ordered a medic to examine Ray's injuries, but the medic ignored him, so Ray went back to the deck and rejoined the gun crew. Dr. Luten found him again and again took him to the station and reprimanded the corpsman. He told Ray to take a good shower and throw his clothes into the trash.

Ray said, "What am I going to wear?"

"When you get out of the shower, I'll give you a pair of pajamas."

George Smith: "I swam around the *Oklahoma*, heading for the *Maryland*, which was moored alongside. They threw cargo nets over the side we could climb aboard. But there were so many men from the *Oklahoma* on the *Maryland* that they ordered us to get into the water again and swim to Ford Island."

Now safely ashore, Smith "couldn't stand looking over there, seeing my ship upside down. I cried that night. I kept saying to myself, 'What am I doing here? I could be home in Seattle going to high school with my buddies. I just quit high school to join the navy—for this.' I was scared. But I knew I grew up that day."

Having warned others of danger, Ensign Mortensen now found himself trapped. "As I treaded water, the ship continued to roll and I was carried into the pharmacy. As the door rolled over me, the glass-faced doors of the medicine cabinets on the bulkhead opened, and I was showered with a deluge of medicine bottles both small and large. . . . The light disappeared almost, but not quite, to zero."

"It was scary," Musician 1st Class Robert West said. "It scared the life out of me. And it knocked you around. And the water just kept rising up. We had to tread the water to keep your head above, and there was only about a foot, maybe a foot and a half, between your head and the water. But we knew we had to get out of that compartment because maybe the water would be coming up again. . . . One more hit and that would be it. So we decided to dive under the hatch. We followed each other into the other compartment. . . . There was so much that was going through your mind. If you were going to get out. And you thought of the good things that had happened to you before. I remember talking to this person next to me, you think about having a milk shake in Walgreens drugstore. . . . We used to talk about little things like that."

Now wearing only pajama bottoms and a hat—he'd lost his slippers—Mortensen was trapped in the pharmacy with about thirty men in all, and about forty cubic feet of air. For about an hour they assumed help was on the way and had no idea that the boat had turned over and that they were far below the water's surface. The only one with a flashlight was carpenter John Austin, who discovered one way out: an underwater porthole. Finally Mortensen kicked it open. It was positioned the wrong way, and that's when they realized the ship had upended, with the tiles on the ceiling being the dispensary's floor.

Some of the men swam down to investigate. Everyone knew that a number of portholes on the ship led to void space, which would be a trap. But when the air started running out, they had no other choice.

The hatch's reversed hanging meant that one man had to hold the door open while another man swam through the fourteen-inch opening. It took seaman George Murphy three attempts to get out; Mortensen ended up pushing him through the port.

Finally, only two men remained behind in the dispensary: Mortensen and the portly John Austin. Mortensen: "John must have known he had no chance. He did not say a word but moved over the few feet necessary and just reached down and held the port. I looked at his face

but cannot describe the look of anguish it contained. It is a look that has never left me.”

Swimming out, Mortensen could see the “golden brown glow above and I knew the surface was up there somewhere. It never occurred to me that the normal color should have been bluish.” The harbor water was now covered with three to four inches of burning oil. The ensign was again shocked when he reached the surface and saw the devastation, since the whole time below, all the men assumed the only ship struck was theirs.

As the swimmers were picked out of the water by a launch, Mortensen realized that he’d lost his pajama bottoms and hat and was now completely naked. A marine working the launch looked him over and thought for a minute. Then without saying a word, he took off his pants and his Skivvies, gave Mortensen his underwear, and put his pants back on.

“We continued pulling men out of the water,” Ensign H. F. Rommel later reported. “It was difficult due to the oil making everyone slippery. Men with undershirts could be pulled into boats by grabbing the shoulder piece and sleeve on each side, while men who had stripped were very slippery. It is recommended that men be instructed not to remove undershirts when abandoning ship.”

Mortensen wouldn’t see his *Oklahoma* roommate until six months later, when he was working on the USS *Mackinac* in the Samoan harbor of Pago Pago. A motor launch puttered by. “I called out, ‘Morey,’ and he looked up at me and said, ‘I thought you were dead.’”

Back on *Oklahoma*, eleven men were still trapped in the lucky bag, the hold for duffels, overcoats, and other personal items. The only escape would be to swim while holding your breath down five stories and then across the main deck, to where you could rise up to the surface. Russell Davenport made it so far he could feel the main deck’s teak, but couldn’t make it all the way and had to give up and go back.

Boatswain’s Mate 1st Class Howard Aldrich said that, to save air, they needed to stay as quiet as possible, and anyone who could sleep should do that. A few more hours went by, and their one source of light, a lantern, died. Hours passed by in the pitch black. Did anyone even know they were there? Would they all suffocate to death?

Electrician’s Mate Irvin Thessman, at twenty-five, was the oldest of eight men trapped in the aft steering compartment and felt responsible for the other men. They had followed the zed closure protocol

as ordered, but it didn't make their compartment watertight, and the sea began leaking in through the ventilation lines. When they tried to tighten that fitting, it broke, so they stuffed rags into the inlet and covered it with a checkerboard to hold the rags in place.

