World War II Times

December 7, 1985 - October 28, 1999

FAREWELL

Dateline Indianapolis

Elbert L. Watson

We gave it our best shot

Only a few of you will remember that we rolled out the first issue of the WORLD WAR II TIMES on December 7, 1985, the anniversary of the "date that shall live in infamy."

Somehow it never occurred to me then that my venture into publishing World War II history would carry me to many places, and bring me into contact with some of the truly great men and women who, themselves, dramatically wrote the history of that era. Some of them include:

PAUL TIBBETS, pilot of the ENOLA GAY; GEORGE GAY, who survived the strike by Torpedo Squadron 8 against the Japanese Fleet at Midway; PAUL ISON, the gallant Marine whose image was captured forever as he stormed across Death Valley on Okinawa; ADRIAN MARKS, PBY pilot who saved 56 survivors of the ill-fated USS INDIANAPOLIS: CAPTAIN ROBERT MORGAN and crew members of the famous MEMPHIS BELLE; ALEX VRACIU, Navy pilot who downed 19 Japanese planes; and many more are names associated with my childhood.

Through the TIMES I had the distinct pleasure of having them literally step out of the pages of history to become my friends.

Travelling across much of our country from Washington, D.C. to Corpus Christi, down to Florida, through the South, and across the upper Midwest brought me face to face with many men who had seen, firsthand, the face of war. Yet, I soon found that they rarely dwelt on that part of their military service. Usually it was the lighter moments which they preferred to talk about.

Still, just knowing them strengthened my life and touched my heart, for those men took me to places like Iwo Jima, Normandy, Tarawa, Peleliu, Guadalcanal, Chosin (Korean War), and the list goes on and on.

Early on, the TIMES struck hard editorially when it appeared World War II's rich legacy was under assault. Never was this more true than when our National Air and Space Museum, an integral arm of the Smithsonian Institution, proposed to display a portion of the ENOLA GAY in less than favorable light.

Thus, in November 1988, long before the American Legion and Air Force Association joined the fray, we thundered: "Mr. Harwit (Martin Harwit, Director of NASM) in our opinion, represents faulty and dangerous ideas, which are an affront to America's honored veterans of the skies, This spurious thinking apparently does not enable him to understand that death and destruction fell from the skies December 7, 1941 on unsuspecting young Americans going about their business."

Little did we know that other fights lay ahead! The so-called Battle of Normandy Foundation's gimmick to erect a "Wall of Liberty" somewhere in France got our attention - the kind of attention which gives one the feeling that something just isn't quite right. So we joined the WASHINGTON TIMES against this fleecing of the pockets of America's veterans.

There were the spirited fights over reckless historical revisionism; the commemorative postage stamp depicting the role played by the atomic bombing of Japan; and calling upon Japan to apologize for its bombing of Pearl Harbor.

We are justifiably proud of our unyielding efforts on these and other issues affecting our World War II community.

However, we are most proud of our unique format of letting the ordinary American veteran tell his or her own story. This unique approach to recording history predated by many years Tom Brokaw's fine book, THE GREATEST GENERATION.

To all of you who have stood with us so faithfully across the years, I am profoundly grateful for your support, letters, and comments, with a few prayers thrown in for good measure.

It's an old cliche that the torch is now being passed to another person. Fortunately for the future of the TIMES that person is TOM BERNDT, owner and publisher of Victory Publishing Co. in Minneapolis, MN. Mr. Berndt is a seasoned professional with an established international publication. Thus, the TIMES, in its new format can look forward to many more years of service to the World War II community, both veterans and history buffs.

You will note our banner headline simply says FAREWELL. That's the way we want to leave things with you, not Goodbye. WEBSTER'S says it much better: "a wish of well-being at parting."

Farewell!

New publisher sends greetings

Dear World War II Times Readers,

Welcome to Militaria International Magazine! I believe fate has led me to writing this note to you. With a whole lot of help from "The Gentleman Upstairs."

I met Elbert Watson through an unusual meeting with a friend of his at the Ohio Valley Military Society Show of Shows in Louisville, Kentucky last February. Little did I know, at the time, that I would wind up carrying on his work in a slightly different format.

I feel most fortunate and thankful that this has occurred. It opens a whole new readership for our magazine and strong personal interest of mine. The remembrance of our veterans who served in World War II, and all other veterans who have served and sacrificed for our freedom. This can never be publicized enough.

The name of our publication is called *Militaria International Magazine. The* name denotes the fact that we are distributed worldwide. We publish 12 issues per year in a very nice magazine format. Our company and publication have no political agenda. It is strictly objective and factual in nature.

Yes, there is tremendous interest by people worldwide in the subject of American military history and collecting of its artifacts. Our subject matter is primarily the history of U.S. forces in WWII, also including, but not limited to, the Civil War, Spanish American War, World War I, Korea, and Viet Nam. The articles vary from month to month, depending on what copy we have available from our authors. We publish many unseen combat and veterans photos every month.

We also cover the buying, selling and collecting of militaria of all types. U.S. foreign, plus current events of the shows that work with collectors.

Personal experiences of veterans are a favorite of our readers, and this is where the acquisition of World War II Times will help us remember our veterans even more than we do already. Too many people in this country have forgotten the sacrifices made by these people for all of us. Each month we will feature an article from World War II Times archives. We welcome new articles from all veterans. Please feel free to call or write your questions at 1-888-428-1942.

We travel to many of the military shows around the country during the year. We will be at the Ohio Valley Military Society's Show of Shows again in February 2000, and if any of you attend, please stop by and see us!

Maybe I can put Elbert to work. The work he has done and his knowledge are priceless. We all should thank him for his tremendous efforts! I don't think we should let him "off the hook" so easily. I *think he'll write some articles for us on* the Civil War!

Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you!

Best Wishes,

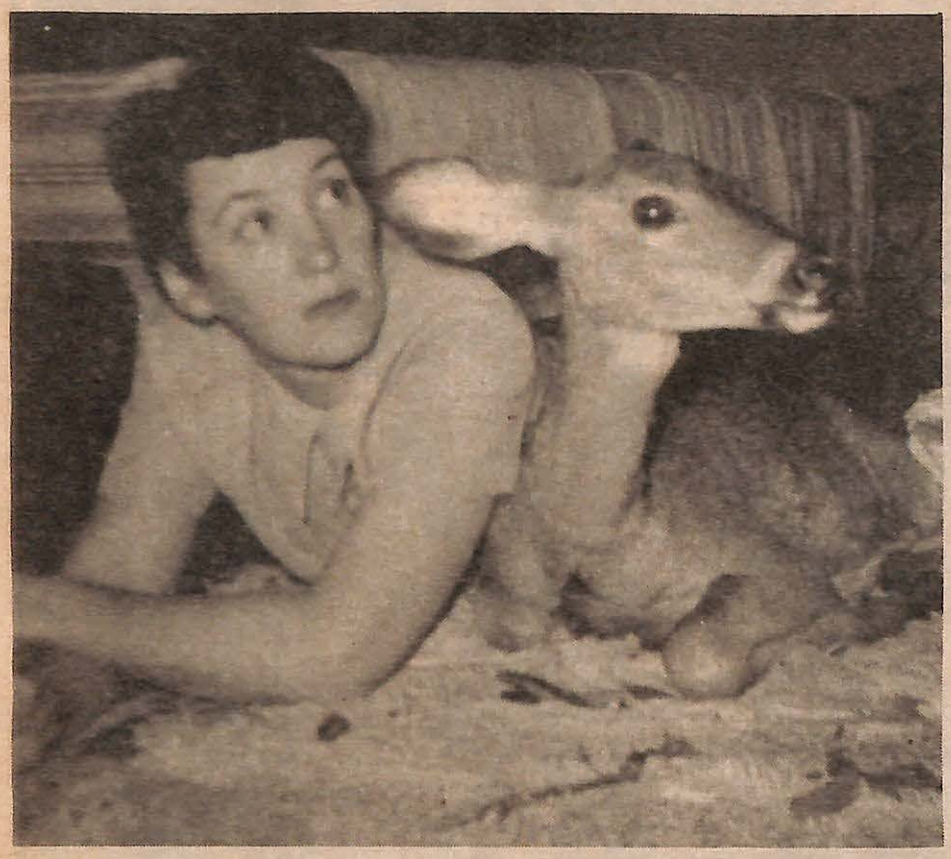
Tom Berndt
Publisher
Militaria International Magazine

World War II Times

Volume 14, Number 4

Send all correspondence to the World War II Times, 1010-East 86th Street, Ste. 61-J, Indianapolis, IN 46240.

