

Oil On Water Was Several Inches Thick, Burning Hot

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The Japanese had set their torpedoes to run at 21 feet, so as to run under the Vestal, which drew 19 feet of water, and slam into the hull of the Arizona.

"We didn't know what was going on," he said. He and the other two men ran down to the messhall. But just as they arrived, a bomb came crashing through the ship, through the messhall and down into a storage room. There were 16 casualties in the messhall. A man standing next to Fahlgren was killed.

After that explosion, he said, smoke came billowing from the lower decks, so he ran back up to the top deck.

The executive officer of the ship yelled at him, "Get the hell off." So he jumped into a motor launch which was taking men off the sinking vessel.

He recalls that the Arizona blew up just after that launch left the Vestal and the blast broke the moorings between the two ships.

The Vestal's captain, Cason Young, was hurled into the water by the blast, but swam back to his ship and climbed aboard again. Then, he ordered the Vestal to move and ran the sinking ship up on the beach before it sank. By that time it had taken a second bomb hit.

For that feat, the captain received the Congressional Medal of Honor. He was killed later in the war.

Besides saving his ship, the captain also saved the life of a sailor who happened to be spending a time in the Vestal's brig. The man with the key to his cell was killed by a bomb blast and only by running the ship upon the beach was the man's life saved.

Fahlgren said oil on the water was several inches thick and it was burning hotly. This, he said, prevented many men from jumping off the Arizona and saving themselves.

Fahlgren finally got ashore and once there was selected to join a group of firefighting volunteers. But the group was scattered as soon as it was formed by straining Japanese planes and Fahlgren found himself near the officers' club.

Through the smoke he saw a group of 40 or 50 soldiers marching his way, with rifles on their shoulders.

"I thought for sure they were Japs," he said.

When they marched by, he saw that they were Americans.

That night, Fahlgren found himself among a group of sailors hastily formed into fighting units. They had been told by their officers that the Japanese had landed and they were stationed in cane fields to fight the invaders off. The only invader of Fahlgren's cane field was a large dog. It was killed.

When the Arizona sank, he said, a machine gun turret was left above water and all through the night, he could hear that machine gun rattling. The next morning, it was found the gun had shot down three American planes flying in from the carrier Enterprise, standing off Hawaii. It was one of the many tragedies resulting from confusion following the attack.

Fahlgren said three two-man Japanese submarines were sunk in Pearl Harbor during the battle and he saw one that was raised from the harbor floor. He didn't find out for four days what had happened to his brothers on the Vestal. They were all safe.

And, he said, he later found out that the Filipino cook on the Vestal had stood on the deck of his ship during the height of the attack and thrown apples at the low-flying Japanese planes — with a few oranges thrown in for "tracers."

Fahlgren stayed on the repaired Vestal for the rest of the war and finally left the Navy in 1947. Although from Montana, he wound up in Klamath Falls and is today a partner in the Hilton distributing company. He is married and he and his wife, Lois, have two children.

While Fahlgren was moving away from the Vestal in a motor launch, Paul Caldwell, several hundred yards away on the cruiser Phoenix, was minding his battle station—and finding nothing to do. His station was a rangefinder, for which there was no use.

Caldwell, a native of Klamath Falls, was eating breakfast when the attack began. "We were in the messhall when the PA system passed the word, 'aid defense. Man your battle stations. This is no drill.'"

"When I got topside, I knew it was no drill. The Arizona blew up. The damndest explosion you ever saw. Fire and smoke everywhere."

"I sat there and watched the planes come in and strafe."

Of the Arizona, he said: "She exploded and went straight down."

"They caught us with our shorts down and that was the uniform of the day too—shorts."

"They strafed us. Nobody was hit, but a .50-calibre slug ran around the steel rangefinder well. It didn't hit any of us."

The Phoenix captain got his ship moving.

"We tried to go around the channel, but the old Utah was bottom up in the channel and it was blocked."

Finally, he said, the ship got out of the harbor, but confusing reports sent the cruiser all over the ocean without finding the Japanese.

Three days later, the Phoenix came back to Pearl.

"Boy, it was really a mess," he said.

The first war mission for the Phoenix was to escort a convoy of civilians to San Francisco. Then, the ship spent almost the rest of the war throughout the South Pacific in a number of battles. She was hit by bombs June 4, 1944, in the Philippines, but managed to limp to Australia for repairs.