As the hours passed, they heard tapping, coming from two directions. Using wrenches, hammers, or anything they could get to bang on *Oklahoma's* hull or her plumbing, the men caught in the lucky bag and Radio Four were talking to each other in Morse code. One of the men in Radio was Seaman 1st Class James Bounds: "There's no way you could get out because in our space there was one of those big spring-loaded hatches up above in the carpenters' shop. So when they dropped that hatch, we were there, unless somebody opened from the topside. Sort of felt like a dark, cold, damp coffin. That's the only way I can describe it. And it felt like it was sealed, and you were just ready to suffocate."

The eight sailors trapped in aft steering voted on every decision that might mean life or death. They tried various doors to get out, but each time, a flood of water rushed in. They decided to wait it out, which led to much thinking about their lives. William Beal, age seventeen, couldn't stop remembering all the mean things he'd done to other people.

Trapped right next to them in No. 4 turret's handling room were thirty men who discovered their only exit was a hatch to the top deck. Getting out would mean holding your breath, pulling yourself thirty feet down to the hatch, swimming across the deck, and up to reach the water's surface. Like Russell Davenport, some tried and failed and came back, defeated. But one succeeded—a Brooklyn boy named Weisman, remembered by his colleagues for his poor physique—who, reaching the surface, could show the cutting teams of rescuers where to drill. But no one below knew about this. Seaman Stephen Young bet his friend Wilber Hinsperger that their air would run out, and they would suffocate. Hinsperger insisted instead that they would drown.

No one bet they would live.

Outside, teams from *Maryland*, *Widgeon*, *Rigel*, *Solace*, the Navy Yard, and even *Oklahoma* herself tapped back encouraging words while trying to figure out as quickly as possible where to cut into the armored hull. The trapped men's knocks, though, would echo, especially across the hollow of the keel, and every rescuer had a different opinion as to where it was coming from, and where they should drill.

It was a terrible education. They first tried burning through the hull plate with acetylene torches, but the flames ignited the caulking sealant. The first two men they found had been suffocated to death by the burning sealant's fumes. When they switched to air hammers and drills, the holes they cut to free the trapped sailors also let out the remaining breathable air. The men might drown in the minutes before they could be rescued.

The huge problem in using torches was that they might ignite the great ship's fuel tanks. *Maryland's* Commander E. Kranzfelder: "I obtained a copy of the *Oklahoma* booklet of plans for use in connection with the cutting of holes in the *Oklahoma's* hull. Lines were rigged from the bilge keel at intervals along the bottom; telephone communication was established with the *Maryland*; an air-supply line was quickly rigged from the *Maryland* to the *Oklahoma*. Since, with the exception of the reserve feed bottoms, practically the entire bottom of the *Oklahoma* consists of oil tanks, considerable care had to be exercised in cutting holes with an oxyacetylene torch in order not to open holes in the bottom which would permit the egress of oil with the attendant fire hazard."

The trapped men felt the hull over their heads getting hotter and hotter. One insisted it was a form of Japanese torture, but in fact the heat was from the cutting torches of rescue workers. Garlen Eslick and his group were one of the first out: "I don't know how long it took them, but it seemed like forever. They had three ends cut, and finally they took a sledgehammer and were beating that end towards us. Then they hoisted us up through the openings they had cut."

James Bounds was now with Thessman's group in the aft steering compartment: "I could see the light. Somebody reached down and got my arms and pulled me up. Then somebody was pushing me from below. They had to handle us up through these holes with lots of jagged edges."

Stephen Young pounded out SOS with a dog wrench, until he heard a voice yelling through the bulkhead. Most of the captives had been trapped inside for twenty-eight hours; Russell Davenport remembered swallowing a gulp of water before he was brought up into the sun and air at noon on December 8. Coming out, they were given cigarettes, and oranges. Brought aboard hospital ship *Solace*, no one who had been entombed wanted to sleep belowdecks.

Nineteen-year-old Herbert Kennedy was saved, but remembered

from that moment not freedom, but horror: “There were still bodies floating in water covered in oil, turning white from the salt water. A sight I never want to see again.” George Smith would make it his mission to meet every single one of the *Oklahoma*’s thirty-two survivors who were rescued on the eighth. Four hundred and twenty-nine did not survive. Their tombstones read UNKNOWN. DECEMBER 7, 1941.

When it appeared that the USS *Raleigh* would also capsize like *Oklahoma*, “orders were given for all men not at the guns to jettison all topside weights and to put both airplanes in the water first,” her commanding officer, R. E. Simons, reported. “Both planes were successfully hoisted out by hand power alone and were directed to taxi over to Ford Island and report for duty, along with all the aviation detail on board. The senior doctor was directed to report to the USS *Solace*, to aid in caring for the injured and wounded from other ships (we had no dead and only a few wounded on this ship). An oxyacetylene outfit and crew were sent over to the capsized USS *Utah* to cut out any men in the hull. One man was rescued, and this man, as soon as he took a deep breath, insisted on going back to see if he could rescue any of his shipmates.”

