

# **“A date which will live in infamy:” Portwood, America remembers Pearl Harbor Day**

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**ALTON** - Each year that passes, American citizens hold dear to their hearts the day of infamy, Dec. 7, 1941, the day of the bombing of **Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.**

**Carl Portwood**, 92, of Fosterburg, a Shell retiree and Army and Navy veteran, is one who never forgets Pearl Harbor Day.

Monday was the 74th anniversary of the Japanese attacks on the U.S. Naval fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, which propelled America into World War II. More than 2,400 Americans died on that day in American history and 1,700 were wounded. The U.S. lost 20 American ships and 300 airplanes. On the following day on Dec. 8, 1941, **U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt** delivered a speech to a joint session of Congress describing **Dec. 7, 1941**, as **“a date which will live in infamy.”** Those words have been used to describe that fateful day for years. Portwood, a native of **Eldred**, and his friends **Bob King and Max Griffith** were touched by that day and American history. As soon as Portwood and his two close friends were able, they entered to serve in June 1942 and all went their separate ways.



Portwood went to gunners mate school in the Great Lakes, and eventually was aboard the USS Birmingham. Griffith ended up on the USS Omaha and King had experience working in fuels, so he began working on a supply ship for a fleet.

Another one of their close friends – **Orville “Perk” Tribble of Eldred** made his way into the Army and eventually participated in D-Day. He received two Purple Hearts during his time of service. Portwood said he was always proud of the sacrifices that his close friend, Tribble, made in World War II.

Portwood, King and Griffith were always good friends their lives. Griffith farmed in Greene and Jersey Counties and King eventually made his way to Florida.

Portwood settled down eventually and became a Shell employee for many years. The Eldred native served in the Navy from June 1942 to April 1946. After he left the service, he started college, but within a month decided at that time it wasn't for him. “I don't think I learned a lot,” he said of that brief college experience.

He tried to re-enlist in the Navy with the same rank he left, but they wouldn't allow him to do that, so he walked a few doors down to the Army enlistment area and they guaranteed him a similar rank, so he joined his second branch of service.

He re-enlisted in 1947 and he eventually served in combat over in Korea during the Korean War. He said he didn't know anyone else who served both the Navy and Army and he said it was also a rarity for someone to have served in both World War II and the Korean War.



Many of those who served in

World War II, never lost their animosity to the Japanese, but Portwood sees the Japanese people today as like anyone here in this country.

“They are just common and ordinary people like us,” he said. “People depend on their leaders to make the right decision and they followed the path of their leaders in World War II. President Roosevelt had a way of telling the truth and we followed his leadership.”

Every year, when the Pearl Harbor anniversary comes around, Portwood reflects for a few moments and thinks of those who lost their lives on that day. He also thinks of many of his friends who lost their lives in both World War II and the Korean War. He also reminds himself that fewer and fewer World War II veterans remain alive.”

“You have to think when I entered the service in 1942, I was 19 years old and many of the people who served in World War II were already 23 or 24, so they would be 96 or 97 years old now,” he said. “Every day we lose more and more World War II veterans.”

As far as living in America, the dual veteran said with such pride: “This country is the only place in the world to be.”