



H-Gram 001: 7 December 1941—Pacific and Atlantic

17 November 2016

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1. Pearl Harbor

At Dawn We Slept was the title of one of the most influential books about the disastrous Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on the morning of 7 Dec 1941, "a date which will live in infamy" as President Franklin Roosevelt called it in his declaration of war speech. However, I respectfully disagree with the premise of the title, as it gives the impression that the U.S. Navy was laying around the beach drinking Mai Tai's and was totally unprepared for the outbreak of war. The reality is somewhat different. To the extent that anyone in the Navy in Hawaii was asleep the morning of 7 December, it was a sleep of exhaustion from months of intensive exercises and preparations for a war that everyone in a position of senior leadership knew was imminent, particularly the commander-in-chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, Admiral Husband Kimmel. The story of Pearl Harbor as it is now usually told in popular culture, that the U.S. was not expecting to be attacked, has led to a sense of complacency today; the sense that we could never be so stupid or



Japanese Navy Type 99 Carrier Bomber (Val) in action during the Pearl Harbor attack (80-G-32908).

unaware as we were back then. The reality is that the story of Pearl Harbor actually represents the razor thin line between defeat and victory against a highly capable adversary. It is a story of incredibly intense effort to get ready by some very smart people, with decisions that were made with great deliberation and purpose, some of which proved incorrect, but were not due to complacency. It is a story of an incredible effort to be ready, that was heartbreakingly close to success, but that still failed. And it should also be noted that virtually every carrier strike in WWII, U.S., Japanese and British, achieved tactical surprise, as did the multiple exercise carrier strikes conducted on Pearl Harbor in the inter-war years. (see attachment H-001-1 for more info related to U.S. Navy preparations for war.)

Readiness. The ship whose duty it was to be on alert that morning, was on alert, and performed her duty in an extraordinarily effective and efficient manner. The USS Ward (DD-139) sank a Japanese midget submarine (launched from mother submarine I-20) attempting to gain access to the harbor a little over an hour before the air raid commenced (but an hour after the Japanese strike had already launched.) In doing so, the USS Ward fired the first shot of the battle, the first U.S. shot of WWII in the Pacific, and with her second shot achieved the first kill. Well before the attack, in response to extensive intelligence pointing toward an outbreak of hostility in the Far East and a build-up of Japanese submarines in the Marshall Islands, Admiral Kimmel had on his own initiative, and without consulting Washington, issued orders that any submarine operating in the restricted area in the approaches to the harbor, and not under positive surface escort, was to be sunk without need to refer to higher authority. Kimmel also directed that any submarine prosecution tactical communications be conducted in the clear, to ensure the widest situational awareness amongst the forces at Pearl Harbor. The duty patrol ship, the USS Ward, was manned almost entirely by enlisted reservists from the Minnesota Naval Reserve, who had been activated on 21 Jan 41 and deployed on 23 Jan 41, to bring the Ward, inactive since WWI, into operational status. The ship's CO, LT William Outerbridge (USNA '27), had been in command less than two days, but nevertheless acted immediately and decisively to attack the submarine as soon as it was spotted by the supply ship USS Antares (AG-10) attempting to trail her into the harbor at 0645, coordinating with a PBY Catalina flying boat as he did. Closing the sub at 20 knots, Ward opened fire with 4" gun #1 (bow) at 100yds and just missed over the sub's conning tower. Gun #3 (amidships, starboard) fired at 50yds and scored a direct hit at the base of the conning tower, which proved fatal, and was a feat of gunnery greeted with some degree of skepticism until the sub was found in 2002. As Ward passed between the submarine and the Antares, she rolled four depth charges over the

stern, which detonated 100' under the sub, which was observed to roll over and sink. The PBY dropped depth charges on the datum as well. At 0653, Outerbridge passed the first of several clear voice and coded messages, with his second message in the clear stating what he hoped was unambiguous, "we have attacked, fired upon, and dropped depth charges upon submarine operating in the defensive sea area." While previous false reports had been numerous, firing on a target was something new. The watch officer ashore reacted with alacrity, and the duty destroyer USS Monaghan was quickly notified to get underway and assist. However, a linear, sequential notification process was slowed by "busy signals" and multiple requests to have the Ward re-confirm the report before passing it up the chain. Nevertheless Kimmel was notified at 0735, cancelled his regular golf game with General Short (unlike in the movie Pearl Harbor), and was on his way into the headquarters in reaction to the report when the air attack commenced at 0755. (see attachment H-001-2 for more on the USS Ward)