T. James had a little "Sniffles"



Elbert L. Watson

Teresa James of World War II WASP fame dated Bob Hope and *was pilot of the 10,000th P-47 which* rolled off the factory line. One of the most acclaimed women pilot's of the *era, she is known far and wide for her authorship of numerous articles* and books dealing with her adventuresome life.

None of the honors topped the event that happened in 1950 when Teresa became "mother" to an abandoned fawn which showed up 50 feet from her rural cottage in Ligonier, PA.

Discovered by a nearby neighbor, the fawn was gorgeous and tiny. When Teresa saw her, she grabbed her and gave her a big hug. Mom and Dad and brother Jack all agreed that the family should keep her. Teresa named her "Sniffles" because she was sniffing things with her beautiful black nose.

For over four years Sniffles was an essential part of Teresa's life. The family quickly spoiled her. She loved to ride in the car looking out the window just like a pet dog. By August she had won her "wings" when Teresa took her up for a spin in her airplane. She lay down in the back of the plane chewing her cud and sniffing while airborne, never showing any fear of flying.

Sniffles almost became a national celebrity. In September 1950 the Doe Skin Napkin Company offered Teresa $5,000 to bring Sniffles to New York City for a big advertising campaign. The deal, unfortunately, fell through when the family discovered that it was illegal to transport deer across state lines.

Other problems eventually arose. In 1952 Sniffles was picked up by *two game wardens who claimed that* it was illegal for a non-domesticated animal to be kept in captivity. Sniffles spent a night in a small 10 by 20 foot pen at a nearby game preserve. Teresa cried all the way home.

The family sat up all night planning what to do to get Sniffles back. Teresa had noticed that the wardens did not arrive for work until 7 a.m. Consequently, she and sister Betty showed up at the preserve by 5 a.m. and found Sniffles in horrible condition.

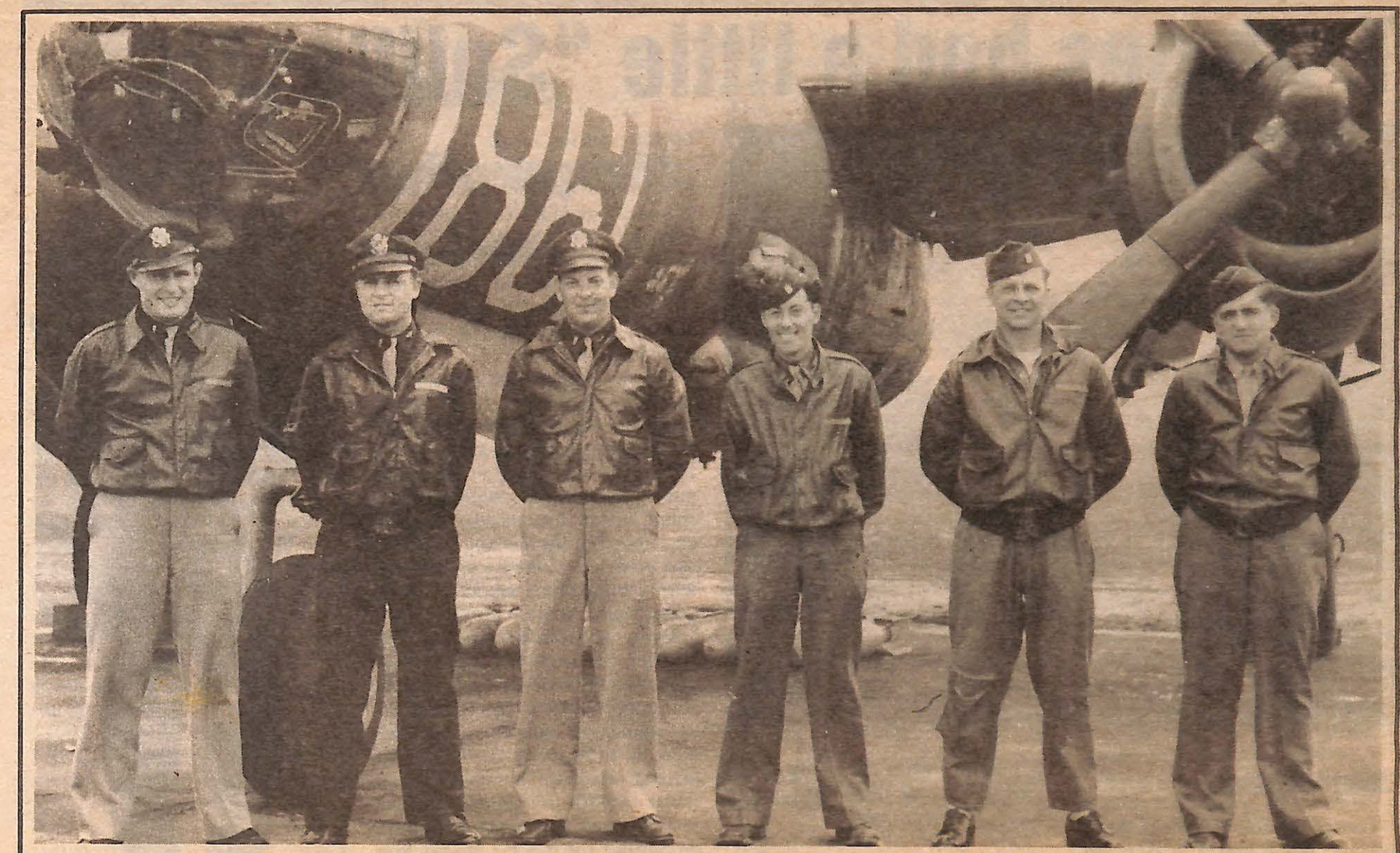
Teresa recorded what happed next! "When I saw Sniffles I almost died! She was cut up and her hooves were all bruised. There were wooden planks under the fencing to keep the animals in the pens, Sniffles had injured herself pawing at those planks trying to dig her way out! I asked God to help me. Somehow I got the strength to yank up that wire fence. I said: "Come on, baby." Sniffles darted under the fence and jumped straight into the car. We took off! Of course, Sniffles wanted to hang her head out of the window, so I had to keep shoving her down so no one would see her."

Sniffles remained a "fugitive" from justice for the rest of her life. Hiding the deer out was no small task, given the fact that game wardens seemed to be ever present. Finally a farmer was found who was willing to keep her in his barn with his horses.

This desperate move, unsatisfactory to Teresa, only lasted one month. A horse kicked Sniffles and broke her leg. Teresa and her father drove out to the farm, picked up the seriously injured deer, and took her to a vet down the road from the family. The vet's somber diagnosis: Sniffles would have to be shot!

