

MILITARY HERITAGE CHRONICLES —

# The 'Day of Infamy' that reached Oregon



By CAL APPLEBEE  
Special to the Siuslaw News

Most Americans didn't want to get embroiled in another war which they felt, at that moment in time, was only Europe's problem. But the unprovoked attack on Japan that day termed by President Franklin Deleanor Roosevelt as "The Day of Infamy" changed that attitude — and brought the United States into the war.

Most Americans are also well aware of the impact the attack had on Hawaii specifically, and the United States as a whole, but may not be aware of its impact on the State of Oregon — and the coast particularly as the war touched the continental United States.

On the day of the attack in Hawaii, more than 2,400 Americans were killed and nearly 1,200 Americans were wounded. On the USS Arizona alone, 1,177 men

were lost and remain interred there.

In addition, 188 American planes were destroyed, 159 American planes were damaged and 18 ships were either sunk or damaged.

Oregon suffered nearly 20 casualties that day. One of those injured was Delmore Sederstrom, a graduate of Salem High School and University of Oregon, who was a U.S. Navy Ensign on board the Oklahoma.

In 1943, the U.S. Navy honored Sederstrom by naming a vessel after him — a destroyer escort, the USS Sederstrom, which served and survived the balance of the war.

At the time of the attack, the Willamette University football team was in Hawaii for the Shrine Bowl. While they were anticipating a tour of the island that morning following the game, they ended up being pressed into service stringing barbed wire on Waikiki beach, and eventually sentry duty.

Oregonians experienced other events as a result of the attack on Pearl Harbor in days

and years to come. With fears of a West Coast invasion, blackout practices and beach patrols became daily routine up and down the coast.

Eventually, the Japanese did in fact attack the Oregon coast in two locations, as well as touch the interior of Oregon.

In June of 1942, a Japanese submarine off the coast by Astoria fired 17 rounds towards Ft. Stevens. On-land reports say that only somewhere between nine and 14 of these shots reached shore.

While the attack caused some damage to the base and some minor injuries, there were no deaths.

Later in the summer, in September 1942, that same Japanese submarine twice launched seaplanes from a catapult, hoping to drop incendiary bombs in the lush Oregon forest and create catastrophic forest fires. While at least one bomb was in fact dropped and exploded on Mt. Emily near Brookings, it caused little damage due to the unusually damp forest that year.

Towards the end of the war,

the Japanese employed a different tactic and started launching high-altitude balloons, hoping they would ride the jet stream clear to the United States.

Numerous balloons did so and landed around the western United States, with 45 reaching Oregon.

On May 5, 1945, one balloon landed east of Bly near Klamath Falls, and exploded after being discovered by a church picnic group. The explosion killed six Oregonians, five of whom were children.

While the dastardly attack on Pearl Harbor on that December morning was nearly 2,600 miles away from the Oregon coast line, it managed to have numerous impacts on Oregonians both then and in the years to follow.

It also changed the landscape for Oregon as it geared up for war-time production, relocated Japanese nationals to internment camps and struggled with life on the home front while many of its native sons were off fighting the war

in the various theaters.

War-time funding became a major effort in the United States following America's entry into the war, and the government's "Build a Jeep" campaign for schools demonstrated how individual schools could fundraise \$733 — the average price of a jeep — for purchase and be delivered to a military unit.

Over the years, the Oregon Coast Military Heritage Museum in Florence has become home to multiple WWII artifacts that are now on display throughout the museum.

As we remember a "Day that lives in infamy, the public is invited to visit the museum Thursday through Saturday, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., on Kingwood Street, next to the Florence Municipal Airport.

To learn more about military heritage in general, visit the Oregon Coast Military Heritage Museum online at [www.ocmhm.com](http://www.ocmhm.com).

Most people probably know the basic story and significance of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941: The United States was still in a mood of isolationism after enduring the horrors of WWI as well as the Great Depression.

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## KCST's 'Our Town' to discuss Pearl Harbor, CASA

This week marks the observance of the 75th anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that led directly to U.S. involvement in World War II. That crucial event has done

more, says historian and author Craig Nelson, to shape modern America than any other single event. He calls the actions taken by U.S. leaders as the "defining moment of what

America is today," even, he adds, "much more than July Fourth."

Nelson has written a book about the events before the attack, as well as the attack itself and the aftermath, called "Pearl Harbor: From Infamy to Greatness."

He will visit with Our Town host Bob Sneddon this week to talk about the three phases of that defining time.

Our Town for December will also feature a variety of other conversations about things that have an impact on our area. Beginning the program will be a brief conversation with Meg Spencer. By day, she's the director of Siuslaw Public Library, but she is also a "vision keeper," active in the Siuslaw Pathways project that is giving local residents a very loud voice in how the area grows and prospers.

Spencer will talk about what she and the other Vision Keepers are doing.

Also in the studio will be Kathy Murphy, the manager of Peace Harbor Home Care Services. She will talk about preparations for this weekend's Hospice Light Up a Life remembrance and fund raiser

set for Saturday afternoon at the Florence Events Center.

Heather Murphy (no relation to Kathy) is the executive director of CASA of Lane County. CASA is the acronym for Court Appointed Special Advocates, a group of individuals who volunteer their time to work with the court system on behalf of children who become involved with "the system."

Murphy said they may be victims of abuse or crime, or simply become wards of the court because a caregiver or guardian has been arrested or charged with a crime.

The other segment on Our Town this week will feature Florence Area Chamber of Commerce president Jenna Bartlett and executive director Bettina Hannigan.

Bartlett will talk about the expansion of paid staff at the Chamber in the past year to include not only the executive director, but also an "events coordinator."

Hannigan was hired five months ago to fill part of the role played by former executive Cal Applebee.

This edition of Our Town airs today on KCST, FM 106.9, between 4 and 6 p.m., then again Thursday morning on KCFM, AM1250-FM 104.1 from 10 a.m. to noon.

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## Tsunami Conference begins today at FEC

Florence will be host to the annual Oregon Tsunami Conference, which opens today at the Florence Events Center. Preparations leaders will discuss what is needed for what would likely be a devastating tsunami and earthquake at some point along the Oregon coastal region.

The conference will continue Thursday.

The goal is to coordinate state, county and local government agencies that would be the first to respond in the aftermath of an earthquake along the Cascadia Subduction Zone off the Oregon Coast.

Speakers will include retired geologist Dr. George Priest, who identified the risks posed by the 600-mile long fault line that spans the Oregon and Washington coastlines.