

Dec. 7 and 8 play an important part of American history, vets say we should never forget those dates

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
December 8 2017 3:44 PM



EDWARDSVILLE - Thursday, Dec. 7, was the anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack, and Dec. 8, is the anniversary that President Franklin D. Roosevelt called the bombing of Pearl Harbor “a date that will live in infamy.”

The Japanese Imperial Navy Air Service attacked Naval Station Pearl Harbor in Honolulu, Oahu, Hawaii Territory, without warning and without a declaration of war, killing 2,403 American servicemen and injuring 1,178 on Dec. 7, 1941. The attack sank four U.S. battleships and damaged four others. Three cruisers were destroyed and one minelayer. There were 188 aircraft destroyed and 159 damaged on that day.

There were remembrances throughout the state on Thursday and one occurred at the Alton National Cemetery where Taps was performed. Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner participated in a wreath laying in the water of Lake Springfield on Thursday. It was the 76th annual ceremony to honor the heroism, service and sacrifice of the men who were at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on Dec. 7, 1941.

Locally, Dave Stout, a past Illinois VFW commander from Alton and member of the Alton VFW Post 1308, and others took part in a playing of Taps and a moment of silence remembering the event at Alton National Cemetery.

“You always remember the sacrifices the entire World War II generation made for the world, not just our country,” Stout said with pride. “The attack on Pearl Harbor was just an overt act of war and left us no choice but to get fully involved in the world wide event. Thursday was a day to remember our comrades who were at Pearl Harbor on that fateful day. It was a sad day when you look at the how this event helped trigger the outcome that changed the entire world in a 15-minute period. Millions died in World War II.”

Ron Eberhart is one of the coordinators of the Edwardsville Veterans Day Parade and former Post 199 American Legion commander.

He worries as time goes by and the date that will live in infamy passes further, that to some Pearl Harbor is ancient history.

“If they don’t pay attention to what happened there it is a serious problem,” he said. “I hope we have learned from what happened then and not just think of it as a thing of the past. There was an unfortunate set of circumstances at Pearl Harbor. We were trying to build up our military and we had much of the Pacific Fleet in the cross hairs of the empire of Japan.”

Eberhart continued and said he has a future hope: “Almost 3,000 died that day on Dec. 7 and it something to honor and remember. I hope America never forgets about Pearl Harbor Day or Dec. 8 when America declared war.”

Stout closed by saying, “It might sound cliché right now, but back then there was a massive evil in the world that needed to be eliminated and that generation did.”