Valor. Although Pearl Harbor was a devastating tactical defeat resulting in 2,403 U.S. military and 68 U.S. civilian deaths, the vast majority of U.S. Sailors responded immediately and in many cases with extraordinary acts of bravery, many of which were unrecorded due to the deaths of so many witnesses. Even so, Navy personnel were awarded 15 Medals of Honor, 51 Navy Crosses, and (somewhat anomalously) four Navy-Marine Corps Medals; the most medals for bravery under fire for a one-day action is U.S. naval history. Medal of Honor recipients included; Rear Admiral Isaac Kidd and Captain Franklin Van Valkenburgh, killed at their post on the bridge of USS Arizona (BB-39) when she exploded; Captain Mervyn Bennion, skipper of the battleship USS West Virginia (BB-48), who attempted to continue to fight his ship even after being mortally wounded by shrapnel; Commander Cassin Young, skipper of the repair ship USS Vestal (AR-4) moored alongside the

Arizona, blown clear off the bridge of his ship into the water, nevertheless climbed back on board and got his sinking ship underway and beached it so it would not be an obstruction. Other Medals of Honor included Chief Boatswain Edwin Hill of the USS Nevada (BB-36), the only battleship to get underway during the attack, jumped into the water, swam to the mooring pier, cast off the lines, swam back to the Nevada and got on board, and was leading actions on the forecastle in preparation to beach the ship, which had attracted numerous Japanese dive bombers, when he was killed by strafing and bomb explosions. Among the Navy Crosses was Ensign Joe Taussig, Jr. (son of Commander, and later VADM, Joe Taussig of WWI "we are ready now" fame) who continued to direct the Nevada's anti-air defenses even with a leg amputating wound. Another Navy Cross was awarded to Messman Third Class Doris Miller, for aiding the dying Captain Bennion on West Virginia under fire, before manning a .50 cal machine gun, on which he had not been trained, and assisting in the downing of more than one Japanese aircraft. Miller was the first African American Sailor to receive the Navy Cross, and of note, Miller's actual battle station, one of the 5" gun mounts, was destroyed by one of the first torpedoes to hit West Virginia, which is why he ended up on the bridge. (see attachment H-001-3 for more of valor at Pearl Harbor)

2. "Neutrality" Patrol

For those in the Atlantic, although 7 December is marked as the entry of the U.S. into WWII, the fact is that the U.S. Navy was already in an undeclared shooting war with Nazi Germany at sea well before that. President Roosevelt and other senior U.S. and political leadership were convinced that England could not be allowed to fall. U.S. Navy leaders were particularly concerned about the possibility that the Royal Navy could fall into Nazi hands (as did most of the French Navy, before the British unilaterally sank most of it) which would dramatically increase the naval threat to the United States. As a result the U.S. pressed the envelope

on "neutrality" and in many cases technically exceeded it, and multiple such "violations" were cited in Germany's declaration of war against the U.S. after Pearl Harbor. In agreement with the British, U.S. Navy assets were escorting trans-Atlantic convoys across "our side" of the Atlantic as far as Iceland before handing them off to British escorts, frustrating German U-boats, who were under orders not to attack U.S. warships, although identification could be challenging (especially after we "loaned" the British 50 WWI-vintage four-piper destroyers.) On 10 April 1941, USS Niblack (DD-424) dropped depth charges on a German U-boat without result, but arguably the first U.S. "shot" of WWII. On 4 Sep 41, USS Greer (DD145) was prosecuting U-652 and providing information to a British patrol bomber, which dropped depth charges on the submarine. U-652 retaliated by firing a torpedo at Greer, which missed, and Greer responded with an unsuccessful depth charge attack. At the time, U.S. Navy ROE allowed passing tactical data to the British, but otherwise limited U.S. forces to self-defense. The Greer incident resulted in new ROE approved by President Roosevelt, which became known as the "shoot-on-sight" order allowing U.S. ships to attack any U-boat detected. On 17 October, USS Kearney (DD-432) responded to a wolf-pack attack that had overpowered the Canadian escorts of a convoy and conducted several depth charge attacks on German U-boats before being hit and damaged by a torpedo fired by U-568, killing 11 U.S. Sailors and wounding 22 more. As the conflict continued to escalate, during daylight on 31 October, USS Reuben James (DD-245) positioned herself between an ammunition ship and a German wolf-pack, and was hit by a torpedo from U-552 intended for a merchant ship (so said the Germans). The torpedo detonated the forward magazine, blowing the bow off the ship, and causing the Reuben James to sink within 5 min. Only 44 enlisted Sailors and no officers survived of her crew of 136 enlisted and seven officers. At the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the U.S. political and military leadership viewed the Atlantic Theater as paramount, and numerous

