

Name: _____

Date: _____

Attack at Pearl Harbor, 1941: A Soldier's Perspective

On December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor was victim to a surprise attack. The Japanese planes attacked in two waves; the first at 7:53 AM, the second at 8:55. By 9:55 it was over. Around 1:00 PM the aircraft carriers were heading back to Japan. Back in Hawaii, there were 2,403 dead, 188 planes were destroyed, and the Pacific Fleet had been devastated, including the loss (either due to total destruction or significant damage) 8 battleships. This two hour attack decisively united American politicians (with the exception of pacifist Jeanette Rankin) to declare war and enter World War II.

Hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japanese planes began a day-long attack on American facilities in the Philippines. Additional Japanese attacks took place in Hong Kong, Malaysia and Thailand to strategically inflict as much damage as possible in the shortest period of time to remain the strongest force in the area. Within a year though, the allies defeated Japan at the Battle of Midway and Japan never regained its position of military dominance and power in the war.

Aboard the USS Arizona

The battleships moored along "Battleship Row" are the primary target of the attack's first wave. Ten minutes after the beginning of the attack a bomb crashes through the Arizona's two armored decks igniting its magazine. The explosion rips the ship's sides open like a tin can starting a fire that engulfs the entire ship. Within minutes she sinks to the bottom taking 1,300 lives with her. The sunken ship remains as a memorial to those who sacrificed their lives during the attack. Marine Corporal E.C. Nightingale was aboard the Arizona that fateful Sunday morning:

"At approximately eight o'clock on the morning of December 7, 1941, I was leaving the breakfast table when the ship's siren for air defense sounded. Having no anti-aircraft battle station, I paid little attention to it. Suddenly I heard an explosion. I ran to the port door leading to the quarterdeck and saw a bomb strike a barge of some sort alongside the Nevada, or in that vicinity. The marine color guard came in at this point saying we were being attacked. I could distinctly hear machine gun fire. I believe at this point our anti-aircraft battery opened up.

"We stood around awaiting orders of some kind. General Quarters sounded and I started for my battle station in secondary aft. As I passed through casement nine I noted the gun was manned and being trained out. The men seemed extremely calm and collected. I reached the boat deck and our anti-aircraft guns were in full action, firing very rapidly. I was about three quarters of the way to the first platform on the mast when it seemed as though a bomb struck our quarterdeck. I could hear shrapnel or fragments whistling past me. As soon as I reached the first platform, I saw Second Lieutenant Simonson lying on his back with blood on his shirt front. I bent over him and taking him by the shoulders asked if there was anything I could do. He was dead, or so nearly so that speech was impossible. Seeing there was nothing I could do for the Lieutenant, I continued to my battle station.

"When I arrived in secondary aft I reported to Major Shapley that Mr. Simonson had been hit and there was nothing to be done for him. There was a lot of talking going on and I shouted for silence which came immediately. I had only been there a short time when a terrible explosion caused the ship to shake violently. I looked at the boat deck and everything seemed aflame forward of the mainmast. I reported to the Major that the ship was aflame, which was rather needless, and after looking about, the Major ordered us to leave.

"I was the last man to leave secondary aft because I looked around and there was no one left. I followed the Major down the port side of the tripod mast. The railings, as we ascended, were very hot and as we reached the boat deck I noted that it was torn up and burned. The bodies of the dead were thick, and badly burned men were heading for the quarterdeck, only to fall apparently dead or badly wounded. The Major and I went between No. 3 and No. 4 turret to the starboard side and found Lieutenant Commander Fuqua ordering the men over the side and assisting the wounded. He seemed exceptionally calm and the Major stopped and they talked for a moment. Charred bodies were everywhere.

"I made my way to the quay and started to remove my shoes when I suddenly found myself in the water. I think the concussion of a bomb threw me in. I started swimming for the pipe line which was about one hundred and fifty feet away. I was about half way when my strength gave out entirely. My clothes and shocked condition sapped my strength, and I was about to go under when Major Shapley started to swim by, and seeing my distress, grasped my shirt and told me to hang to his shoulders while he swam in. "We were perhaps twenty-five feet from the pipe line when the Major's strength gave out and I saw he was floundering, so I loosened my grip on him and told him to make it alone. He stopped and grabbed me by the shirt and refused to let go. I would have drowned but for the Major. We finally reached the beach where a marine directed us to a bomb shelter, where I was given dry clothes and a place to rest."

