

## A TYPICAL SUNDAY – December 7, 1941

BY BOBBIE SUE SHELTON

On Sunday morning, December 7, 1941 the raid on Pearl Harbor, by the Japanese, was one of the great defining moments in history. In President Roosevelt's address on December 8th at 12:30 p.m. to Congress and to the Nation, via radio, called it "a date which will live in infamy". The Senate responded to this address with a unanimous vote in support of war and at 4 p.m. that same afternoon, President Roosevelt signed the declaration of war.

Eighteen months earlier, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had transferred the United States Fleet to Pearl Harbor, as a presumed deterrent to Japanese aggression. The Japanese military, deeply engaged in the seemingly endless war it had started against China in mid-1937, badly needed oil and other raw materials. Commercial access to these was gradually curtailed, as the conquests continued. In July 1941, the Western powers effectively halted trade with Japan. From then on, as the desperate Japanese schemed to seize the oil and mineral-rich East Indies and Southeast Asia, a Pacific war was virtually inevitable.

By late November 1941, with peace negotiations clearly approaching an end, informed U. S. officials believed, through an ability to read Japan's diplomatic codes, fully expected a Japanese attack into the Indies, Malaya and probably the Philippines. Completely unanticipated was the prospect



William and Frances Haynes

that Japan would attack east, as well.

The U. S. Fleet's Pearl Harbor base was reachable by an aircraft carrier force, and the Japanese Navy secretly sent one across the Pacific with greater aerial striking power than had ever been seen on the world's oceans. Its planes hit before 8 a.m. on that Sunday morning. Within a short time several of the battleships at Pearl Harbor were sunk or sinking and much damage occurred to others. Soon after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japanese plans eliminated much of the American Air Force in the Philippines and a Japanese Army was ashore in Malaya. According to records, the destruction of the "sneak attack" on Pearl Harbor included: 5 battleships sunk, 3 damaged; 2 destroyers sunk, 1 damaged; 1 other ship sunk, 3 damaged; 188 aircraft destroyed, 155 damaged; 2345 military and 57 civilians killed; 1247 military and 35 civilians wounded, 4 midget submarines sunk, 1 run a ground, 29 aircraft destroyed, 55 airmen, 9 submariners killed and 1 captured . . . .

Approximately 1 1/2 years earlier, a recent graduate of Chapel Hill High School, William Houston Haynes, was considering, what he felt were his options, of either going to the State Teachers College in Murfreesboro (now MTSU) or the military. He decided on the military. Since a peacetime draft was being discussed in Washington, William felt, rather waiting to be drafted in the Army, he would join the Navy. On June 22, 1940, this eighteen year old, traveled to Nashville and enlisted in the Navy. His first assignment was in Norfolk, Virginia, training at the Naval Training Station. His other duties, during the next six years, included serving on the destroyer, USS CONYINGHAM DD-371, and aircraft carriers USS CROATAN CVA-25 and the USS HORNET CV-12.

On that infamous day, December 7th, 1941, William Haynes was fulfilling his duties on the destroyer, USS Conyningham DD-371, docked in the Pearl Harbor area.

Here is an account of that day in William's own words, from memory permanently etched in his mind.....

December 7, 1941, was a typical Sunday for naval personnel in the Pearl Harbor operating area. I was serving aboard a destroyer, the USS Conyningham, and was tied up along side a destroyer tender which was supplying us with water and electricity while we checked the boilers, engines and

other equipment.

I had finished breakfast about seven and another sailor and myself walked to the back of the ship when we noticed a column of smoke rising from the vicinity of Hickam Field (an army air base), and I remarked to him that we might as well go to the quarters, as we could have to go and fight the fire. About that time a low flying plane came from toward Ford Island, the navy air base, where most of our battleships were anchored, and as it banked around, two rising suns were highly visible. I realized what was taking place and ran to the quarterdeck to inform the person on watch, that the Japanese were attacking. He just as quickly informed me, that I was crazy. At that time, no one believed the Japanese would try anything like this, for we were supposed to be superior to them, in all aspects.

By this time, however, a few ships were beginning to fire back and shortly all hell broke loose. Smoke and fire was obscuring Ford Island from the burning and sinking ships. We were shooting at them, by this time, with five-inch AA guns and 50 caliber machine guns, which soon burned up from lack of cooling water. Cruisers were firing their six inch and eight inch guns at them, also. We could see them drop their bombs and shot several down, but they had accomplished their mission and after that started making level bombing runs. Some were turned loose over us, but fortunately they missed. After this, the action slowed and by noon it was over.

Everywhere we looked, there was fire and destruction. Huge bubbles of air and water were rising from the ships that had flopped over. Every now and then, one of our planes would fly into the area and a nervous gunner would open up and then everything would start shooting at it. Several of them were shot down, also.

We got the ship underway that afternoon and headed out to sea. When it got dark, we could see the fires burning. It reminded me of the sugar cane fields around the harbor, that were set on fire to burn the foliage off, before harvesting.

Everyone was tired, and discouraged, but this was only the beginning of a long road of island-by-island and ship-by-ship trail to end some four years later.

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William was discharged June 22, 1946 and



William Houston Haynes - USN

was honored with the following significant awards; American Defense Service Medal, Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal W/11 stars, European. He only returned home for a visit three times from 1940-1946.

William's parents, Roy Houston and Carrie Haynes, had two other sons who also served our country. John Haynes served in the Korean War and Lawrence Haynes in the Vietnam War. During the Korean War, William was also called back into service for a period of time. Mrs. Haynes saved every letter she received from her sons while they were away, during the wars. William has in his possession, the letter he wrote home after the bombing, to let his family know, he was o.k.

William returned to the Chapel Hill area and married Frances Hill, daughter of Rice and Susie Hill. They celebrated their 59th wedding anniversary on September 30th 2008.

William and Frances have a son, William "Bill" Houston Haynes Jr., who married Kathy Arnold, three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

In 1958, the Haynes family moved to Eagleville from Chapel Hill. William worked for Heil Quaker and retired from State Farm in Murfreesboro after 27 years of service. Frances served as an Eagleville substitute mail carrier for a period of time. William and Frances keep very active. They may be retired, but it's a very busy retirement.

World War II brought about special issues of one-dollar bills in 1942. Special \$1 silver certificates were issued for Hawaii in case of a Japanese invasion. HAWAII was printed vertically on the left and right side of the obverse and also horizontally across the reverse. The seal and serial numbers were changed to brown. This type of note could be declared worthless if they fell into enemy hands. This was the method of payment given to the United States service personnel during WWII and often referred to as "Invasion Money".