Teresa's father pled that no cost would be too great if the vet would, at least, try to save her life. Despite the fact that he could have lost his license, the vet gave Sniffles a shot, put a pin in her leg, and applied a splint. It took four months of tender care, but finally the cast came off and Sniffles walked again, albeit with a limp which would continue the rest of her life.

Time eventually ran out for Sniffles. She disappeared forever in November 1954. Understandably Teresa's heart was broken. Every day she would pound the tin on the deer's dish, all to no avail. So she wrote: "Dear God, the Bible says a sparrow never falls to the ground without your knowing it. Please keep an eye on Sniffles for me. I'll always love her."



GALLANT CREW. Left to right: Robert Maloney, pilot, Nicholas Fratt, Ward Hollis, Vincent Dado, Felix Ratkowski, and John Nicholson.

God used a candy bar

John Nicholson

It is said, when a person faces sudden death his whole life flashes before his eyes. On the morning of September 23, 1988, in Dayton Ohio, nothing so drastic was occuring, but a lot of memories were returning to a few hundred men gathered at the Air Force Museum for the B-26 Marauder Memorial Dedication.

As the last Marauder still flying, flashed overhead, tears flowed from the eyes of many mature men.

In my case, my memories returned to that long ago January 20, 1944, in Lake Charles, Louisiana, as a young airman who had completed individual training, and was ready to become a member of a flight crew. I was one of the luckiest tail gunners, since my assignment was to the crew of Lt. Bob Maloney, an outstanding officer and leader.

Memories returned to Easter Sunday, 1944, on board a troop ship in the North Atlantic. We had been surrounded by a submarine pack and the entire day was spent on deck in the freezing fog. After 18 hours we were completely covered with ice and so tired and cold, any change was welcome. We finally broke free of the pack and were able to go below.

The date of June 5, 1944, came to mind. Our 45's had been issued, flight crews assigned and aircraft painted with stripes. We needed no official notice that tomorrow was the day the entire free world had been waiting for, D-Day. It was to be both my first and second mission.

As I lay on my bunk that night, unable to sleep, I wondered if I would be able to perform my duties consistent with my training. Would I be so afraid that I would panic? If we were attacked, would I be able to shoot back?

I tried to pray, but this brought up bigger problems. Was there really a God? Had all my time in church been wasted? If there really was a God, would he care about me? So many people would die tomorrow, would he have time for me?

My doubts about God continued until our tenth mission. Over enemy territory, our aircraft had been so badly shot-up that Maloney gave the order to bail out. For us to bail out it was necessary for the waist gunner to pull in the waist guns. The only problem was that he was calmly eating a candy bar to make sure he was not captured while hungry. By the time we were ready to bail out, our pilot decided he could make it to an air strip above Ranger Cliff.

That night as I lay in a fox hole, I thought about that candy bar's role in saving my life. Suddenly, I remembered my mother teaching her children to have faith, that everything happens for the best. For the remainder of my missions, including four crash landings, all my doubts about God were gone.

One memory that has never faded was our stay in an orphanage in Belgium. During the Ardennes breakthrough, our crew had been temporarily assigned to the 18th Corp to work with the 82nd Airborne to get a taste of their life on the ground. Our home during that period was in a Catholic orphanage near Sap, Belgium. Each night we had a dozen little girls join us to sing Army songs, and say a prayer for our safety.

Sadly the "Marauder" has been forgotten by all, except for a few of us. At the British War Museum at Duxford, England, there was not one photograph of a B-26. One might wonder if we even flew during World War II.

I returned to the Air Force in 1949 and served in a B-26 unit during the Korean War. My son was in the Air Force during the Vietnam War and now my granddaughter is in the Air Force. I hope they realize that the B-26, the grand old bird, is part of their own heritage.

Nicholson

Bold escape to freedom

10 brave men lived to tell a gripping story

At 12:00 noon May 6, 1942, the bastion fortress Corregidor surendered to the Japanese, marking America's final defense of the Philippines. A radio operator tapped out the pathetic message:

"We are waiting for God knows what. Damage terrible. Too much for the guys to take. Going off the air now. Goodbye and good luck." Then only silence.

It would be almost two years until Americans would know the fate of the brave men who fought to the end in the Philippines. During that time of dark silence, loved ones back home could only hope and pray.

Finally in 1943, 10 American POWs escaped and told a horrible story of atrocity, starvation, and outright murder of their buddies by Japanese soldiers. Their amazing escape was first recounted by Captain William Dyess. ***The Dyess Story: The Eye-Witness Account of the Death March from Bataan,*** stunned Americans to find the Japanese capable of carrying out such sadistic torture.

More shocking was the widely circulated story chronicled by Life magazine (February 7, 1944), "Death was Part of Our Life," written by two escapees, Commander Melvyn McCoy and Lt. Colonel S.M. Mellnik. Though admitting that the story did not make "pretty reading," Life detailed how the prisoners managed to outwit their captors to reach freedom.

Commander McCoy told of Captain A.C. Shofner, USMC, coming to him in March 1943, to report that he and five Army and Marine Corps officers were planning an escape. Included were Dyess, Marine Lieutenants, Jack Hawkins and Michiel Dobervich, and Army Lieutenants Samuel Grashio and L.A. Bolens.

McCoy and Mellnik and two Army sergeants, Paul Marshall and R.B. Spielman, already were toying with the idea of an escape, so Shofner's information brought good news. As the senior officer, McCoy was selected to lead the escape.

McCoy wrote: "We were not too enthusiastic about our chances for a successful escape. On the other hand, neither were we too enthusiastic about our chances for stayingalive if we remained." The decision was made to go forward.

Shofner, a member of the 1936 University of Tennessee football team, recently commented to "The Tennessee Alumnus."

