

Remembering from 1A

“We had two crews out in the open, one that was finishing up and one that was coming on duty,” Tait said. “So

there were plenty of targets to shoot at.”

Tait and his mates were actually the first Americans to come under attack on the “Day that will live in infamy.”

“We were hit before Pearl

Harbor,” explained Tait. “I was stationed at Naval Air Station Kaneohe Bay, which is across the bay from Pearl Harbor. We saw the fighters coming down and straffing our planes...”

After a thoughtful pause,

Tait continued, “I had charge of wing ordinance, so I went to the gun cabinet and thought if I was going shoot at airplanes, I better get one of those B.A.R.s — a Browning Automatic Rifle. It was the same caliber as the machine guns on the airplanes.”

Tait remembers continuing to shoot at the incoming airplanes as a second wave of fighters flew low enough for him to take aim and fire hundreds of rounds.

“We were running low on ammunition, but in the meantime the Marines had come through and they left us plenty of ammo so we could keep shooting,” he said.

After the initial fighter attacks, bombers followed and laid waste to the ships in the bay. Tait recalls the chaos that ensued.

“Then they started doing crazy things,” he said. “They sent a wave of bombers next that started dive bombing the ships and there were a lot of casualties.”

The battle at Pearl Harbor was a major military success for the Japanese. Five of eight battleships, three destroyers and seven other American ships were sunk or severely damaged. American casualties were significant, with 2,400 killed and 1,200 wounded.

By comparison, Japanese forces lost less than 100 soldiers and suffered the loss of only 30 planes.

Miraculously, Tait suffered only minor injuries during the confrontation and was responsible for shooting down a fighter plane with a rifle. It’s an impressive accomplishment that he discounts.

“I was lucky to get a good line of sight on him,” he said. “I pulled that trigger, his engine started smoking and he



Veteran Alan Tait got the chance to view Oregon Coast Military Museum’s World War II display this week.

crashed into the hillside across the way.”

The young service man wrote a letter the next day to his girlfriend, Barbara, who was stateside, sharing his experiences. They eventually married in 1947 and, in a few months, will celebrate their 70th anniversary.

The couple has made several trips back to Hawaii to visit the Pearl Harbor Memorial and other military shrines over the years. However, their most memorable trip may be one they took in 2014.

“We got to take an honor flight to Washington, D.C., together, which is unusual because most wives don’t qualify,” said Tait. “But Barbara did because of her work with the nurse corps, starting in 1947.”

The couple enjoyed their honor flight weekend.

“It was quite a deal. We got to see all the memorials from all the wars,” he said. “That makes you think a lot.”

“Oh, but we had a good time, it was a very nice trip,” Barbara added with a hint of a smile. “It was something we were real lucky to get to do.”

Despite the experience of

that day 75 years ago, the Taites said they hold no ill will towards their one-time enemies, even hosting a Japanese student in their home.

“I don’t have any problems with the Japanese people. They are some of the smartest and nicest folks I’ve ever met,” said Tait. “It was their leaders I didn’t like.”

In 1976, while celebrating America’s 200th anniversary, the Taites played host to a Japanese girl named Tamiko.

“She stayed at our house with our daughters for a week or two,” said Tait. “She wasn’t exactly like an exchange student because she didn’t go to school. It was more of a cultural exchange.”

The couple corresponded with Tamiko for a long while after the visit.

“She got married and had two kids, so that was good,” Tait said.

When asked to share the reasons for their many years of marriage, their good fortune during the war and their good health, the couple — now in their 90s — looked at each other briefly before answering in unison, “Just lucky, I guess.”

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2 – 3:30 p.m.

Florence Events Center

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- Bring friends and family.

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PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Medical Center

peacehealth.org

Lawsuit from 1A

home as well as a nearby home that was unoccupied at the time. Miller’s body and that of one of her dogs was

later recovered.

Miller’s husband, who had placed the 911 call, escaped with only minor injuries.

Last week, Miller’s sons Stephen Miller and Keith Eldein filed a \$9.7 million wrongful death lawsuit in Lane County Circuit Court alleging that negligence by both the Heceta Water People’s Utility District (HWPUD) and William and Gail Munzer — owners of the other property that was damaged — contributed to Miller’s death.

The suit blames the water district for improper maintenance

of a water line that runs beneath a road near the home, which is part of an easement with the district.

Miller’s sons believe leakage in the water line contributed to the failure of the hillside.

The suit also claims that the Munzers failed to maintain a series of drainage ditches and other forms of erosion prevention for several years prior to the landslide.

HWPUD general manager Carl Neville said he had no statement at this time.

The Munzers couldn’t be reached for comment.



Health Care Town Hall

Join us for the second in a series of town hall events addressing our community’s health care, the national provider shortage and how Team Medicine is improving access to care.

Friday, Dec. 9

12:30 - 1:30 p.m.

Florence Events Center

715 Quince St., Florence, OR 97439

■ GOT QUESTIONS?

Come to the town hall for an opportunity to ask your questions in person. Or, share your questions in advance of the event: facebook.com/peaceharbor

■ NO REGISTRATION REQUIRED.

Visit us online for the latest information about the event and PeaceHealth’s provider recruiting efforts.

PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Medical Center

peacehealth.org/WeCare

Thanks to our partner, the City of Florence, for working with us to host this event.

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