References: Lord, Walter, Day of Infamy (1957), Prange, Gordon, At Dawn We Slept (1981), Wallin, VAdm. Homer N. Pearl Harbor: Why, How, Fleet Salvage and Final Appraisal (1968).

Questions

1. How, and for what, did Pearl Harbor unite Americans?
 - a.
 - b.
2. Why did Japan attack Pacific locations after Pearl Harbor?
3. What is the *Arizona* a memorial of today?
4. Summarize Nightingale's first three paragraphs of recollection in 4 sentences.
5. How do you think the soldier was able to seemingly stay calm until he got in the water?
6. How do you think he would have described his experiences that day to his family?

Attack At Pearl Harbor, 1941: The Japanese Point of View

The Japanese attack fleet left Japan at the end of November, steaming a circuitous route towards Pearl Harbor. Fleet Commander, Vice Admiral Nagumo, received his final orders on December 1. At 6:00 AM the first phase of the aerial assault, consisting of fighter aircraft, torpedo bombers, high-level bombers, and dive-bombers, were readied and awaited the "go" order.

"Surprise Attack Successful"

Commander Mitsuo Fuchida led the first wave of the air attack and published his recollections in 1951. These were later published in English in 1955. We join his story as he approaches the Hawaiian coast:

"One hour and forty minutes after leaving the carriers I knew that we should be nearing our goal. Small openings in the thick cloud cover afforded occasional glimpses of the ocean, as I strained my eyes for the first sight of land. Suddenly, a long white line of breaking surf appeared directly beneath my plane. It was the northern shore of Oahu. Veering right toward the west coast of the island, we could see that the sky over Pearl Harbor was clear. Presently the harbor itself became visible across the central Oahu plain, a film of morning mist hovering over it. I peered intently through my binoculars at the ships riding peacefully at anchor. One by one I counted them. Yes, the battleships were there all right, eight of them! But our last lingering hope of finding any carriers present was now gone. Not one was to be seen.

It was 0749 when I ordered my radioman to send the command, 'Attack!' He immediately began tapping out the pre-arranged code signal: 'TO, TO, TO...' Leading the whole group, Lieutenant Commander Murata's torpedo bombers headed downward to launch their torpedoes, while Lieutenant Commander Itayay's fighters raced forward to sweep enemy fighters from the air. Takahashi's dive-bomber group had climbed for altitude and was out of sight. My bombers, meanwhile, made a circuit toward Barbers Point to keep pace with the attack schedule. No enemy fighters were in the air, nor were there any gun flashes from the ground. The effectiveness of our attack was now certain, and a message, 'Surprise attack successful!' was accordingly sent to *Akagi* [Flagship of the Japanese attack fleet] at 0753. The message was received by the carrier and duly relayed to the homeland.

The attack was opened with the first bomb falling on Wheeler Field, followed shortly by dive-bombing attacks upon Hickam Field and the bases at Ford Island. Fearful that smoke from these attacks might obscure his targets, Lieutenant Commander Murata cut short his group's approach toward the battleships anchored east of Ford Island and released torpedoes. A series of white waterspouts soon rose in the harbor. Lieutenant Commander Itaya's fighters, meanwhile, had full command of the air over Pearl Harbor. About four enemy fighters which took off were promptly shot down. By 0800 there were no enemy planes in the air, and our fighters began strafing the airfields.

My level-bombing group had entered on its bombing run toward the battleships moored to the east of Ford Island. On reaching an altitude of 3,000 meters, I had the sighting bomber take position in front of my plane. As we closed in, enemy antiaircraft fire began to concentrate on us. Dark gray puffs burst all around. Most of them came from ships' batteries, but land batteries were also active. Suddenly my plane bounced as if struck by a club.

When I looked back to see what had happened, the radioman said: 'The fuselage is holed and the rudder wire damaged.' We were fortunate that the plane was still under control, for it was imperative to fly a steady course as we approached the target. Now it was nearly time for 'Ready to release,' and I concentrated my attention on the lead plane to note the instant his bomb was dropped. Suddenly a cloud came between the bombsight and the target, and just as I was thinking that we had already overshot, the lead plane banked slightly and turned right toward Honolulu. We had missed the release point because of the cloud and would have to try again.