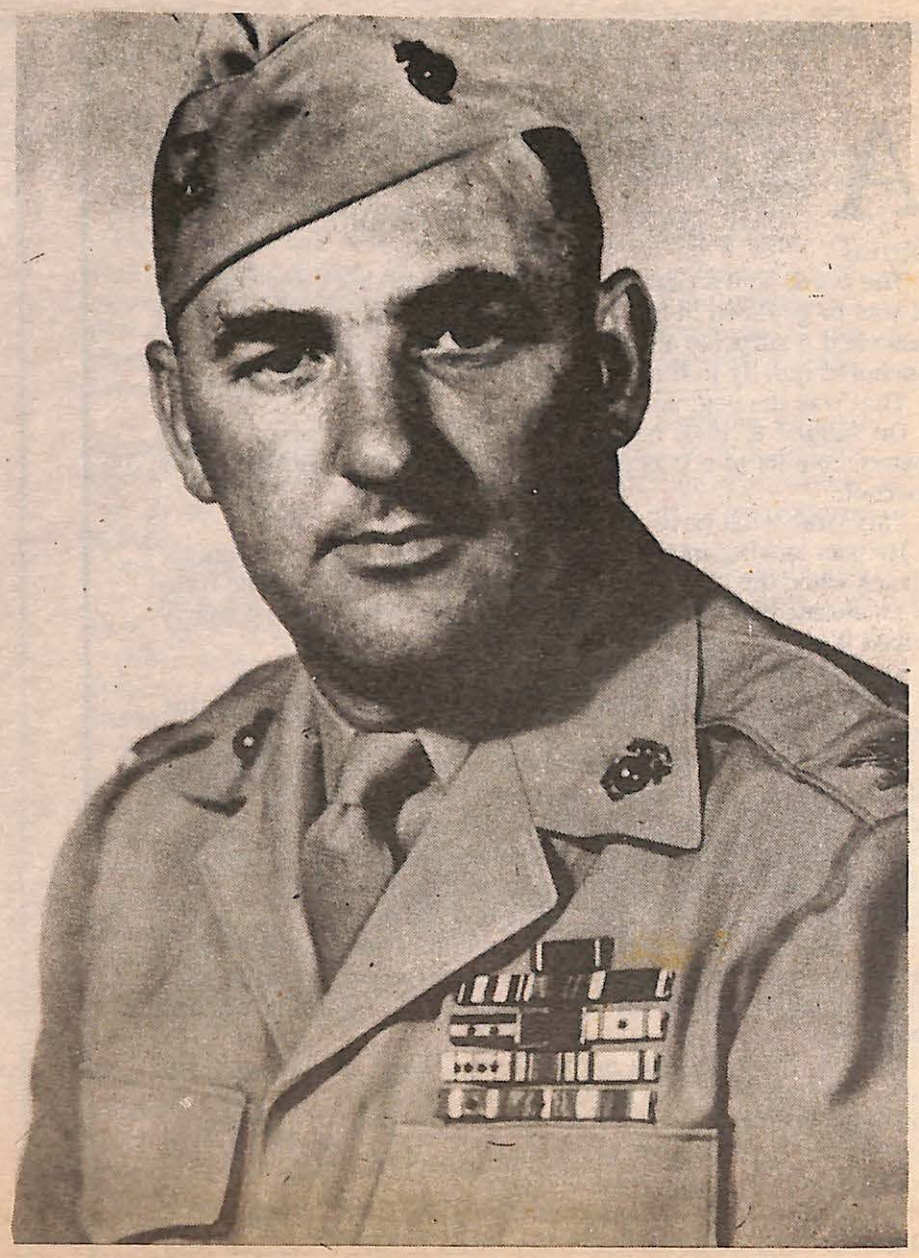
"The mission in the Pacific was not a good one to be on. We were just there to delay the Japanese. It was a sacrifice mission. Our torpedoes didn't work—we had World War I equipment. That was the result of a Pacifist nation."

"In my battalion, only one other officer lived through prison camp. A prisoner interned by the Japanese had a 10 times greater likelihood of dying than those in German prison camps."

"Twice a day we'd get a slim portion of very watery rice. It was unwashed and sometimes it had in it little worms with white bodies and black heads. Then we called it stew."

Sunday, April 4, 1943, was the date set for the daring escape. The men went out the main gate which led from the prison confines to the prison farm. Once out of sight they ducked into a coconut grove and began to crawl Indian-fashion toward the place where they had concealed some equipment.

With the equipment stuffed inside their clothing, the escapees had to cross a road which was always patrolled by a Japanese sentry. They marched boldly into view, gave a sharp salute, and penetrated into the jungle as soon as they were out of sight. The ruse worked.



Ever the Marine, Shofner proudly displayed his service ribbons at war's end.

The men joined up with two Filipino ex-convicts who agreed to serve as guides. In the jungle, they encountered all kinds of obstacles. A huge swamp, severely impeded their progress. Rough terrain through the unexplored jungle limited their progress to only 12 miles away from the Japanese camp after four days.

After 35 days they teamed up with a band of Americans who had not surrendered and had started a guerrilla operation. Shofner was made a judge.

On November 15 an American submarine, the USS Narwhal, tied up at a pier on the northern coast of Mindanao in broad daylight and rescued the men.

After a period of recuperation and military schooling, Shofner was back in the Pacific five months later. He was an assault battalion commander on Peleliu in September 1944; was assigned to the U.S. Army for the landing on Luzon in January 1945; and was with the First Marine Division to help lead the assault on Okinawa April 1, 1945.

For his heroism, Shofner received the Distinguished Service Cross; two Silver Stars; the Legion of Merit; and the Purple Heart. In 1947 he married Kathleen "Koky" King, a 1938 UT beauty queen. They raised five sons, all of whom graduated from college with honors.

Shofner retired from the Marines in 1959. Today, at 83, he lives in Shelbyville, Tennessee.

We began with Pearl Harbor...

At 7:58 a.m., Hawaiian time, on December 7, 1941, a Naval radioman, Karl Boyer tapped out a message:

"AIR RAID ON PEARL HARBOR. THIS NO DRILL."

The words sent an unsuspecting nation into shock and outrage. It was to go down in history as a day of "infamy." Japan had launched a surprise air attack on the United States Navy fleet anchored quietly in the picturesque Hawaiian Islands.

That was the beginning.

On August 6, 1945, nearly four years later, Captain Robert Lewis, co-pilot of a B-29 named the **Enola Gay**, scribbled in his journal:

"My God, what have we done?"

He was looking into total devastation. The world was dumbstruck when the **Enola Gay** dropped man-made hell in the form of an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima and nearly wiped it off the face of the earth.

That was the beginning of the end.

A war ended, but the atomic age was born. It was to change the course of history.

In those four, bloody intervening years, a million stories — sad, heroic, tragic, comic, poignant — were told. They would never be forgotten by those who lived them.

But, passing years have shadowed the past, and one must probe a swirl of events to examine the historical impact.

America won the war. But, did it win the peace?

That question, after nearly half a century, rests uneasy on a generation of men — fading men — veterans of World War II who look back on those times and wonder if it all will be so soon forgotten.

Pulitzer Prize winning author John Toland, in his book, **Infamy: Pearl Harbor and Its Aftermath**, observed, "...A final victim is the present state of the world. Imagine if there had been no war in the East. There would have been no Hiroshima and perhaps no threat of nuclear warfare."

But, that is to beg the question. With hindsight, one reads an August 27, 1945 editorial which appeared in **Life** magazine with some sense of alarm.

It asks:

"Was it all worthwhile?"

And goes on to say in part, "...The national (Japan's) defeat, though generally understood in a formal sense, is a mere reality — and temporary reality at that. But in the minds of the Japanese, appearance is fully as important as reality and they will find more ways to keep up appearances than the longest memoried chatelaine who ever survived the magnolia-scented Old South."

It was a notation worth consideration. In recent years, Japan has wantonly denied responsibility for starting World War II, and even distorts the history of those years in lessons it teaches its present generation of school children.

The 1945 editorial continued:

"...this means that they (the Japanese) will eventually try to bring the reality of their situation back into balance with their idea of it (the noble national policy) ...The Japanese mind — so closed yet keen, so antlike yet inspired — is a sort of feudal atom which the 20th Century must find a way to split."

