

I Praised the Lord— They Passed the Ammunition

One seaman's legs were buckling as he passed the heavy shells up the line. Impulsively, I clapped him on the shoulder and shouted: "Praise the Lord—and pass the ammunition!"



In America's darkest hour, a young chaplain sounded a battle cry that inspired his shipmates—and the nation; here is his story of that Pearl Harbor incident

Editors' Note: *The Rev. Howell M. Forgy was a young pastor in Kentucky when World War II broke out in Europe. In 1940, he wrote to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, offering his services as a chaplain wherever he might be needed. He was accepted and assigned to the Navy. When the Pearl Harbor attack occurred, he had been aboard the cruiser USS New Orleans about nine months. He remained on that ship, which saw action in many Pacific engagements, throughout the war.*

After the war, he divided his time between the pulpit and working as a sociological consultant. During 1962 he served as Chairman of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association. Recently, he was felled by a series of strokes and is now in an Air Force hospital near Riverside, Calif. A big, energetic, deep-voiced man, he finds the forced inactivity chafing.

I WAS STRETCHED OUT in my bunk on the heavy cruiser *USS New Orleans* in Pearl Harbor when General Quarters sounded at 7:45 on the morning of Dec. 7, 1941.

I wasn't sleeping; I was planning my sermon. It was Sunday, and as the only chaplain on the ship, one of my duties was to conduct services for the 1,400-man crew.

By HOWELL M. FORGY
Commander, U.S.N., Ret.
Former Pastor, Hollister (Calif.) Presbyterian Church
as told to Joseph N. Bell

ILLUSTRATION BY GIL WALKER

Taking it for granted this was another dry run, I sauntered to my duty station in the ship's hospital. But the speaker system began bellowing over and over, "This is no drill," and, a few seconds later, one of the ship's doctors stuck his head into the sick bay and said with a chilling edge to his voice, "There are planes up there—lots of them—and they don't look like ours."

As I hurried topside onto the well deck, there was a deafening roar from an aircraft motor, then a staccato rat-a-tat-tat-tat. Bullets hitting the metal deck made sparks as they ricocheted around me. Without thinking, I did a little "dance" on the deck, foolishly trying to dodge the flying bullets.

By some miracle, I wasn't hit, and I watched for a few seconds, transfixed, as the plane traversed the length of the ship, its tail bobbing and weaving like a jack rabbit in a mesquite patch. Then it was gone—and in its wake was confusion. A quarter-mile away, the *Arizona* was a black, flaming pyre, and the *West Virginia* looked as if her back had been broken. The black, oily

water was full of struggling figures, and the sky was orange with antiaircraft fire. The whole harbor looked as if it were aflame.

Dozens of planes were overhead, bombing and strafing, their rising-sun emblems glinting in the bright sunshine.

I knew we were in mortal danger—trapped in the confines of Pearl Harbor, fat targets for an enemy that had refined treachery to a fine edge on this beautiful Sunday morning.

The order came to cast loose and rendezvous at sea, and someone ashore hacked away the lines holding us. In their frantic haste, they forgot one thing: the *New Orleans* was in Pearl Harbor to have a turbine repaired. Our engines were down, completely immobile. We were receiving power from a line strung out from a shore installation. And the shore crew cut all the lines—including the power line!

The *New Orleans* not only couldn't move, but she also had no power on board within a few minutes after the Japanese attack. Since all our ammunition was stored below decks and was carried to the gun crews by electric hoists, we were virtually without means of defending ourselves once we had used our ready ammunition.

In this crisis, our men responded, as they were to do so many times in the months and years ahead, with great courage and ingenuity. There was only one way to get the ammunition up to the guns—by sheer muscle power. And within a

(Continued on page 14)

COVER:



Baby brothers are for loving is the unspoken phrase here as pert Julie Lochridge and new brother Jeffrey get acquainted. The scene was photographed by Phoebe Dunn.

Family Weekly / December 1, 1963

LEONARD S. DAVIDOW President and Publisher
WALTER C. DREYFUS Associate Publisher
PATRICK E. O'ROURKE Executive Vice President and Advertising Director
WILLIAM V. HUSSEY Advertising Manager
MORTON FRANK Director of Publisher Relations
Advertising and business office: 153 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 1, Ill.
Editorial office: 60 E. 50th St., New York 22, N. Y.

ERNEST V. HEYN Editor-in-Chief
BEN KARTMAN Executive Editor
ROBERT FITZGIBBON Managing Editor
PHILLIP DYKSTRA Art Director
MELANIE DE PROFT Food Editor
Rosalyn Abeavaya, Arden Eidell, Hal Landon, Jack Ryan, Peer J. Oppenheimer, Hollywood.

© 1963, PROCESSING AND BOOKS, INC., 153 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 1, Ill. All rights reserved.