

“A Date Which Will Live in Infamy”

By Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian

Seventy-five years ago President Franklin D. Roosevelt requested the support of Congress for a declaration of war, with the immortal words, “Yesterday, December 7, 1941—a date 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 attack began at 7:48 a.m., Hawaiian Time. Six Japanese aircraft carriers launched 353 planes in the invasion, resulting in the deaths of 2,403 Americans, and almost half as many wounded. Four U.S. Navy battleships were sunk, the remaining four sustained significant damage. Many other ships were sunk or damaged.

One of the four sunk battleships was the USS Arizona, resulting in the death of 1,177 crewmen and officers. Just 125 yards away was the USS Solace, and among the crew was Fairport’s Edward Van Scott. The Solace, a hospital ship, was not damaged in the attack. The ship’s lifeboats were immediately dispatched to rescue victims in the burning water of the harbor. Hundreds of wounded were brought to the USS Solace for treatment that day.

Less than 45 minutes after the invasion, Fairport’s Paul Earl received word of the attack while on the deck of the USS Chester, a Northampton-class cruiser, which was on route from Wake Island, back to Pearl Harbor at the time.

Edward Van Scott and Paul Earl survived the invasion of Pearl Harbor, but they had something else in common as well. Scott and Earl lived within sight of each other in Fairport. Van Scott kissed his wife goodbye and left behind his home at 38 Roselawn Avenue to serve his country. Across the street at 41 Roselawn Avenue, William and Ruth Earl bid farewell to their son Paul, shortly after his graduation from Fairport High School. Both Navy men survived the war, as did Paul Earl’s father, who joined the Navy as well.

At least two other Perinton men were stationed at Pearl Harbor at the time of the attack. Robert C. Granger served on the USS Maryland, a Colorado-class battleship which sustained damage and four deaths from two armor-piercing bombs during the attack. Most of the crew of over 1,080 were on board during the attack. Newspaper accounts at the time indicate John H. Freeman, Pharmacist, 2nd Class served on an unidentified battleship as well, although as of publication, I have not been able to verify he was on board during the attack.

A good friend of mine has organized an event, “Fairport Remembers Pearl Harbor, to be held on Wednesday, December 7th, at the Church of the Assumption at 20 East Avenue in Fairport. Veterans and the public are invited at 10:00 AM to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Pearl Harbor. A mass will follow at 11:15 AM.