naval assets, including aircraft carriers and battleships were diverted from the Pacific Fleet. In particular, the priority basing of long-range patrol aircraft to the Atlantic was a critical factor in the acute shortage of such aircraft (and trained crews and parts) at Pearl Harbor which contributed significantly to the Japanese surprise.

3. Featured Photo

Gun from USS Ward: see attachment H-001-4.



The forward magazines of USS Arizona (BB-39) explode after she was hit by a Japanese bomb, 7 December 1941. Frame clipped from a color motion picture taken from on board USS Solace (AH-5) (80-G-K-13513).

H-001-1: Pearl Harbor, 7 December 1941

H-Gram 001, [Attachment 1](#)
Samuel J. Cox, Director NHHC
17 November 2016

The following is not intended to be a comprehensive account of Pearl Harbor, nor to whitewash the numerous errors of judgment and failures of process that occurred across all levels of the U.S. chain-of-command from the President to the tactical level. Over time, the lessons of

history tend to get distilled to a “bumper sticker” level, when the reality is far more complex and nuanced...and many times the conventional wisdom bumper sticker is just plain wrong. There is no question that the United States and the Navy were not prepared for war, despite the fact that Navy leaders well-understood that U.S. diplomacy and economic embargos were pushing the Japanese toward initiating hostilities. Navy leaders kept arguing for our diplomats to back off in order to buy more time. The commanders at Pearl Harbor were anticipating war far more than they were ever given credit for. Hopefully this will stimulate you and your Sailors to want to know more.

Things You Might Not Have Heard About Pearl Harbor:

Vice Admiral Nagumo's post-attack report stated that after the first five minutes U.S. AAA fire became so intense that it effectively negated the effect of surprise. The fact that more Japanese planes weren't shot down (9 on the first wave, 20 on the second wave) had more to do with the ineffectiveness of the weapons being used (.50 cal with too-short range, insufficient numbers of jam-prone 1.1" quad AAA guns, 5" guns that couldn't elevate enough to counter dive bombers, large numbers of dud rounds) than due to surprise. Japanese sources reported astonishment at the volume of fire put up by U.S. ships at Pearl Harbor, and the increasing intensity and accuracy was a major factor in Nagumo's decision not to send a "third wave." The U.S. shipboard 5" guns, which became active mostly on the second wave, fired over 3,100 rounds, which actually accounted for the majority of U.S. civilian deaths (all the damage in Honolulu was from U.S. AAA returning to earth.) The deficiencies in AAA were well known to Navy leaders in Washington, demonstrated in exercises at sea, but uncorrected until late 1942 with the introduction of Bofors 40mm, Oerlikon 20mm, and 5" with proximity fuses. Due to the pre-war budget-driven paucity of "live-fire" training, the large number of defective rounds to come as an unpleasant surprise to the defenders at Pearl Harbor. The Japanese torpedo planes that attacked Battleship Row (all in the first wave) also rolled in five minutes before planned, and even so, seven of the last nine were shot down; had they been on schedule, their losses to U.S. AAA would have been even greater.

The known AAA deficiency of the U.S. ships (based on exercise experience) was a principle factor in why the battleships were in port rather than at sea ("Sunday" had little to do with it.) The two U.S. carriers (USS *Lexington* (CV-2) and *Enterprise* (CV-6)) in the mid-Pacific were away on higher-priority national tasking to deliver U.S. Marine aircraft (stripped from Pearl Harbor

defenses) to Midway and Wake Island to support the transit of B-17 bombers to the Philippines in a hastily conceived change of national strategy to use bombers to deter Japanese attack against the Philippines. The original orders called for the carriers to carry and launch U.S. Army Air Force fighters (also stripped from Pearl Harbor) but Admiral Kimmel succeeded in convincing Washington that was a dumb idea. Without carrier air cover, the battleships at sea were considered to be highly vulnerable to both air and submarine attack, and the lack of carrier air cover was the principle reason Kimmel brought the fleet in, and in the event the ships were sunk, they wouldn't be lost in deep water with most of their crews. In Pearl Harbor, the responsibility of air defense was with the Army (Navy was responsible for long range reconnaissance.) The Army's capability to defend Pearl Harbor against air attack was a known serious deficiency, one that the Army commander in Hawaii, General Short, had lobbied hard to correct but had been overridden by Washington due to higher priority elsewhere. Despite knowing this, Kimmel reasoned that having the ships in port with some air cover was better than being at sea with no air cover (which disabuses the notion that "battleship admirals" just didn't get it.)