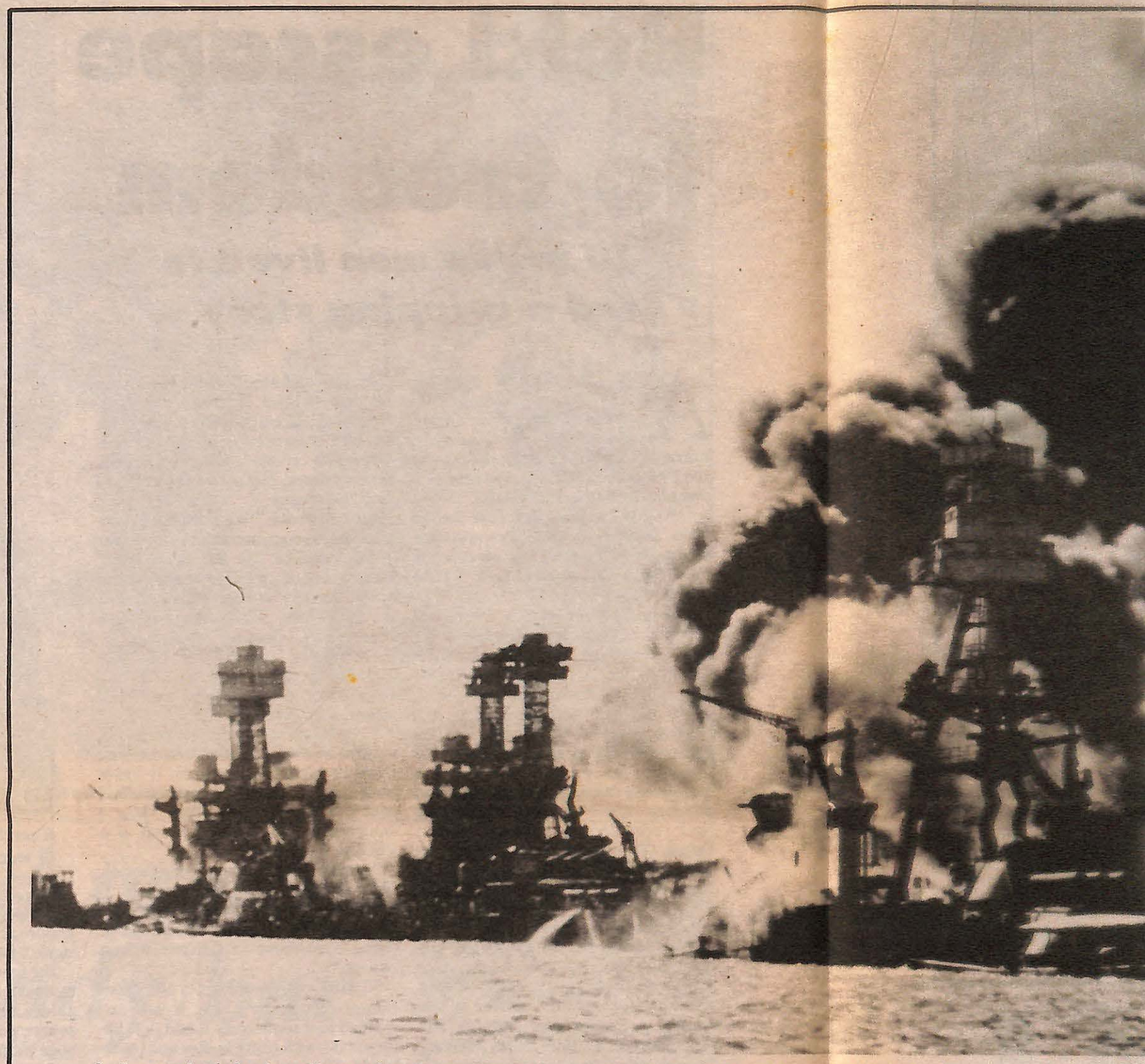
Today, some 53 years after that evaluation, Japan has reemerged as a formidable world power, not in the military sense, but as an economic giant in a world re-structured on international finance and trade.

The question then arises, do we dare forget Pearl Harbor and again drift into deep sleep?

There are those who look back on those grim years and claim it was an "innocent" time in American history, that the nation will never be caught so guileless and ill-prepared again.

In truth it was a bitter, isolated, festering time. The nation was so cramped with internal pain, opposing factions and the Great Depression, it failed to recognize the cancer spreading across the Far East and Western Europe.

We listened back then to Roy Acuff sing of **The Great Speckled Bird**, Gene Autry of **Mexicali Rose**; we watched **Snow White and**



A torrent of destruction rains from the skies as the battleship "Arizona" takes her fatal blow. Am

Terrible date of in

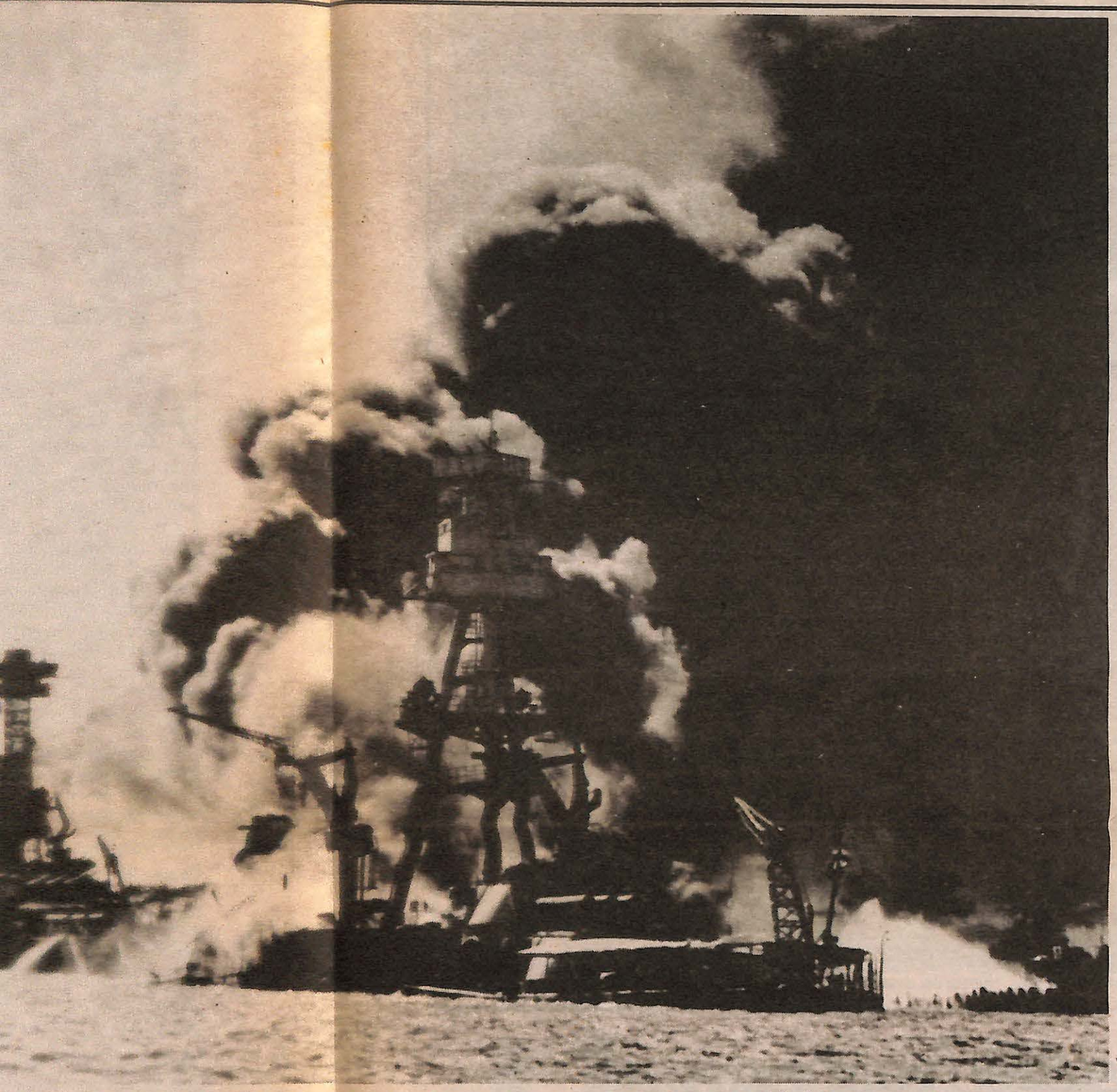
Rex Redifer

Gone With the Wind; and laughed as the Silvertone newsreels pictured Adolph Hitler and Benito Mussolini goose-stepping to great cheering crowds and waving flags. We smiled on items labled "made in Japan" as pure junk. Burma and China were as unreal to the average American as Shangri La, and besides, oceans away.