At 0817 on December 7, destroyer *Helm* plowed through the burning waters and the black smoke to reach the open sea. As she exited the channel, lookouts spotted an odd submarine that had run aground on a reef. The destroyer fired, missed, and the sub dove. At about 0828, men on the *Perry* spotted an unidentified craft “heading toward the Middle Loch and swinging toward the moorings of *Medusa* [and] *Curtis*” but *Perry* was moored between *Zane* and the sub in such a way that *Zane* couldn’t fire her guns. *Perry* fired her four-inch cannon; the first shell missed, but the second appeared to strike the sub enough to sink it, and by then *Medusa* was also firing away. *Monaghan*’s Gun No. 2 joined in; one of her shells missed and ignited a fire on a derrick barge. *Burford* then charged toward the sub trying to ram it with “all engines ahead flank speed and full right rudder.” The submarine shot a torpedo at 0840 that breached into the air, heading at *Monaghan*, but missed, plowing into the bank and throwing up a two-hundred-foot geyser. As *Burford* passed over the sub, her chief, G. S. Hardon, dropped two cans of depth charges, which both exploded at 0844. It was decided that the enemy had been destroyed.

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In Washington, Navy Secretary Frank Knox's office received the "Air Raid, Pearl Harbor. This is No Drill" radiogram at around one thirty that afternoon. Knox immediately called the White House, first getting ahold of Harry Hopkins. Like so many officers in Hawaii who couldn't believe their eyes and ears, Knox and Hopkins were at first certain it had to be wrong, that the attack must have been on Manila. But President Roosevelt's immediate reaction was to yell, "No!" Secret Service agent Mike Reilly remembered seeing FDR just after he had gotten the news, thrusting forward in his wheelchair to the Oval Office, looking like a prizefighter: "His chin stuck out about two feet in front of his knees and he was the maddest Dutchman I—or anybody—ever saw."

Before that moment, Hopkins remembered the president had "really thought" the Japanese were capable of doing anything, except something that might explicitly draw the United States into the war; that she would go after more territory in China, Thailand, French Indochina, or even the Soviet Union, but directly attacking the United States? After hearing about the cable, though, "the president thought the report was probably true and thought it was just the kind of unexpected thing the Japanese would do, and that at the very time they were discussing peace in the Pacific, they were plotting to overthrow it."

Roosevelt called Cordell Hull at State, where, at that moment, Ambassadors Nomura and Kurusu were waiting to present Dispatch No. 907—the fourteen-point cable. Since Togo had ordered that only senior consular staff in Washington could know the details of the dispatch, and since none of those officials knew how to type, the two ambassadors had arrived at Hull's office at 2:05, missing their 1:00 deadline. The president suggested the secretary make no mention of the attack, but only greet them "formally and coolly and bow them out," just in case the air raid cable was wrong.

The ambassadors in fact had no idea that their country had launched its war against the world, but "coolly" was not the way of Cordell Hull. After ushering them in at 2:20, the secretary pretended to read the cable. Its fourteen points included that the United States had "resorted to every possible measure to assist the Chongqing regime so as to obstruct the establishment of a general peace between Japan and China," had "attempted to frustrate Japan's aspiration to the ideal of common prosperity in cooperation with these regions," and "may be said to be scheming for the extension of the war" with Amer-

ican demands for Japan's "wholesale evacuation of troops . . . [which] ignored the actual conditions of China and are calculated to destroy Japan's position as the stabilizing factor of East Asia." The Hull Note also ignored "Japan's sacrifices in the four years of the China affair, menaces the Empire's existence itself, and disparages its honor and prestige." The fourteenth point concluded that the Japanese government "cannot but consider that it is impossible to reach an agreement through further negotiations."

Though he'd already been informed of all of this hours before through MAGIC, Hull's hands shook with rage at both Tokyo's duplicity and at his own failures in reaching a diplomatic victory. He finished pretending to scan the pages and turning to the two unsuspecting emissaries, he announced: "I must say that in all my conversations with you, I have never uttered one word of untruth. This is borne out absolutely by the record. In all my fifty years of public service, I've never seen a document that was more crowded with infamous falsehoods and distortions—infamous falsehoods and distortion on a scale so huge that I never imagined until today that any government on this planet was capable of uttering them."

Nomura and Kurusu bowed and left, speechless and confused; they were then surprised by a group of reporters waiting outside, peppering them with questions on a Sunday. As their embassy's gates swung open and closed to let their car pass through, policemen formed a cordon to keep an angry and growing American mob from surging inside. Only then were the two admirals told how they had been used by their government. Admiral Yonai had in fact warned his fellow admiral Nomura of exactly this outcome when he'd first left for Washington, saying, "The gang around today are the kind who won't hesitate to pull the ladder out from under you once they've got you to climb up it." When a Japanese consular staff member told his wife the news of Japan's attack on Oahu, he concluded, "Oh, it's terrible! Why did they do such a terrible thing? Japan is doomed."

Though Cordell Hull would be the first to call the Pearl Harbor attack treacherous, he later came to believe that Nomura and Kurusu's delay in announcing the end of negotiations was due to "ineptitude" since, for over the next six decades, beginning at the Tokyo war crimes tribunal, Japan would present this incident as an honorable mishap, claiming that her government had tried to follow the terms of the 1907 Hague Convention and give notice before an attack—thirty minutes'

notice, but so be it—and sadly, the incompetence of the consular staff in Washington prevented this warning from arriving in time.

