

Pearl Harbor Survivors Say Final Farewell to Watery Grave of USS Arizona

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PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii — One by one, aging survivors from ships sunk 65 years ago Thursday in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor laid wreaths under life preserver rings honoring their ships.



Nearly 500 survivors bowed their heads at 7:55 a.m., the minute planes began bombing the harbor in a surprise attack that thrust the United States into World War II.

The veterans, most in Hawaiian aloha shirts, were honored with prolonged applause at the solemn ceremony near where some of the ships remain rusting and moss-covered under the harbor's waters. Many were treating the gathering as their last, uncertain if they would be alive or healthy enough to travel to Hawaii for the next big memorial ceremony, the 70th anniversary.

"Sixty-five years later, there's not too many of us left," said Don Stratton, a seaman 1st class who was aboard the USS Arizona on Dec. 7, 1941. "In another five years I'll be 89. The good Lord willing, I might be able to make it.

If so, I'll probably be here. I might not even be around. Who knows? Only the good Lord knows." Stratton and other survivors were boarding a boat to the white memorial straddling the sunken hull of the USS Arizona, where they will lay wreaths and lei in honor of the dead.

The Arizona sank in less than nine minutes after a 1,760-pound armor-piercing bomb struck the battleship's deck and hit its ammunition magazine, igniting flames that engulfed the ship. More people died on the Arizona than any other ship as 1,177 service members, or about 80 percent of its crew, perished. Altogether, the surprise attack killed 2,390 Americans and injured 1,178. The average age of an American casualty was approximately 23. In contrast, the average age of a casualty in Iraq is nearly 27, and the 9/11 attacks were around 40. Twelve ships sank and nine vessels were heavily damaged. Over 320 U.S. aircraft were destroyed or heavily damaged by the time the invading planes were done sweeping over military bases from Wheeler Field to Kaneohe Naval Air Station.

WWII claimed the lives of more than 407,300 American servicemembers. In response to the attacks, The Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki involved the nuclear attack on the Japanese city of Hiroshima by the United States Army Air Forces on August 6, 1945 with the nuclear weapon "Little Boy," followed three days later by the detonation of the "Fat Man" bomb over Nagasaki during World War II against the Empire of Japan, part of the opposing Axis Powers alliance. It is estimated that as many as 140,000 had died in Hiroshima by the bomb and its associated effects, with the estimate for Nagasaki roughly 74,000. In both cities, the overwhelming majority of the deaths civilians. The role of the bombings in Japan's surrender, as well as the effects and justification of them, have been subject to much debate. In the U.S., the prevailing view is that the bombings ended the war months sooner than would otherwise have been the case, saving many lives that would have been lost on both sides if the planned invasion of Japan had taken place.

Japanese veterans who participated in the attack as navigators and pilots will also pay their respects, offering flowers at the Arizona memorial for the American and Japanese who died. Japan lost 185 men, mostly on dive-bombers, Kamikaze fighters and midget submarines. Some Japanese veterans and American survivors have reconciled in the decades since whereas others appeared as if one foul word would lead to blows. Japanese dive bomber pilot Zenji Abe has apologized to American survivors for the sudden attack, ashamed his government failed to deliver a declaration of war in time for the assault. The Japanese aviators who carried out the attack thought the declaration had already been made by the time they started bombing, Abe has said.

1. In paragraph(s) form, thoroughly summarize the events which took place in what today is most commonly referred to a "Pearl Harbor." As a minimum, include specific times, dates, casualties, etc.
2. How many men served on the crew of the USS Arizona? What percentage of them survived?
3. Approximately how many more pounds than ounces did the armor-piercing bomb weigh?
4. In paragraph(s) form, analyze and interpret the overall American casualties and injuries with the Japanese.
5. In your opinion, why is there such a disparity in the ages of those killed at Pearl Harbor, 9/11, and Iraq?
6. If a service member aboard the USS Arizona was born on Friday, February 29, 1924 how old was he during the following historical events: a) Rosa Parks refusal to give up her seat, b) Desegregation of schools, c) "The Giants win the pennant", d) JFK was assassinated, e) Princess Diana was killed, f) Iraq invasion, g) 12/7/06?
7. In the passage above, in paragraph form, explain at least five ways using the red "Four-Step Reading" poster simplifies understanding of the material. Be specific.
8. Using contextual clues only, explain the meaning of the italicized words: declaration, reconciled, justification, i prevailing, solemn, prolonged, and hull.
9. In paragraph form, explain at least five legitimate and educational purposes behind The Daughtry Times.