While my group circled for another attempt, others made their runs, some trying as many as three before succeeding. We were about to begin our second bombing run when there was a colossal explosion in battleship row. A huge column of dark red smoke rose to 1000 meters. It must have been the explosion of a ship's powder magazine. [This was the Battleship *Arizona*] The shock wave was felt even in my plane, several miles away from the harbor. We

began our run and met with fierce antiaircraft concentrations. This time the lead bomber was successful, and the other planes of the group followed suit promptly upon seeing the leader's bombs fall. I immediately lay flat on the cockpit floor and slid open a peephole cover in order to observe the fall of the bombs. I watched four bombs plummet toward the earth. The target - two battleships moored side by side - lay ahead. The bombs became smaller and smaller and finally disappeared. I held my breath until two tiny puffs of smoke flashed suddenly on the ship to the left, and I shouted, 'Two hits!'

When an armor-piercing bomb with a time fuse hits the target, the result is almost unnoticeable from a great altitude. On the other hand, those which miss are quite obvious because they leave concentric waves to ripple out from the point of contact, and I saw two of these below. I presumed that it was battleship *Maryland* we had hit.' As the bombers completed their runs they headed north to return to the carriers. Pearl Harbor and the air bases had been pretty well wrecked by the fierce strafings and bombings. The imposing naval array of an hour before was gone. Antiaircraft fire had become greatly intensified, but in my continued observations I saw no enemy fighter planes. Our command of the air was unchallenged." *As the first wave of the attack made its way back to its carriers, Commander Fuchida remained over the target in order to assess damage and to observe the second wave attack. He returned to his carrier after the second wave successfully completed its mission.* References: Fuchida, Mitsuo and Masatake Okumiya, *Midway, the Battle that Doomed Japan* (1955); Lord, Walter, *Day of Infamy* (1957).

Questions

7. Inferring from the text, what is a "circuitous route?" Why would that choice have been made?

8. What two things was Fuchida looking for through his binoculars? Did he see them?
 - a.

 - b.

9. When the bombing started, what became certain?

10. How did the attack open?

11. Inferring from the text, what was America's status during the attack (or response to the attack) by 8am.

12. List 3 successes the Japanese had in their bombing runs.

The Attack on Pearl Harbor: The White House Reacts, 1941

President Roosevelt learned of the attack on Pearl Harbor Sunday afternoon. Later, Winston Churchill called to tell him that the Japanese had also attacked British colonies in southeast Asia and that Britain would declare war on Japan the next day. Roosevelt responded that he would ask Congress the following day to ask for a declaration of war against Japan. Churchill wrote: "To have the United States at our side was to me the greatest joy. Now at this very moment I knew the United States was in the war, up to the neck and in to the death. So we had won after all! ...Hitler's fate was sealed. Mussolini's fate was sealed. As for the Japanese, they would be ground to powder." On Monday, FDR signed the declaration of war granted by Congress. One day later both Germany and Italy, as partners of Japan in the Tripartite Pact, declared war on the US.

"My God, there's another wave of Jap planes over Hawaii right this minute."

Grace Tully was a secretary to President Roosevelt and published her experiences in the White House soon after his death. In the early afternoon of December 7, she was at her home when she received a phone call:

"On Sunday afternoon the telephone rang and Louise Hackmeister said sharply: 'The President wants you right away. There's a car on the way to pick you up. The Japs just bombed Pearl Harbor!' With no more words and without time for me to make a single remark, she cut off the connection. She had a long list of people to notify. In twenty minutes I was drawing into the White House driveway, already swarming with extra police and an added detail of Secret Service men, with news and radio reporters beginning to stream into the Executive Office wing and State, War and Navy officials hurrying into the House. Hopkins, Knox and Stimson already were with the Boss in his second floor study; Hull and General Marshall arrived a few minutes later.

Most of the news on the Jap attack was then coming to the White House by telephone from Admiral Stark, Chief of Naval Operations, at the Navy Department. It was my job to take these fragmentary and shocking reports from him by shorthand, type them up and relay them to the Boss. I started taking the calls on a telephone in the second floor hall but the noise and confusion were such that I moved into the President's bedroom. General Watson, Admiral McIntire, Captain Beardall, the Naval Aide, and Marvin McIntyre were on top of me as I picked up each phone call and they followed me as I rushed into Malvina Thompson's tiny office to type each message. All of them crowded over my shoulders as I transcribed each note. The news was shattering. I hope I shall never again experience the anguish and near hysteria of that afternoon.