In fact, the Foreign Ministry had drafted a Final Memorandum on December 3 that had far more ominous language than the fourteenth point's tepid conclusion of "impossible to reach an agreement through further negotiations." That draft announced that "we are forced to terminate negotiations" and that Washington "would be held responsible for any and all the consequences that may arise in the future." But during the December 4 liaison conference, the general staffs of the army and the navy rejected that language and insisted on the far milder conclusion that appeared in the radioed cable, language so vague that, of the dozen or so Americans allowed to read MAGIC, only Franklin Roosevelt and Rufus Bratton are recorded as having interpreted it as meaning war. The December 6 Imperial Japanese Army war diary admitted all this with the note: "Our deceptive diplomacy is steadily proceeding toward success." Additionally, the same Major Morio Tomura of the Army General Staff Communications Section who had delayed Roosevelt's cable to Hirohito for ten hours had also succeeded in delaying the final transmissions of the fourteen-part cable from Togo to Nomura. But Foreign Minister Togo was not without blame; he used the cable to Nomura to give a delayed notice, instead of directly speaking with Joseph Grew.

After getting confirmation of the attack, the president called White House press secretary Steve Early at home. Roosevelt and Early had been working together for almost thirty years, and they began an Oval Office tradition of getting ahead of the news. At his home, Early jotted down FDR's statement, then called the national wire services to brief them, before heading over to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

At two thirty, James Roosevelt arrived to help his father in any way he could. He remembered the president's aura of "extreme calmness—almost a sad, fatalistic, but courageous acceptance of something he had tried to avert but which he feared might be inevitable." The man told his son simply, "It happened." The first lady agreed with James, noting her husband's "deadly calm. . . . I thought that in spite of his anxiety Franklin was way more serene than he had appeared in a long time. I think it was steadying to know finally that the die was cast. One could no longer do anything but face the fact that this country was in a war. . . . I remember when he was told he had polio, he seemed really relieved that he knew the worst that could happen to him."

Claude Bloch in Hawaii was finally able to reach Harold Stark on the phone that afternoon, but was wary of discussing horrific details on a conversation that could be intercepted. But Stark insisted on knowing everything, so Bloch finished his report and then warned any eavesdroppers, "If any unauthorized person has heard the remarks that I have just made to the chief of naval operations, I beg of you not to repeat them in any way. I call on your patriotic duty as an American citizen."

Just before leaving for the White House at 3:00 p.m., George Marshall cabled General Douglas MacArthur in Manila to warn, "Hostilities between Japan and the United States . . . have commenced. . . . Carry out tasks assigned in Rainbow Five."

Moored at Berth F-7, the 600-foot long, 31,400-ton *Arizona* was tied, bow to stern, on her port to the 466-foot, 12,585-ton repair ship *Vestal*. As Minoru Genda had predicted, US ships such as *Arizona* that were anchored inbound had suffered little damage from his dive-bombers and torpedo planes. *Vestal's* Warner Fahlgren: "We're supposed to weld up the portholes on the *Arizona*, we were the repair ship. I was in the rec room addressing Christmas cards to send home when general quarters rang. They were coming down dropping torpedoes and strafing at the same time. I can remember seeing them drop a torpedo [at 0755] and it coming toward our ship—it looked like it was coming right where I was at. You could see the wake of the torpedo and it looked like it was coming to you. The torpedoes that hit the *Arizona*, they went underneath our ship."

Aboard *Arizona*, Ensign Jim Miller felt that strike and thought it was a mistaken firing of the catapult. Jim Lawson, enjoying *Flash Gordon* in the Sunday paper, didn't think anything of the thumps since the army had been doing so much construction work next door. When he heard general quarters, he raced to his battle station at Turret 4: "It was just a few minutes when the people down in the lower handling room, where the powder magazines were, started yelling, 'We're hitting water and it's coming pretty fast.' We didn't have any power or any communications whatsoever with the rest of the ship, so we had no idea what condition she was in. The guys there in the lower handling room kept getting water, water up to their knees, water up to their waist. Pretty soon it was up to their chins."

The division officer approved an evacuation to the turret's upper

level, but when sea water hit the unit's batteries, the room filled with chlorine gas. Lawson: "The fumes were so bad I was sitting there in the pointer's chair with a T-shirt over my nose saying, 'What do we do next?' The division officer was absolutely worthless—he didn't know what to do either. We had no communications with the bridge, we couldn't ask anybody what was going on. We were just sitting there in limbo. We knew we'd been hit bad."

Vernon Olson was hauling himself up *Arizona's* after mast to his battle station, the crow's nest: "They were strafing and bombing, but it don't take you long. You crawled up the ladders as fast as you could. I was scared. Everybody was scared. Anybody said they weren't scared were crazy." But as for so many others, a problem kept Olson from firing back at the Japanese with his .50-caliber machine gun: "The ammunition was stored below the platform, but the guy with the key never got there. [So] we just stood there and watched them fly right between the masts and bomb us. You could see their faces. You could see them laughing when they were firing at us. They flew right between the two masts. Our machine gun nest must've been two hundred, three hundred feet high, so we had a bird's-eye view of it. We could see them bombing Ford Island. We felt pretty vulnerable."

Jim Foster was alone at his antiaircraft-gun battle station when he saw Admiral Isaac Kidd and Captain Franklin Van Valkenburgh sprinting to the bridge. Kidd turned to Foster and said, "Man your battle station, son." Jim Foster: "He hit me on the shoulder. I think he called me son. I don't know why. Man your battle station—one man on a sixteen-man gun!" Worth Ross Lightfoot and John McCarron then joined him. They loaded in a shell and pulled the trigger, but nothing happened. Then, Jim Foster was knocked unconscious. He came to and found that his legs and feet were all burned to hell, and his nose was broken: "We were blown off the gun. We went over the gun shield and landed on our hats over there. I was on the bottom of the admiral's boat." He looked up at the bridge, now in flames, to see what had happened to the admiral and the captain: "It was like pouring molten metal in there. It must've been the powder coming up out of the stack on the bridge. They died in that fire."