In light of history, it is incredible that military leaders so completely underestimated and miscalculated Japanese capabilities. The blueprint for the Pearl Harbor attack was evident as far back as 1904, when Japan's Admiral Togo, without declaration of war, led a similar surprise attack by torpedo boat against the Russian fleet at Port Authur, ensuring a decisive victory over a superior Russian navy in the Russo-Japanese War.

Equally perplexing is the overestimation of Pearl Harbor as an "impregnable fortress" termed by General George C. Marshall, then Army chief of staff, just weeks prior to the attack.

As far back as February, 1932, a simulated air attack was carried out successfully by our own armed forces during training maneuvers over Hawaii. Still, the prevailing thought was any attack on Pearl could easily be repulsed by American forces.



skies as the battleship "Arizona" takes her fatal blow. America's world of innocence had ended.

le date of infamy

Rex Redifer

declaration of war, led a similar surprise attack by torpedo boat against the Russian fleet at Port Authur, ensuring a decisive victory over a superior Russian navy in the Russo-Japanese War.

Equally perplexing is the overestimation of Pearl Harbor as an "impregnable fortress" termed by General George C. Marshall, then Army chief of staff, just weeks prior to the attack.

As far back as February, 1932, a simulated air attack was carried out successfully by our own armed forces during training maneuvers over Hawaii. Still, the prevailing thought was any attack on Pearl could easily be repulsed by American forces.

In retrospect, it is inexplicable the ineptness of American policy so rigid and unbending in negotiating with the Japanese in avoiding a conflict that Japan was prepared to compromise and avoid at almost any cost.

The attack on Pearl Harbor was a desperate measure and considered by Japanese military experts no more than a gamble at best.

Americans awoke that quiet morning with no forewarning that the day would change many of their lives forever.

In Indianapolis, as in cities across America, it dawned a typical wintery morning. The temperature had dropped to a brisk 25 degrees during the night. The forecast promised a warming trend to 45 during the afternoon.

The world news was unsettling. That morning, the early riser might have read in the **Indianapolis Sunday Star** that "Moscow faces 1,500,000 Nazi Invaders," or might have read, "U.S. Informed 125,000 Japs in Indo-China."

But that was half a world away. More reassuring news was that "President Roosevelt (the night before) addressed a personal message to Emperor Hirohito of Japan for maintenance of peace in the Pacific, which the United States maintained is now threatened by reported Japanese military movements in Indo-China and the Gulf of Siam."

To be sure, it was a war-torn world, but America seemed secure and oceans away from it all. Thoughts in Indianapolis centered largely on the Christmas season. After the lean years of the Great Depression, it promised to be a more prosperous holiday.

Advertisements filled the paper's pages: Finer topcoats and overcoats and two-trouser Balboa Suits for $39.50; raincoats $5.95; girls' shoes $2.

Other news was that Sonja Henie and her Hollywood Ice Review would appear at the Coliseum; Stella Mills at the Fox Burlesk; Dick Jurgens at the Indiana Roof. More immediate were the antics of Lil Abner, Mickey Finn and Big Chief Wahoo in the "funny papers."

It was shortly after 2 p.m., when radio programs were interrupted by the incredible announcement that Japanese aircraft were bombing Pearl Harbor in the Hawaiian Islands. Immediately, a numbed nation gathered around its radios in disbelief. Early shock gave way to blind fury as the afternoon wore on.

It was a day frozen in time.

Especially for those who were there.

Charles W. Newkirk was a 20-year-old farm boy from Rushville, IN, who that day was a United States Army sergeant stationed at Schofield Barracks on the island of Oahu. Like many other young men in the late 1930s, he was out of work. With no prospects for a job, he had signed up in 1938 for a three-year hitch in the Army. He was assigned to the Intelligence Corps, had earned his stripes and decided to re-enlist. Meanwhile, he had saved furlough time for three years, and was scheduled that Sunday to leave for home for 90 days to spend Christmas back in the states with his folks.

"Man, I thought I had it made," he recalled.

"Then, the bottom fell out. I didn't make it home and I never got that furlough..."

John C. Berlier, 28, Indianapolis, was assigned to the USS **Sacramento**, which lay at anchor in Pearl Harbor that Sunday morning. He had the day free, and with his wife and young son, decided to tour the island by car.

It dawned a typically tropical day on the island of Oahu.

The island swarmed with American Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines who had gathered there in recent months for military maneuvers.

In the harbor, nearly two dozen American warships of the Pacific fleet, were anchored in clusters near Ford Island.

At Wheeler Field, sleek American pursuit planes stood in cramped rows, and at Hickam Field, equal numbers of huge American bombers were closely grouped and guarded against possible sabotage.

The day was coming slowly to life. The sun came up on a sparkling blue vista, palm trees glistened in the early morning dew. Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines arose sleepily and headed to breakfast at Schofield, at Hickam and at Pearl on the island of Oahu.

There wasn't a hint that, an hour earlier, at dawn, 200 miles to the north, an armada of Japanese aircraft — fighters, bombers, dive bombers and torpedo planes — were launched from a six-carrier Japanese task force, **Kido Butaim**, and were enroute toward Pearl Harbor.

At 7:55 a.m., just about an hour after sun-up, Sgt. Newkirk, assigned that day to a field unit, heard muffled explosions and looked up to see planes.

"We all thought they were ours and wondered what they were doing out practicing that early on a Sunday morning."

"It did not take long for the truth to register as the island

Continued page 10

These pictures are enlarged 200% from snapshots taken shortly before D-Day. We don't know who these men are or where they came from. A call to duty lay only hours ahead. Did they join those who Lincoln called the "honored dead?"

"I'll never forget those men"

Frank Ehrman's memoirs

From our airfield in Bottesford, we moved to Exeter, our last station in England. Exeter was in the southern part of England and close to a British naval base.

Facilities were much better in Exeter and we were only three miles from the city. It was located in the county of Devon which is noted for its rolling hills and beauty of scenery. It was only about 20 miles from the English Channel and when we saw some of the results of the bombing of the city, we knew that the war was a little nearer to us.

Here we encountered more "red alerts" but we were always fortunate that nothing happened. On one particular night, enemy aircraft were sighted but when the AA guns opened up the Germans were driven away. That occured about two weeks before D-Day. We had been warned about the Germans dropping a contingent of paratroopers for intelligence work and general sabotage.

About this time we could hear the distant rumblings of the Allied bombings along the coast of France in preparation for the coming invasion. Our planes were being used for training the paratroopers.

The four Troop Carrier Groups under the 50th Wing were the 439th, 440th, 441st, and 442nd. Each group had four squadrons under them.

On the evening of June 5, 1944, we knew this was the real thing and not a dry run as we had been accustomed. Paratroopers started coming to the base loaded down with their gear, chutes, rifles and their faces blackened, ready for the big jump.

I'll never forget those men. They were young, scared faces just as we were scared for them. Only by fate were we not among those who had to make the real sacrifice.

The planes left the field late in the evening of June 5. All of them made the lift-off. We watched as the planes rendevoused over the southern coast of England with our other planes. It was a sight one won't forget. We all said a prayer that night for those boys who were on those planes, knowing that many of them would not return.

(Shortly after the invasion, Ehrman's unit was sent to LeMans, France. On November 2 he was moved to Chartres, France, where he and his buddies were billeted in a former girls school, "Lycee de Jeunes Filles.")