Because of the known deficiency in Army air defense (minimal AAA and many obsolete aircraft) Kimmel directed the ships in port maintain a higher status in AAA readiness than they would normally have been at. Although the stories of ammunition being "locked up" (which was true for ships in repair status) have become common lore, a quarter of the fleet's .50 cal AA were manned and ready, and reacted almost immediately. The 5" guns came on line quickly, but too late to counter the torpedo bombers which led the first wave (which were most vulnerable to fire from the 5" guns) and largely ineffective against the dive and high-level bombers. For every story of naval personnel being dumfounded that they were under attack, there are more where naval personnel

instantly grasped what was happening; the signal for air attack was being hoisted as the first bomb was falling on Ford Island, and most ships began responding with the capability they had almost immediately (although the gun crews were actually well-trained and drilled, the .50 cal were just not particularly effective). The ships were more fully manned than they normally would have been; 70% of the officers and almost all enlisted were aboard ships in operational status. (Thanksgiving leave and liberty had been cancelled; Kimmel's staff had been at work late Saturday - the fleet was not in "holiday routine." Of note, after Admiral Nimitz assumed command, he carefully reviewed Admiral Kimmel's inport air defense plan and chose not to change any of it, reasoning that it was as well-thought out as could be given the system limitations.

Admiral Kimmel, and his predecessor, Admiral Richardson, were well aware that Pearl Harbor was potentially vulnerable to air attack (contrary to popular lore). In at least four major fleet battle problems in the 1920's and 1930's (and numerous smaller exercises,) U.S. carriers had "attacked" Pearl Harbor and achieved surprise every time. Admiral Richardson was fired by President Roosevelt for vociferously arguing that putting the Pacific Fleet in Pearl Harbor was a provocation and a vulnerability rather than a deterrent to the Japanese, and also lacked the support/supply infrastructure of the Pacific Fleet's then home ports of San Pedro and Long Beach. The Pacific Fleet had deployed to Hawaii as part of an exercise in 1940 and had been ordered by President Roosevelt to stay (Imagine three carriers going out on RIMPAC and being directed to stay in Hawaii indefinitely, with no families or preparation and insufficient support infrastructure.) When Kimmel assumed command, he lobbied continuously and vigorously for more long-range reconnaissance, more air defense capability, and even barrage balloons and torpedo nets. Almost none of what Kimmel requested was forthcoming, due to the

higher priority of the Atlantic, or because the U.S. Navy didn't have the capability yet.

The critical thing that Admiral Kimmel did not know (and no American knew) was that only at the 11th hour in late October had the Japanese figured out, through extensive trial and error, a torpedo fin configuration that would enable torpedoes to be launched from aircraft in water as shallow as Pearl Harbor. Kimmel anticipated a bomb threat, that barring a lucky hit like the one on the *Arizona*, could damage a battleship, but wasn't considered near as lethal as a torpedo. Kimmel also was not anticipating an attack of the scale of Pearl Harbor; the first time the Japanese ever launched a six-carrier strike was 7 Dec 1941, even they hadn't practiced it. Kimmel, along with everyone else in the U.S. Navy at the time, "mirror imaged" Japanese capability in believing their carriers would operate as ours, in single carrier task groups. Many others woefully underestimated Japanese capability, e.g. since our torpedoes couldn't be dropped in such shallow water, how could the Japanese with their "inferior" technology possibly do it?

Also contrary to lore, Kimmel and most other senior Navy leaders were very cognizant of the threat posed by carrier aviation. As early as 1916, the Navy General Board (the group of senior Navy Admirals that advised the Secretary of the Navy - eventually supplanted by the OPNAV staff) stated that whoever controlled the air at sea had a decisive advantage. During exercises in the 1930's however, the carriers were always "sunk," because they were highly vulnerable to the opposing carrier. The carriers were essentially viewed as a prizefighter with a knockout punch and a glass jaw, hence the continued focus on what the Navy viewed as a "balanced" fleet. Even the Japanese still viewed their battleships as the decisive force, even after the attack. Admiral Nagumo had a long list of reasons for not launching a third wave, but the primary one was that he did not know where the American carriers were and he assumed (erroneously) that we knew

where he was, which made him acutely vulnerable to surprise attack by the American carriers.