Lieutenant Commander Samuel Fuqua: "We found the admiral's body on the boat deck, or we found a body which I believe to be the admiral's body on the boat deck, just at the foot of the flag bridge ladder. The captain's body was never found. However, the captain's ring

and some coat buttons were found on the flag bridge.” Divers eventually found Admiral Kidd’s wedding ring in the water. It had melted.

Foster, meanwhile, went to look for shelter in the galley deck: “I stuck my head in and it was full of gas or something. I couldn’t breathe. I couldn’t see anybody, but I heard them hollering all down below. They were screaming and pounding. Cursing. And the noise of the bombs was deafening. Bang! Bang! Boom! Bang! The ship would jerk and toss every time a bomb hit.”

“After the torpedo attacks, horizontal bombers, in *V*s of five planes, came in from southward at twelve to fifteen thousand feet, in close formation and unhindered except for AA fire,” *Jarvis’s* Ensign W. F. Greene reported. “Horizontal attacks were regularly spaced at rather long intervals, though I cannot be sure of the exact time, at about ten-to-fifteen-minute intervals.” Greene was observing Mitsuo Fuchida and his high-level bombers in their formations of five, six, and nine, the nine made of three *V*s of three planes each, a tactic that had resulted in their best trial-run hit ratio: 33.5 percent. Just as he’d sent the dive-bombers in for the kill, Fuchida ordered his radioman to flash *Tsu, tsu, tsu* on the telegraph, which told his horizontals to begin their deadly run. Fuchida: “Dark gray puffs burst all around. Suddenly a cloud came between the bombsight and the target, and just as I was thinking that we had already overshot, the lead plane banked slightly and turned right toward Honolulu. We had missed the release point because of the cloud and would have to try again.” One pilot released his 800-kilogram (1,763-pound) bomb anyway. It fell into the water, completely worthless. Fuchida let the pilot know his feelings with a shake of his fist; the bombardier responded that American antiaircraft fire had shook the bomb loose.

After the Japanese circled around for another attempt, Fuchida’s plane was hit by American shells. He asked if everything was all right, and a crewman reported that it was just “a few holes in the fuselage.”

Fuchida: “We were about to begin our second bombing run when there was a colossal explosion in Battleship Row. A huge column of dark red smoke rose to one thousand meters. It must have been the explosion of a ship’s powder magazine. The shock wave was felt even in my plane, several miles away from the harbor.”

“A spurt of flame came out of the guns in [*Arizona’s*] number two turret, followed by an explosion of the forward magazine,” said a

mechanic on nearby tanker *Ramapo*. “The foremast leaned forward, and the whole forward part of the ship was enveloped in flame and smoke and continued to burn fiercely.”

Lieutenant Commander Samuel Fuqua: “I glanced up. I saw a bomb dropping, which appeared to me was going to land on me or close by. The next thing I remember I came to on deck in a position about six feet aft of the starboard gangway. I got to my feet and looked around to see what it was that had knocked me down. Then I saw I was lying about six feet from a bomb hole in the deck. . . . I would judge about eight fifteen or eight twenty I saw a tremendous mass of flames, the height of three hundred feet, rise in the air forward and shook the ship aft as if it would fall apart like a pack of cards.”

Pilot Heita Matsumura: “A huge waterspout splashed over the stack of the ship and then tumbled down like an exhausted geyser . . . immediately followed by another one. What a magnificent sight!”

Pilot Ottawa: “Now we had given this world-famous American navy the first blow. And I was the one who had made this first strike. I had been trained all the way for this moment. Now all this training was rewarded. Since the bomb weighed eight hundred kilograms and the weight of the plane itself was two and half tons, the plane suddenly lifted when we released that heavy bomb. At that moment, all of my feelings of joy rushed up. I did it!” The single bomb strike that took so many American lives in that instant would officially be credited to one of Fuchida’s high-level bombers from *Hiryu*, Tadashi Kusumi.

As over a thousand American boys were incinerated, drowned, or eviscerated by shrapnel, five-hundred-foot-high towers of flame erupted into the sky. An immense fireball roared across the city of the sea’s vitals, then the 32,600-ton dreadnought lifted out of the water, cracked her back, and sank back down, her enormous superstructure enveloped in vicious and immense oil-black clouds, her forward compartments flooding with both water and oil.

Japan’s air commander couldn’t take his eyes away from *Arizona*’s fiery death throes. After he had become a Presbyterian missionary, Fuchida would remember it as “a hateful, mean-looking red flame, the kind that powder produces, and I knew at once that a big magazine had exploded. Terrible indeed.”

“A red fireball shot up and spread into a mushroom of death nearly a thousand feet high,” said *California* sailor Theodore Mason. “A mighty

thunderclap of sound, deep and terrible, rode over the cacophony of planes and bombs, and now-awakening guns.”

A *West Virginia* sailor: “Ships on fire, ships burning, explosions going on all over the place. I saw the *Arizona* blow up and she just rained sailors. And of course those were the ones that were fortunate enough to live—the ones that were blown off the ship.”