The only time the Phoenix left the Pacific was for two months in 1943 when the ship took Secretary of State Cordell Hull from Washington to Casablanca for a high allied meeting. Caldwell left the Navy an acting chief petty officer in 1947. He has been with the Klamath Falls Fire Department for four years as a driver. He and his wife, Rita, have six children. The family lives at 1215 Owens.

Earl Carlson, 46, retired as a chief petty officer in 1939 after 23 years in the Navy. He lives at 927 Alandale and was once the Navy recruiter in Klamath Falls.

On Dec. 7, 1941, he was a boiler tender on the destroyer USS Craven, with Task Force 14 and Admiral Halsey.

The task force had transported 14 planes to reinforce Wake Island as the situation between the United States and Japan grew worse.

The task force arrived off

Oahu (Hawaii) the night before that Sunday morning and was to have entered port at 10 a.m. Dec. 7.

Carlson said the executive officer of his ship and told him men that he expected war to break out at any moment. And it did.

Carlson — too — was eating breakfast and listening to Honolulu radio when the announcement of the attack came. Soon official word was flashed and general quarters was sounded.

"We steamed around looking for the Jap fleet, but we didn't sight any planes," he recalled. "The next morning (Monday) we went into port and saw the damage."

"The first thing I looked for was the big crane used to mount guns in the harbor. If it was down I knew we were in trouble. It was still standing."

After picking up fuel and supplies, the Craven headed out again for reconnaissance duty, but still couldn't find the elusive Japanese fleet.

Ten days later, the ship was back in Pearl Harbor.

"It's hard to imagine the state

of chaos," Carlson said.

Carlson later left the Craven for duty aboard the destroyer USS Stenbel and remained on her in the South Pacific through the rest of the war. Carlson retired in Klamath Falls in 1959 after a tour of recruiting duty here. He and his wife, Marcella, have one son. Carlson is commander of the local chapter of the Disabled American Veterans.

Vern Schortgen, the Klamath Falls building inspector, wasn't at Pearl Harbor on the day of the attack, but he did arrive less than two months later as an employee of Pacific Bridge Company.

Schortgen was assigned to supervise the raising of the battleships California and Maryland. Pacific Bridge raised five of the battleships in all.

Schortgen said the ships were sunk in 64 feet of water and their tops were barely underwater. All had torpedo holes in their hulls.

To raise them, Schortgen said, this technique was used: First the ships were surveyed and the size and location of the

holes determined. Then patches made of 12x12-inch timbers were constructed and edged with rubber tubing.

A patch would be lowered and held down with ballast. The divers would draw the patch inward with cables and jacks until it covered the hole.

When the holes were patched, a concrete wall was poured on the ship's deck with the top of the wall out of water. Huge pumps would then pump out the water inside the walls and then inside the ship. Finally, the ship would rise. Water pressure had sealed the patches against the hold.

Schortgen said that even two months after the disastrous attack, the harbor was still a shambles, with wreckage everywhere.

"They hadn't even started to clean it up," he said.

Each of these four men have something special to remember about that day 22 years ago. Thousands of men across the country have similar memories.

Fahlgren, for example, is a member of a unique association the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, which holds its convention every year on Dec. 7. Next year that convention will be held in Portland — and the battle of Pearl Harbor will be fought once again in the minds of men who were there, and lived to remember.

Quiet Observance Held

HONOLULU (UPI) — Prayers, taps and a moment of silence and the laying of a wreath above the rusting hull of a once-proud battleship.

This was to be the quiet observance of Pearl Harbor Day Saturday, 22 years after Japan's attack on the naval base here that triggered U.S. entry into World War II.

Some 70 representatives of 26 veterans' organizations planned the quiet observance at 3:15 p.m. EST, at the white concrete memorial above the battleship USS Arizona.

The Arizona was sunk in the

PHILADELPHIA (UPI) — Princess Grace of Monaco said Sunday on her arrival here to visit her mother that she would visit the grave of President John F. Kennedy this week and call on Mrs. Kennedy.

The princess, the former Grace Kelly, said her visit to the President's widow would be at the former First Lady's convenience.

first wave of the Japanese attacks that long ago Sunday. Her rusted hull still entombs the bodies of 1,102 American dead. Her fuel tanks still bleed a thin stream of oil across the smooth waters of Pearl Harbor.

The Navy no longer observes Pearl Harbor Day as such because it is Defense Department policy to conduct a single memorial for all war dead on May 30 each year.

There was, of course, a fresher note of mourning here Saturday. For flags throughout the harbor have been at half-staff the past two weeks in memory of the late President John F. Kennedy, a Navy hero of the Pacific War that began here Dec. 7, 1941.

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