The location of the Japanese carriers, particularly the big fleet carriers, was the highest priority for U.S. Naval Intelligence in the Pacific in the year leading up to Pearl Harbor, and the intelligence organization had gone to 24/7/365 manning (normal now, but unheard of then) months before the attack in response to rising tensions. In the weeks before the attack, U.S. naval intelligence knew that we had lost track of the carriers, a fact of great concern, but something that had happened several times before for up to three weeks in the preceding year. Although Japanese OPSEC was not perfect, they did not make themselves an easy target to track, ever. Kimmel was so concerned about that lack of locating data on the carriers, that he personally visited the basement location of Station HYPO (under the command of Commander Joe Rochefort, who worked for OP-20G (in Naval Communications) in Washington, not for Kimmel) which was also unheard of, to understand exactly which codes were being read, and how the traffic analysis process worked. At the morning staff meeting on 2 Dec 41, Kimmel said to his Fleet Intelligence Officer, LCDR Eddie Layton words to the effect, "do you mean to tell me the Japanese carriers could be rounding Diamond Head now and we wouldn't know it?" Layton responded with, "Yes, but I would have hoped they would have been spotted by now."

Two weeks prior the attack on Pearl Harbor, in response to rising tensions and even before the 27 November "War Warning" message, Admiral Kimmel directed the Pacific Fleet in Exercise 191. The exercise plan called for the USS *Lexington* (acting as "Black" Force) to proceed two hundred miles north of Oahu and launch a strike against "White Base" (Pearl Harbor) to test air defense reaction, and also to be on the lookout in case the Japanese might be in the area. The exercise was cut short by directive from Washington to avoid any actions that might be interpreted by the

Japanese as provocative, as Washington belatedly came to the conclusion that "buying time" was necessary. Sources are in dispute as to whether Kimmel considered the north to be the primary threat sector, but this exercise (and the fact that previous exercise "surprise strikes" originated from the north, due to the far less dense shipping traffic) suggests that he did. As it turned out, the Japanese carrier force launched their strike from the same position as the *Lexington* did.

The U.S. had broken the primary Japanese diplomatic code ("Purple") and some lesser diplomatic codes. The U.S. was in the process of breaking the Japanese General Naval Operating Code (then referred to as the "5 Num" code, and later retroactively as the JN-25 series.) Sources conflict as to how much of the naval code the U.S. was reading before Pearl Harbor, but at best it wasn't much. The real point is that neither Kimmel nor Layton had access to Purple (also known as "Magic") intelligence, other diplomatic intercepts, or any JN-25 intelligence that might have existed. Some of the "conspiracy" books about Pearl Harbor postulate some sort of sinister intent on the part of Roosevelt, but the reality appears to be pure bureaucratic buffoonery. Kimmel and Layton sensed that there was intelligence they were not getting (and Gen MacArthur and ADM Hart in the Philippines were,) especially after they got a couple Purple-derived messages by accident in July, and kept requesting to receive such intelligence. The CNO, Admiral Stark (and others of the very few who were cleared) assumed that Kimmel was getting Purple traffic, or was told erroneously that he was, and no one followed up to be sure. The Purple traffic was so tightly compartmented that no one actually had the big picture; the few senior leaders with access each sifted through hundreds of raw decoded intercepts, with no overall assessment.

Within the Purple traffic, and the lesser diplomatic codes which were being decrypted very-time late, were plenty of indications that

would have alerted Kimmel and Layton that Pearl Harbor was a target. They did not receive any of it. Prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, there was a mountain of intelligence indicating that hostilities were imminent in the Far East between Japan and Britain and probably the United States. In no message from Washington that Kimmel received, including the 27 November "War Warning," was Pearl Harbor ever explicitly mentioned as a possible target. The fact that Washington was also directing that fighters be stripped from Hawaii, over Kimmel's and Short's protests, strongly suggested to Kimmel that Washington was not concerned about an attack on Pearl Harbor.