Burning *Arizona* crewmen ran aft or into the water, thinking they would find relief. Instead they found six-inch pools of fiery fuel oil covering the sea, turning them into matchsticks. Clint Westbrook: “All of the oil tanks on all of the battlewagons had been ruptured, most of them, and you could just about almost get out and walk on it, it was that thick. And around those ships that had fire on it was on fire as well, so a lot of these people jumping off the ships were jumping right into burning oil. We had just loaded the day before ’cause we were going back to the States for Christmas. The admiral had told us, so we had filled the tank Saturday.”

The burning oil’s smoke created an impenetrable black fog floating ten feet over the surface. One witness said, “These people were zombies. . . . They were burned completely white. Their skin was just as white as if you’d taken a bucket of whitewash and painted it white. Their hair was burned off; their eyebrows were burned off; the pitiful remains of their uniforms in their crotch was a charred remnant; and the insoles of their shoes was about the only thing that was left on these bodies. They were moving like robots. Their arms were out, held away from their bodies, and they were stumping along the decks.” The teakwood decks, once holystoned into a rich glow, now “looked like a boneyard” from all the body parts. Adolph Kuhn: “The most vivid recording in my memory bank of that ordeal was the hundreds of white sailors’ hats floating in the salty brine, with their black stenciled names in full view.”

In the US Navy’s final accounting, USS *Arizona* was struck by eight bombs. Like all the great battleships of Pearl Harbor, *Arizona*’s powder and ammunition magazines, as well as her fuel tanks, were full; the latter with about 660,000 gallons of oil. Similar to the unbelievable series of events that had exploded the *Shaw*, one Japanese bomb had penetrated to an *Arizona* powder magazine, igniting it into a chain reaction that turned the ship itself into a bomb. The explosion in her forward magazine of 308 fourteen-inch shells, 350 five-inch rounds, 5,000 powder cans, and over 100,000 rounds of bullets was so forceful it

blew out some of her hull's armored plates until they were pancake-flat horizontal. The *Tennessee* was more damaged by *Arizona's* debris than she was by the direct strikes of two Japanese bombs.

Arizona sank in nine minutes. The souls of 1,177 sailors and marines were lost, more than died in the Spanish-American War and the First World War combined. It was the highest mortality in the sinking of a single vessel in American naval history, and of human beings killed by a single explosion in the history of war . . . until Hiroshima.

Six months later, when Lieutenant Wilmer Gallaher dove his Dauntless to pay back *Akagi* with a fatal blow at Midway, he remembered the horror at Pearl Harbor. As *Akagi* exploded, he whispered to himself, "*Arizona*, I remember you."

Arizona's explosion was so immense it blew crewmen off the neighboring *Vestal's* deck, including Captain Cassin Young. He swam back, countermanded the crew's collective decision to abandon ship—"You don't abandon ship on me!"—and ordered them back to their posts to defend Pearl Harbor. Young found two bodies on the afterdeck: "These men may have been either *Arizona* personnel blown over by magazine blast or members of *Vestal* after gun crews: they were burned beyond recognition."

As *Vestal* began firing back with her three-inch and her machine guns, two bombs struck, one exploding in a lower hold, cutting power cables and igniting a fire that burned toward the forward magazine, which held seven hundred rounds of ammunition. *Vestal* saved her own self from detonation by flooding that magazine, but could do little about the second bomb, which hit to port and farther aft, breaking tanks. The ship began to flood with both fuel and sea water.

Sailor Warren Law: "I've never seen anything like it in my life since, and I hope I never do. The devastation was just unbelievable on those battleships. You think they're big, heavy, lotta heavy steel and all that. When you see those superstructures just twisted—big hunks of steel that were twisted just like you take a straw and twist the thing. I couldn't believe the amount of devastation that I saw."

On *Arizona*, Boatswain's Mate 2nd Class John Anderson "was standing on gun turret number four when I saw a bomb hit the side of it. It scooped out the side of the turret. It went right past me, a big mound of molten steel. I got my people out and went to look for my brother." Anderson's twin, Delbert, was stationed at Turret 3, and John tried to find him, but between the wreckage left behind by the explosion, and

the number of dead and dying men on the deck, John couldn't make it to 3. So he went in search of an officer to get some direction and came across his ensign "dead on deck, his back split open like a watermelon."

The force of a bomb then blew Anderson down a quarterdeck's hatch. He recovered and joined a group working to fight back with an antiaircraft gun, but when the ship lost power, that gun was unusable, so he joined the rescue operation: "By now the ship had settled some in the water. We were passing down the wounded hand over hand into the lifeboats as fast as we could. We weren't any too gentle, as you can imagine."

When Anderson's turn came to get in the boat, he announced that he was going back aboard to rescue Delbert. Samuel Fuqua set him straight: "He's gone, they're not going to make it. And we better get off before everyone else is killed, too." Anderson accepted this, and as his boat left for Ford Island, he took one last look at lost home: "Everything was on fire. The ship was on fire, the water was on fire, and there were people in the crane . . . and I saw them as we went and they were up in this fire. I thought, 'God Almighty, how are they going to make it?'"

Now reasonably safe on Ford, all John Anderson could think about was getting back to *Arizona* to rescue more men: "I looked around and saw a boat floating in the water. I saw a kid named Rose, Chester Clay Rose from Kentucky, and I said, 'Hey, Rose, are you game?' . . . He said yes, so we dived in, got in the lifeboat, and went back to the ship." They found the 250-pound body of *Arizona's* cook: "I don't know how he got blown out of the galley to the outside. He was dead, with a kitchen knife stuck in him from the force of the explosion."