Coding and decoding operations in Hawaii and in Washington slowed up the transmission. But the news continued to come in, each report more terrible than the last, and I could hear the shocked disbelief in Admiral Stark's voice as he talked to me. At first the men around the President were incredulous; that changed to angry acceptance as new messages supported and amplified the previous ones. The Boss maintained greater outward calm than anybody else but there was rage in his very calmness. With each new message he shook his head grimly and tightened the expression of his mouth. Within the first thirty or forty minutes a telephone circuit was opened from the White House to Governor Joseph B. Poindexter in Honolulu. The Governor confirmed the disastrous news insofar as he had learned it. In the middle of the conversation he almost shrieked into the phone and the President turned to the group around him to bark grimly: 'My God, there's another wave of Jap planes over Hawaii right this minute.'

Mr. Hull, his face as white as his hair, reported to the Boss that Nomura and Kurusu were waiting to see him at the exact moment the President called to tell him of the bombing. In a tone as cold as ice he repeated what he had told the enemy envoys and there was nothing cold or diplomatic in the words he used. Knox, whose Navy had suffered the worst damage, and Stimson were cross-examined closely on what had happened, on why they believed it could have happened, on what might happen next and on what they could do to repair to some degree the disaster. Within the first hour it was evident that the Navy was dangerously crippled, that the Army and Air Force were not fully prepared to guarantee safety from further shattering setbacks in the Pacific. It was easy to speculate that a Jap invasion force might be following their air strike at Hawaii - or that the West Coast itself might' be marked for similar assault. Orders were sent to the full Cabinet to assemble at the White House at 8:30 that evening and for Congressional

leaders of both parties to be on hand by 9:00 for a joint conference with the Executive group. Shortly before 5:00 o'clock the Boss called me to his study. He addressed me calmly:

'Sit down, Grace: I'm going before Congress tomorrow. I'd like to dictate my message. It will be short.' I sat down without a word; it was no time for words other than those to become part of the war effort. Once more he inhaled deeply, then he began in the same calm tone in which he dictated his mail. *'Yesterday, December 7, 1941-a day which will live in infamy-the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.'*

The entire message ran under 500 words, a cold-blooded indictment of Japanese treachery and aggression, delivered without hesitation, interruption, or second thoughts. 'I ask,' he concluded, 'that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday December 7, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire.' As soon as I transcribed it, the President called Hull back to the White House and went over the draft. Harry Hopkins added the next to the last sentence: 'With confidence in our armed forces-with the unbounded determination of our people-we will gain the inevitable triumph-so help us God.'

References: Grace Tully's account appears in Tully, Grace F.D.R. My Boss (1949); Churchill, Winston, The Second World War, vol. I (1959).

Questions

13. What caused Churchill to believe that Hitler and Mussolini would be defeated?

14. Why did Germany and Italy declare war on America after Pearl Harbor?

15. Surmise how receptive, or not, Congress was to FDR's speech to ask Congress to declare war. Why was that the case?

16. Describe the scene and atmosphere when Grace was trying to get all the information to present to FDR. Why was this so?

17. In another draft, the phrase "world history" was used instead of infamy. Explain the difference in meaning, or impact, for the reader between world history and infamy.

18. Re-write this statement in your own words: 'With confidence in our armed forces-with the unbounded determination of our people-we will gain the inevitable triumph-so help us God.'

Overarching and Comparison Questions—continue your answers on the back if you need more space

19. Lacking modern technology, how did the American people find out about what happened at Pearl Harbor? Would there have been differences in how information was received by an upper class person living in the middle of New York City versus a poor farmer in the middle of Nebraska? Why or why not?

20. How would news spread if Pearl Harbor happened today? Write an example of a Facebook status, tweet, or Instagram post one might read. Would there be a difference in how a rich or poor person learned the information today? Why or why not?

21. Even though these accounts represent 3 points of view, they are about the same event. Try to find 2 similarities between the accounts.

22. Identify 3 key differences between accounts and explain why each perspective offers such different recollections.

23. There were more than just 3 points of view that day. Describe the reaction to Pearl Harbor from the point of view of a soldier, government official, or civilian from Germany, Britain, France, Russia, Switzerland, Spain, or Egypt. You should write at least 3 unique (yet historically plausible) items in your answer.