After the attack, the traditional American search for someone to blame (besides the Japanese) commenced in earnest. Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox arrived soon after the attack to investigate. The Army relieved General Short first, and in the spirit of "jointness" the Navy followed suit with Kimmel on 17 Dec 1941. Kimmel expected to be relieved and revert to his "permanent rank" of two-star RADM. (It was fairly common for 3 and 4 stars to accept follow on positions at 2 star rank. (RADM Claude Bloch, the Commander of the 14th Naval District (Hawaii) at the time of the attack, and who worked for both Kimmel and CNO Stark, had previously been the four-star Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Fleet in 1938-40.)) Kimmel expected to be offered a follow-on job where he could contribute to the war, but that never happened and he eventually reluctantly resigned. The Roberts Commission in 1942, which was the first of numerous investigations, was conducted with none of the rules of evidence or rights of the accused (e.g., right to review evidence against them, etc.) of a court martial, yet concluded that Kimmel and Short were guilty of "dereliction of duty," resulting in a feeding frenzy by the press, public, and politicians. With no opportunity to appeal, Kimmel was accused of failure to conduct adequate long-range reconnaissance, despite the fact that because of acute shortages of aircraft,

trained crews and especially spare parts, Kimmel could only sustain a fraction of the coverage required - and the weather would have almost certainly prevented discovery of the Japanese anyway, even if Kimmel had been prescient enough to launch his few aircraft to the north on that particular morning. Kimmel repeatedly requested a court-martial in order to defend himself, but was denied. The primary reason was that a trial would have risked exposing the code-breaking effort that was considered (and really was) of paramount importance in winning the war. Another unstated reason is that a trial would have risked the reputations of many senior military and government officials in Washington, who were far more culpable of the failures that led to surprise at Pearl Harbor than Kimmel was.

If by this point you think that Admiral Kimmel was treated unfairly, you are in the company of Admirals Zumwalt, Stockdale, Crowe, Hayward, Turner, Holloway, McKee, Lawrence, and 28 other 3-4 stars who signed a petition in 1991 to posthumously promote Rear Admiral Kimmel to Admiral. So far it hasn't happened.

I am not going to attempt to address the numerous conspiracy theories about Pearl Harbor (it is very much a cottage industry) other than to say that the vast majority are based on little-to-no actual evidence, usually taken out of context, and much speculation. What can be said is that U.S. political and military leaders knew full well that the economic sanctions were backing the Japanese into a corner that would almost certainly result in an outbreak of war, and that the outbreak was imminent. No one expected an attack on as devastating scale as that at Pearl Harbor. Everyone grossly under-estimated Japanese capability and resolve, assuming that when the expected war came, we would easily clean their clock.

It should also be noted that the Japanese made numerous errors of judgment as well, and but for some lucky breaks for the Japanese, the battle

could have gone very differently. The many Japanese mistakes included the Air Strike Commander, Fuchida, botching the signal to the strike force as to whether surprise had been achieved or not, and which plan (surprise or no surprise) to execute, which significantly effected timing and targets. Most importantly, the Japanese apparently had no plan to take out the repair facilities, submarine base, and fuel storage facilities (all of which would play a critical role in their defeat) because most Japanese leaders believed the war would be too short for those to have an impact, and smoke from burning oil storage would just foul the range anyway. The Japanese, too, grossly underestimated their enemy.



Japanese midget submarine originally launched outside of Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 by submarine I-18. Photographed soon after its recovery near the entrance to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, July 1960. It had apparently been unable to enter the harbor as its torpedoes had not been fired (KN-2589).

H-001- 2: USS *Ward* (DD-139): The Rest of the Story

*H-Gram 001, [Attachment 2](#)
Samuel J. Cox, Director NHHC
17 November 2016*

LT William Outerbridge was awarded a Navy Cross (his first) for his actions in command of USS *Ward* on the morning of 7 December 1941.

USS *Ward* was subsequently converted to a fast transport (APD16), and 4"/50 #3 (which fired the

second shot, which hit and sank the Japanese midget submarine) was removed from the ship. Gun #1, which fired the first shot, remained on board, and is now at the bottom of the ocean off the Philippines. The #3 Gun was preserved due to its historic significance, and as a result of an intense lobbying effort by the Minnesota congressional delegation was loaned to the state of Minnesota, where most of the enlisted crew came from, where it remains on outdoor display just west of the Veteran's Services Building in Saint Paul, Minnesota,

USS *Ward* earned nine battle stars as a destroyer and fast transport during WWII.