It was so hard to find the living among such a floating mass of corpses that Anderson decided to stop making guesses and just bring in everybody. Anderson and Rose rescued as many as they could out of the water, filling the boat with both the dead and the injured. On their way back to Ford's naval hospital, "we moved on into the middle of the stream, got hit by a shell, and lost everybody. I even lost Rose. I was the only survivor."

By the end of the week, he'd learn that his brother, Delbert, was trying to fix a jammed AA gun when he was killed.

William Goshen was a pointer for Turret 3's five-inch gun, but when he got there, no one else was around, and he couldn't find any ammunition. The strafing scared him, so he sat against a locker where there was some cover. Next thing he knew, he was swimming; the explosion

had thrown him in the water. He had escaped with his life by sitting in that little corner; his turret was mere yards from the bomb strike: "All that was between me and that bomb was two canvas sheets. Evidently it burnt the canvas off and carried right on into the compartment where I was at, and the concussion happening inside blew me out." Struggling to the surface of the water, "I looked over at the ship, and I knew there was no need going back there. I looked up at the boats; they were all on fire. The *Arizona* was on fire. I heard the buzzing of planes, the cracking of cannons, the machine guns they were strafing with." He was taken to the Ford Island dispensary with burns on 70 percent of his body.

Galen Ballard's life was saved because, instead of going to bed the night of December 6 in his own bunk, he fell asleep in Honolulu, not waking up until a little after 0800. After starting the day with some Ink Spots on the record player, he turned on the radio and heard, "Seek cover. Personnel, report to your stations." He was out of uniform, so he had to go back to the Navy Center to get it, and on a Sunday the building was locked: "I had to scale a wall to get to my locker and change into uniform and call a cab." As he and the cabbie got close enough to see Pearl Harbor, "at first I thought from all the smoke they'd hit some oil reserves, but as we got going, I realized it was more than that. The bombers were going over and there was a lot of anti-aircraft fire. We could see the *Arizona* was up in flames, and the *Oklahoma* was capsized. All we could see was smoke and flames. I was numb. Frightened. Confused. . . . Everything I owned was on the *Arizona*—all I had left was what I had on my back."

Samuel Fuqua: "As I was running forward on the starboard side of the quarterdeck, approximately by the starboard gangway, I was apparently knocked out by the blast of a bomb, which I learned later had struck the faceplate of number four turret on the starboard side and had glanced off and gone through the deck just forward of the captain's hatch, penetrating the decks and exploding on the third deck. When I came to and got up off the deck, the ship was a mass of flames amidships on the boat deck, and the deck aft was awash to about frame ninety. The anti-aircraft battery and machine guns apparently were still firing at this time. Some of the *Arizona* boats had pulled clear of the oil and were lying off the stern.

"At this time I attempted, with the assistance of the crews of number two and number four turrets, to put out the fire which was com-

ing from the boat deck, and which had extended to the quarterdeck. There was no water on the fire mains. However, about fourteen CO₂s were obtained that were stowed on the port side and held the flames back from the quarterdeck, enabling us to pick up wounded who were running down the boat deck out of the flames. I placed about seventy wounded and injured in the boats which had been picked up off the deck aft and landed them at the Ford Island landing. This was completed about 0900 or 0930. All personnel but three or four men, turrets number three and number four, were saved. About 0900, seeing that all guns of the antiaircraft and secondary battery were out of action and that the ship could not possibly be saved, I ordered all hands to abandon ship.”

Ensign G. S. Flannigan: “When that bomb hit, it made a whish with a gust of hot air and sparks flew. There followed a very nauseating gas, and smoke immediately afterwards.

“Before this time, condition zed had been set in the lower room of Turret three, and the men in the passage and I were unable to get out of the passageway. I beat on the door for some minutes before someone inside the turret opened the door. We got all the men that we could find in the passageway into the lower room and then dogged down the passageway door.

“The air in the turret was fairly clear for a while, but finally gas or smoke starting coming in. The men made quite a bit of confusion at first but they were very obedient when Ensign Field and I ordered them to keep quiet. About this time we got a flashlight and saw the turret was very misty with smoke. Just after this, we heard hissing noise, which was later discovered to be air leaking from holes in the forward transverse bulkhead of the lower room.

“Conditions from smoke were getting worse and worse. It was then that we decided that we would have to leave the lower room. I took charge of the men in the pits, and Ensign Field went out on deck to help Lieutenant Commander Fuqua. We saw smoke entering the pits through the pointers’ and trainers’ telescope slots. I urged the men to take off their shirts, and we closed the openings with the clothes.”

US marines Sergeant John Baker, Corporal Earl Nightingale, Major Alan Shapley, and Second Lieutenant Carleton Simensen were climbing the mainmast when one of Minoru Genda’s eight-hundred-kilogram, armor-blasting shells hit Turret 4, bounced up, and hit the deck, exploding into shrapnel. Corporal Nightingale: “I was about three-quarters

of the way to the first platform on the mast when it seemed as though a bomb struck our quarterdeck. I could hear shrapnel or fragments whistling past me. As soon as I reached the first platform, I saw Second Lieutenant Simensen lying on his back with blood on his shirt-front. I bent over him and, taking him by the shoulders, asked if there was anything I could do. He was dead, or so nearly so that speech was impossible. Seeing there was nothing I could do for the lieutenant, I continued to my battle station.