The only period of anxiety we experienced at Chartres was during the German offensive which happened around the Christmas holidays of 1944. Through our Intelligence section, we had learned that the Germans were planning a mass prison break of their prisoners in the American camps. The Germans decided that Christmas Eve, when Americans would be less alert of celebrating, would be the proper time to strike.

In Chartres we had a stockade of prisoners numbering between 14,000 and 16,000 men and women. Fortunately we learned of the plan in time and amply prepared for what might await us. We were equipped with hand grenades and tear gas bombs. All night long we waited, tense and uncertain what might happen. Nothing did. Morning came and the crisis passed.

What a way to spend Christmas Eve.

I knew Betty

Joe Callaway
Danville, CA

It was at the fashionable Forest Park Hotel in St. Louis that my parents became bridge playing friends of Bud and Billie Grable. I was shoved off on their nine year old daughter, Betty, who not only tolerated me but was very friendly and we used the whole hotel as our playground.

I think Betty probably accepted me and another nice guy my age, Jack Sparks, because we were the only kids whose parents were permanent residents--the only game in town so to speak.

Betty was deeply into dancing and singing at her mother's behest. One Saturday our two families went down to the Odeon Theatre to watch Betty perform in either a contest or recital of some kind, which she won. Also, on someone's birthday we all--Betty, Jack and I were taken to the local zoo. Our pictures were taken with a friendly gorilla and atop an elephant.

I don't remember Betty's Dad much, but I do remember her older sister, Marjorie and her sweet Mom, who was crippled and walked with a cane because of a painful swelling in her hip. She made a big impression on me because she was so nice to me.

When my Dad was transferred to Chicago Manufacture Sales Division, I lost track of Betty until I was in high school in Evanston, Illinois. I noticed her again in the late 1930's when she turned up in a movie "Whoopee" with Eddy Cantor. During that time I would always say, "I knew her when". Very few fellows ever believed me and I began to have local girl problems of my own to worry about.

Then in 1942 while at Field Artillery O.C.S. Class 13, Fort Sill, Oklahoma, I was in a fire direction class, learning how to read coordinates on a chart. Wow, there she was on this huge training-aid chart in that famous over-the-shoulder pose which G.I.s adored.

Her picture was over-layed (excuse the expression) with longitude and latitude coordinate grid lines. The instructor would point to-say her elbow and ask a student to give the coordinates. It was a great training-aid..

A year or so later, while on desert training in Arizona, I had a three day pass to Los Angeles. Dependents were not allowed while we were in the desert so the only time we got off was on a pass every two weeks or so.

Having had a brief stint with J. Walter Thompson, an ad agency in Chicago, I knew they had a Hollywood office to handle their client's radio show biz programming commercials, etc. Through them I was able to get Betty's unlisted number and was invited over to her house for dinner and to meet Harry James, her new husband. She was about six months pregnant and glowing with good health .

The dinner was great and we all had a warm home spun visit, filling in all the gaps, weddings, children, etc. from St. Louis to the present.

The reunion was dampened a bit when she told me that Jack Sparks was listed as missing in action over Europe. Other than that the evening turned out to be great fun, including listening to some of Harry's original recordings.

One more thing. After some pretty hazardous combat on Peleliu Island late in 1944, I was returning to the states on an Army Air Corps C-47 (DC-3) flying from Anguar to Guam. I was still in battle dress fatigues, dirty, tired, high strung, grumpy and jumpy, sitting on a bench in the noisy old plane when the pilot announced that our IFF was out and that we might have company coming into Guam.

Shortly he said; "There they are now---look out the starboard window." Much to our relief, out there, almost at our wing tip was a Marine F4U Corsair and---there SHE WAS---emblazoned in full color up near the cowling in that famous over-the-shoulder pose.

Seeing Betty high aloft really broke the tension and we all had a good laugh as we knew we were almost back to civilization.

In the truest sense Betty performed a great service to her country both in training and morale building.

And that's the way it was with me and Betty Grable.

Date of infamy

From page 7

erupted in balls of flame and huge billows of smoke arose from strategic points around the island. All hell had broken loose.

"Bombs were falling everywhere, and the fighters came in strafing. It was terrible; but, you know, there wasn't chaos. Our guys reacted well. There just wasn't much we could do. They caught us with our pants down.

"I say more heroism that day than anyone could imagine. Our guys were out there shooting back with whatever they had — rifles, pistols, shaking their fists. I think we got about six planes into the air. The rest were sitting ducks.

"They got our fighters at Wheeler, our bombers at Hickam and it was sickening to see the warships ablaze in Pearl. They were shooting up everything in sight and we had nothing to fight back with. It was infuriating."

Berlier had just begun his motor trip when he saw the planes.

"I saw the first wave come in from the north. I thought they were ours. I saw the first one peel off, then the second and third. I heard explosions and saw smoke and then the big red Rising Sun on the wings. I knew we'd been had. I turned back, dropped off the family and headed for Pearl and the ship."

The US Sacramento was badly strafed but not sunk.

"I remember I was so proud of our boys. Despite the devastation, I knew in my heart the Japs had made a terrible mistake. I watched these 18-and 20-year old kids come together with a show of heroism and unity that was unbelievable.

"It was a terrible thing, but it put steel into our spines. It made us fighting mad...

"But," he added sadly, "I'm not sure we haven't forgotten. There are stinkers around who want to breathe our free air, but don't want to pay the price.

"We paid the price at Pearl Harbor."

A terrible price, too: 18 warships destroyed or seriously damaged including eight battleships, 188 American aircraft destroyed — 96 Army, 92 Navy planes; 2,403 military personnel killed — 2,008 Navy (half on the USS Arizona where they went to a watery grave); 109 Marines; 18 Army; 68 civilians and a thousand more wounded.

Not only was it a crippling, blindsided blow, but the attack set the American war effort back months, resulting in the needless death and capture of thousands of ill-equipped American defenders in islands throughout the South Pacific.

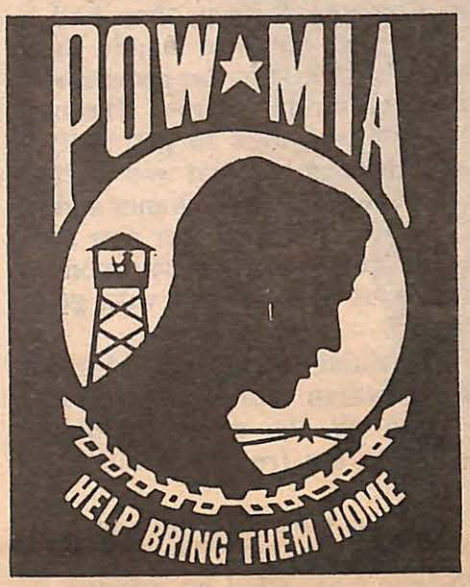
While America had begun to mobilize in the summer of 1940, it was so woefully unprepared for war that it had an army of only 227,000 soldiers and equipment to supply only 75,000 of them.

While millions of young men, filled with pride and patriotism, rushed out to join the ranks following the attack, they soon learned the hard realities of war. It took more than bravado. It took blood and bullets and sweat. It took courage and deadly determination. They learned soon enough the Japanese were a fanatic foe and that war makes no distinctions in human terms.

The United States dug in and held on until it could adequately train an army and mobilize to counter attack; meanwhile, the Japanese entrenched in its island fortifications, and a step-by-step conflict was waged through the Pacific.

and we end with Pearl Harbor.

Veterans, never forget that date or day.



Glenn Miller's AAF Band at the 94th Bomb Group's 200th mission party, September 15, 1944. T/Sgt. Ray McKinley, right foreground.