On 7 Dec 1944, the *Ward* was hit by a kamikaze (a twin-engine "Betty" bomber) off the Philippines. With the fire out-of-control, the crew of *Ward* was ordered to abandon ship (which they did reluctantly) but the ship did not sink. The destroyer USS *O'Brien* (DD-725) was ordered to sink the *Ward* with gunfire. The commanding officer of the USS *O'Brien* was Commander William Outerbridge, former skipper of the *Ward*.

The Japanese midget-submarine sunk by the *Ward*, launched from the mother submarine *I-20*, was one of five that attempted to enter the harbor that morning. After multiple fruitless searches over the years, the midget submarine (20) was finally found in 2002 by a research team from the University of Hawaii, about three miles outside the 1941 Pearl Harbor restricted zone. The submarine was resting upright and had no visible damage other than the shell-hole at the base of the conning tower. Based on the configuration of the dive planes and rudder, the current theory is that the midget sub sank slowly and drifted underwater a considerable distance before settling rather gently onto the bottom at 1300 feet.

Of the five Japanese midget submarines, one definitely made it into the harbor, and a second probably did as well. The midget launched from *I-19* got hopelessly lost and eventually went aground on the east side of Oahu; one of the two crew was captured and became the first Japanese POW of the war; this submarine is now on display at the Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas. The midget launched by *I-18* was damaged by depth charges and abandoned by its crew; it was recovered from Keehi Lagoon (with its two torpedoes) in 1960 and returned to Japan where it is on display at the Eta Jima naval academy. The midget launched from *I-20* was sunk by the *Ward*. The midget launched by *I-22* made it into the harbor where it was fired upon by several ships before being rammed, depth charged and sunk by the USS

Monaghan (DD-345) the duty destroyer that had gotten underway in reaction to *Ward's* report; both torpedoes fired by the midget missed; the remains of the submarine were used as land-fill, and a later attempt to recover the crew abandoned due to toxic residue.

The midget submarine launched by *I-16* probably made it into the harbor, although this is not definitive. The submarine was finally found in 2009, both torpedoes expended, in a debris field off Oahu associated with the 1944 West Loch Disaster (an ammunition handling accident that sank six LST's and killed 163 naval personnel and that remained classified long after the war.) The current theory is that she fired her torpedoes at Battleship Row; one of the torpedoes that hit the USS *Oklahoma* (BB-37) was described as having significantly more explosive force than the others, possibly suggesting a submarine-launched torpedo which was much larger than aerial torpedoes. The submarine then wound up in West Loch, where the crew used their scuttling charge to sink themselves. The remains of the submarine were later scooped up with the wreckage from the disaster and dumped off Oahu. If this theory is true, it leaves unexplained which unit fired two torpedoes reported by the USS *St. Louis* (CL-49) as she was exiting the harbor just after the attack. (My theory would be that *I-70* was closer to the exit than the 10 miles she was supposed to be, and fired the torpedoes, but as she was subsequently sunk by aircraft from USS *Enterprise* (CV-6) on 10 Dec with no survivors we will never know.)

H-001-3: Navy Valor at Pearl Harbor

H-Gram 001, Attachment 3

Samuel J. Cox, Director NHHC

17 November 2016

Medals of Honor Awarded to Navy Personnel

Captain Mervyn Bennion – posthumous. USS *West Virginia*, commanding officer. Despite being mortally wounded, showed no concern but to continue fighting and save his ship.