“When I arrived in secondary aft I reported to Major Shapley that Mr. Simensen had been hit and there was nothing to be done for him. There was a lot of talking going on and I shouted for silence, which came immediately. I had only been there a short time when a terrible explosion caused the ship to shake violently. I followed the major down the port side of the tripod mast. The railings were very hot, and as we reached the boat deck, I noted that it was torn up and burned. The bodies of the dead were thick, and badly burned men were heading for the quarterdeck, only to fall apparently dead or badly wounded.”

Surrounded by the corpses of their friends and the destruction of their home, Shapley, Nightingale, and Baker finally got to the boat deck, where Fuqua, as senior officer present afloat, was in the middle of this scene of incomprehensible horror, leading shocked crewmen—many of them teenagers, or nearly so—in the abandonment of his ship. Aviation Machinist’s Mate 1st Class D. A. Graham: “There were lots of men coming out on the quarterdeck with every stitch of clothing and shoes blown off, painfully burned and shocked. Mr. Fuqua set an example for the men by being unperturbed, calm, cool, and collected, exemplifying the courage and traditions of an officer under fire. It seemed like the men painfully burned, shocked, and dazed became inspired and took things in stride, seeing Mr. Fuqua, so unconcerned about the bombing and strafing, standing on the quarterdeck. There was no ‘going to pieces’ or ‘growing panicky’ noticeable.” John Baker said that Fuqua’s “calmness gave me courage, and I looked around to see if I could help,” but Fuqua ordered him to join the others in the boats. Private Cory remembered Fuqua quietly urging them on: “Over the side, boys! Over the side!” Grabbing life rafts, they jumped overboard. The commander’s leadership had such a profound impact that it saved countless lives beyond the seventy that are his official credit.

“I was the second-to-last man off the ship,” Private Cory said. “Fuqua was the last guy. Those rafts immediately started drifting and

floating into the burning oil, so those were quickly abandoned. The two or three guys that actually got on one were going right into the fire so they had to get off immediately. The currents were taking them right into the fire.”

Marine Corporal Earl Nightingale: “Charred bodies were everywhere. I made my way to the quay and started to remove my shoes when I suddenly found myself in the water. I think the concussion of a bomb threw me in. I started swimming for the pipeline which was about one hundred and fifty feet away. I was about halfway when my strength gave out entirely. My clothes and shocked condition sapped my strength, and I was about to go under when Major Shapley started to swim by and, seeing my distress, grasped my shirt and told me to hang to his shoulders while he swam in. We were perhaps twenty-five feet from the pipeline when the major’s strength gave out and I saw he was floundering, so I loosened my grip on him and told him to make it alone. He stopped and grabbed me by the shirt and refused to let go. I would have drowned but for the major. We finally reached the beach, where a marine directed us to a bomb shelter, where I was given dry clothes and a place to rest.”

For these actions, Major Shapley would be awarded the Silver Star.

Argonne’s Charles Christensen: “The oil was on fire and [the men] were trying to swim out of it. They’d come up and try to get their breath. The whites of their eyes were red. Their skin was coming off. At the hospital, oil was all over everything and everybody. I never saw any panic. I was always proud of the navy after that.”

One man in the water didn’t know how to swim. Jim Lawson tried to help, but it would have meant drowning for both: “I was making no progress, just treading water with him, and the breeze and the current were taking us into the fire. I went ahead and let him go.” Finally Lawson was picked up by Fuqua, running a barge. Lawson got the sailor who couldn’t swim to dog-paddle over, tied a T-shirt to the man’s ankle, and they towed him to Ford Island. “There was a guy standing on the dock, how he got there I don’t know. He looked like he just got off the grill. He was burned to a crisp. The poor guy, what kept him alive I don’t know. He kept asking for help and no one could help. What could you do?”

“A friend of mine was crying and asking me for help,” *Arizona* crewman Carl Carson wrote. “I looked at him in horror. His skin was hanging off him. There was nothing in the world I could do for him. He

was dying. They gave us the word to abandon ship. I started to swim to Ford Island. I must have passed out and gone down in the water. Everything was peaceful and nice. It would have been so easy to just let go. And I saw this bright light, and something made me come to. And there was oil all around. And fire all around. A man saw me down there and he reached down and pulled me up to the surface.”

Jim Foster jumped into water to get away: “When I came up, I was gagging. I was really busting water trying to get away from that thing before it blew up. I wasn’t a very good swimmer, but I really busted water for about ten feet and realized I was giving out. I was giving plum out. The planes were still coming in, and they were strafing all the men in the water.”

Finally he reached a pipe sticking out on the beach on Ford Island, and he and two others held on to it until they could get help. Foster and John McCarron survived; with Foster’s feet so burned up it was months before he could wear shoes.

Worth Ross Lightfoot died after a couple of weeks.

“Both my legs were burnt pretty bad,” *Arizona* Seaman 1st Class Donald Stratton said. “My legs, arms, face, my hair. Lost my hair. Lost a couple of tattoos . . . don’t recommend that way to get rid of ’em. . . .

“I seen everything that went on there, and I tell you what. There was more courage and more heroics and more valor and more sacrifice that day than a human being ought to see in ten lifetimes.”