

Pearl Harbor Anniversary Is Always Day Of Reflection For Naval Veteran Able And Other Veterans

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
December 8 2020 2:00 PM



ALTON - Each December 7, is a day of reflection for VFW Post 1308 Commander Wayne Able. Able is from a long line of family members, his dad, grandfather, and a brother, who served in the Navy. Able did the same thing on Monday, December 7, he

does each year, reflect on all who lost their lives and gave of their lives to save others during the tragic time.

Able was in the Navy from 1989 to 1993 and he also was in the Naval Reserves from 1994-1997.

He said he remembers some certain things from visiting Pearl Harbor. The most moving part was to see the name of his service brothers on the wall.

“The respect people give the Pearl Harbor memorial is something special,” he said. “You can’t believe the silence at the memorial. When you are standing there, very few people are talking at all.”

The attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, was a surprise attack by the Japanese Navy Air Service upon the United States against the naval base at Pearl Harbor in Honolulu, Hawaii, just before 8 in the morning that day.

The base was attacked by 353 Japanese aircraft in two waves, launched from six aircraft carriers. Of the eight U.S. battleships present, all were damaged and four sunk. All but the USS Arizona was raised and six were returned to service and went on to fight in the war. A total of 188 U.S. aircraft were destroyed, 2,403 Americans were killed and 1,178 wounded.

The Japanese only lost 29 aircraft and five midget submarines and 64 servicemen were lost.

The next day, the U.S. issued a declaration of war on Japan. On December 11, Germany and Italy each declared war on the U.S.

Able’s grandfather served in World War II in the Navy, but he said his grandfather rarely talked about it.

“It was something they just didn’t bring up back then,” he said.

Able said December 7 is a day the whole country should never forget. He said this year because of the COVID-19 Pandemic, it was difficult to organize any remembrance.

Able said there are still some World War II veterans in the VFW Post 1308.

“Those World War II members are always cherished when they come in,” he said. “There is very much respect for having them there and hearing their stories. It is great to have that history and be able to listen and talk to them.”

Able said the Pearl Harbor attack launched Americans into World War II, while the country was trying to remain neutral and stay out of it.

“My thoughts today go not only to the sailors lost but the nurses, doctors, and contract workers who worked nearly 24 hours a day to save who they could and make sure every person was recovered from the ships. It was an all hands on deck for civilians in Hawaii at that time, too. I think that day helped to unite our country.

“Oil is still dripping there today and if you look down you see the Arizona flat on the bay and Utah still demolished. You also see the USS Missouri standing there. Most of the ships were pulled out and they built them into better battleships. It is really a touching experience being at the Pearl Harbor Memorial.”