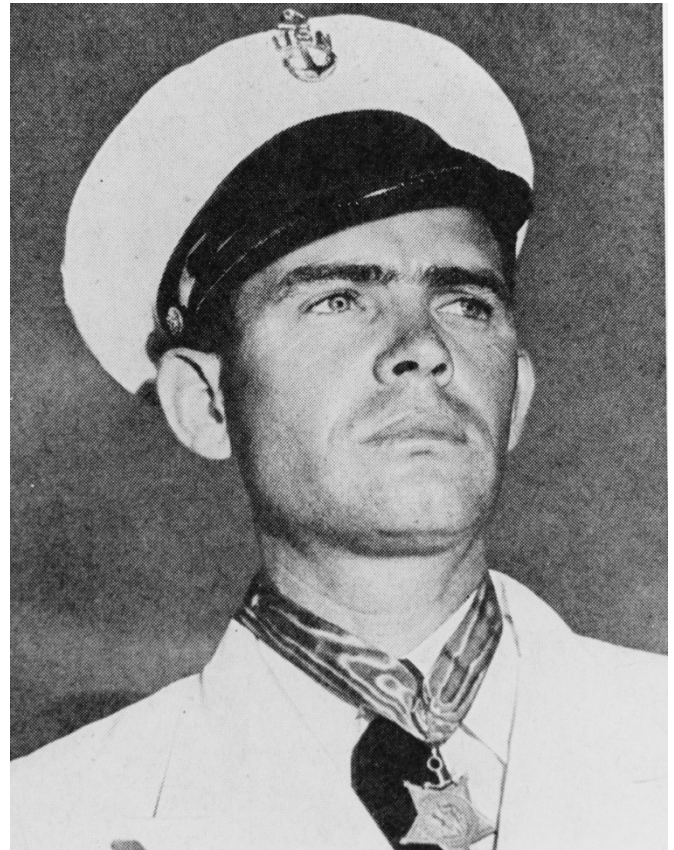
Chief John Finn. Naval Station Kaneohe Bay. Despite numerous painful wounds continued to man a .50 cal machine gun in the open continuously firing at Japanese aircraft despite intense strafing.

Ensign Francis Flaherty – posthumous. USS *Oklahoma*. Sacrificed his life to ensure remainder of his turret crew could escape.

Lieutenant Commander Samuel Fuqua. USS *Arizona*. As the senior surviving officer after the explosion that destroyed the *Arizona*, he remained on board directing damage control, firefighting and rescue efforts.

Chief Boatswain Edwin Hill – posthumous. USS *Nevada*. Swam back to the ship after casting off the lines. Subsequently, after directing his men to take shelter, he was killed by bomb explosions and strafing in an exposed position on the forecastle attempting to let go the anchors as the *Nevada* was beached.

Ensign Herbert Jones – posthumous. USS *California*. Despite fatal wounds, organized and led a party supplying ammunition to the anti-aircraft batteries.



Chief Aviation Ordnanceman John W. Finn, USN (NH 95448).

Rear Admiral Isaac Kidd – posthumous. USS *Arizona*. As Commander of Battleship Division One, he discharged his duties as Senior Officer Present Afloat (SOPA) until the *Arizona* blew up.

Gunner Jackson Pharris. USS *California*. Despite severe wounds, on his own initiative, set up a hand-supply for the anti-aircraft guns, and repeatedly risked his life to save other shipmates.

Radio Electrician (Warrant Officer) Thomas Reeves – posthumous. USS *California*. Passed ammunition by hand in a burning passageway to anti-aircraft guns after the mechanized hoists were put out-of-action, until overcome by smoke and fire.

Machinist Donald Ross. USS *Nevada*. Single-handedly kept the forward dynamo room

operating, after ordering his men to leave due to smoke, steam and heat, despite being blinded.

Machinist Mate First Class Robert Scott – posthumous. USS *California*. Remained at his post at an air compressor as it flooded to ensure the anti-aircraft guns had air as long as possible.

Chief Watertender Peter Tomich – posthumous. USS *Utah*. Remained at his post in the engineering plant of USS *Utah* as she capsized, securing boilers and ensuring the escape of all fireroom personnel.

Captain Franklin Van Valkenburgh – posthumous. USS *Arizona*. As Commanding Officer, valiantly fought his ship until killed in the magazine explosion.

Seaman First Class James Ward – posthumous. USS *Oklahoma*. Sacrificed his life so others in his turret crew could escape.

Commander Cassin Young. USS *Vestal*. As commanding officer of the *Vestal*, was blown overboard by the force of the Arizona blast, but returned to his ship and despite two more bomb hits, got his sinking vessel underway and moved to where it would not be an obstruction.



This photo (NH 97446) was taken of the USS Ward (DD-139) shortly after the Pearl Harbor attack. It shows the number three 4"/50 mount and its crew, consisting of Naval Reservists from Minnesota. This gun survives today and is located in a park near the grounds of the Minnesota state capitol. The original U.S. Navy official caption, as well as the plaque on the gun today, erroneously states that this gun fired the first shot during the Pearl Harbor raid. Gun #1 fired the first shot, which missed. Gun #3 fired the second shot, which hit and sank the Japanese midget submarine. USS Ward only fired two rounds during the engagement.

H-001-4: USS *Ward* (DD-139) Gun

H-Gram 001, [Attachment 4](#)
Samuel J. Cox, Director NHHC
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