Close your eyes

Dick Sinnott

It's 1941 and you're at the Totem Pole Ballroom, King Philip, Hollywood Palladium, Glen Island Casino or perhaps Frank Dailey's Meadowbrook in Cedar Grove, N.J.

You're anywhere you want to be with anyone you want to be with.

The war in Europe is a long way off. Hawaii slumbers and so, too, do Guam, Wake Island, and the Phillipines.

It's the first week of the last month of the year, and up on the bandstand it's the orchestra of Glenn Miller. Ray Eberle solos on a ballad, and then The Modernaires join Tex Beneke as he boards that "Chattanooga Choo-Choo." Then it's back to Ray who has found his thrill on Blueberry Hill.

It is Saturday night, December 6, 1941, and all is well in our little corner of the world.

Turn the pages faster, click the camera quicker. It is again December, but three years have passed. It is mid-December, 1944. The sky is deep blue. The sun is warm, and a slight breeze plays with the sun and seas as we churn our way through the South Pacific.

I am one of three young radiomen relaxing on the fantail as our U.S. Navy ship skirts Eniwetok and heads toward Guam. And then the bulletin, the bulletin I shall always remember, comes over the Armed Forces Radio Network, "Major Glenn Miller of the Army Air Corps is missing on a flight from England to France."

Flashback again to December, 1944, an Army Air Corps officer boards a small plane that is to take him from war-torn England to Paris, a city liberated from five years of German occupation only four months before.

It is a foggy, drizzly night and the temperature is falling. The name of the pilot is British Flight Officer John Morgan. He checks his instruments. The two passengers introduce themselves. One is Air Force Colonel Norman Baesell. The other is Major Alton Glenn Miller.

Sergeant Freddie Guerra, a sax player in the Miller band, waves goodbye as the small craft thunders down the runway. It roars into the night, heading high over the English Channel.

Dick Sinnott, author/columnist.

It is never seen or heard from again.

Glenn Miller's stay as a band leader was all too brief. After fronting two unsuccessful orchestras, he launched a third in Boston in 1939. This was the band that made it. "The Miller Sound" was born when Glenn inserted a clarinet in the five-man sax section with the clarinetist playing the arrangement written for trumpet.

The Miller band rode a crest of popularity that took them from the State Ballroom in Boston, to the big, big ballrooms — the Hollywood Palladium, the Meadowbrook, the Glen Island Casino. It played the finest hotel supper clubs and on radio starred on "The Chesterfield Supper Club."

The band made two movies and for three years it was tops in every sweet band category in every poll taken by "Downbeat," "Billboard," and "Coin," trade magazines that took the public's pulse.

"The Miller Sound" as we knew it ended in Massachusetts the last week of September, 1942. The band played a week at the old RKO Boston Theatre, thence to Pasaaic, New Jersey, and broke up.

The last tune Glenn played in Boston was a "give the Japs and Nazis hell" song called "People Like You and Me." And then Glenn gave the downbeat for his signature theme, "Moonlight Serenade."

There were tears in Miller's eyes, and singer Marion Hutton wept openly. Hal Dickenson and Paula Kelly, husband-and-wife members of the Modernaires, also sobbed.

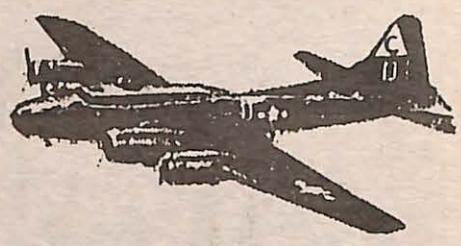
Whatever happened to Glenn Miller?

On that night that Miller's small plane took off from England, according to Army Air Corps records, there was no other United States air activity over the English Channel. As a result, German anti-aircraft installations were observing a slow, slow night.

However, on our side, the English side of the Channel, there was often havoc as a V-Bomb zoomed across the Channel and slammed with murderous force into the English countryside. English anti-aircraft gunners slept little that night. They took aim at anything within sight or sound.

There are those who say Miller's plane was downed by our own anti-aircraft.

Dick Sinnott was a U.S. Navy radioman in World War II. He became an Associated Press columnists TV commentator and Boston City Censor. He currently hosts a talk show on WJCC, Boston, and teaches journalism at Curry College.



STAYING ALIVE, A B-17 Pilot's Experiences Flying Unescorted Bomber Missions by 8th Air Force Elements During World War II, by Carl Fyler, DDS, Major (R) - AF. Copyright 1995, hardcover; 144 pages with pictures and illustrations. To order, send $21.95 plus $3.00 shipping and handling to Dr. Carl Fyler, PNJVC American Ex-POW's, 300 S.W. Yorkshire Rd., Topeka, KS 66606.

An old French warship remembered

Captain Roberto Rigoli

At this time I was in command of the submarine *PLATINO* and, if I remember correctly, it was November 11 or 12, 1942, just after the Allied North African landings. We were ordered to attack Allied invasion shipping. I approached the Port of Bougie after a long submerged journey. The idea was to penetrate the harbor, but it was defended by natural straits and also Allied torpedo boats and corvettes and a submarine net.

I attempted to close on the surface, but we were attacked by German aircraft by mistake. I submerged as Allied ships began appearing. I put the boat on the bottom in about 70-80 meters of water. Some Allied ships came close, but we were not detected.

I surfaced at nightfall and began looking for a way into the harbor, past the net. Very suddenly an American corvette appeared out of nowhere, coming at us from astern. By this time we were in only 30 meters of water, and to dive to escape was out of the question. The only thing to do was stay on the surface - and pray.

By some great fortune, the American ship did not see us, but passed so close we thought we could hear men on deck. I followed this ship's path for a while, hoping to find a way in. I did not. I realized now that we were quite a bit west of the main harbor entrance, but we sighted some ships anchored at this western end of the harbor.

There were no warships to be seen. Apparently the docks were very full and there was no room for these ships to unload so they were anchored at this far end of the harbor awaiting a turn. I closed on the surface slowly, trying to get as close as possible to the ships. Soon we were in very shallow waters, maybe only 20 meters.

Close enough! Still no warships in sight. I selected the first ship as target. I fired two torpedoes, but they failed to hit. I fired two more, this time of the magnetic fuse variety. There was an explosion and a fire started. We watched as men on deck did not move too quickly despite the fire.

I decided to leave quickly as we had come. We spotted some small ships moving about and a single large warship in the distance, but there was no attempt to find us and we escaped without any attack on us.

I learned only years later why there had been no search for us and no alarm. The Allied Officials in charge though it was an internal explosion which had started the fire. They had said that it was suicide for a submarine to try an attack in such shallow waters, and they thought no submarine would dare to try it, so they never thought to search for us.

(NOTE: At that time, Captain Rigoli did not realize what he had done. He thought he had torpedoed some *"old French warship"* when in fact he had sunk the 16,632 ton British transport *NARKUNDA*. It was the largest ship to fall victim to an Italian U-Boat in the Mediterranean during the course of World War II.)

Rigoli's attack got his name and boat mentioned in radio broadcasts, and for "daring and courage" it earned him the "Medeglia D'Argento", the Silver Medal; Italy's second highest military decoration.

Later, operating in the Atlantic, there would be more successes and by war's end, he had over 32,000 tons of Allied shipping and he had been decorated four times.

NOTE: Captain Roberto Rigoli is a member of SHARKHUNTERS and like other AXIS submarine Skippers and veterans, regularly share their memories of the war in the monthly magazine of SHARKHUNTERS. For FREE information on this international group, send a stamped self-addressed envelope to: SHARKHUNTERS, P.O. Box 1539-J13, Hernando, FL 34442.