

USS Arizona Memorial

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

USS Arizona Memorial
Pearl Harbor, Hawai'i



Remembering the USS UTAH

*The men we took out . . .
that were dying . . . some of
'em maybe thirty years old,
calling their mama.
That shakes you up.*

-John Eichman, WT2c

Our Duty to Protect

"I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies," was each man's oath aboard the battleship USS *Utah*. On the morning of December 7, 1941 they honored that promise. During a fierce, Japanese surprise attack the men of the *Utah* fought to protect their ship, their country and each other—but many could not protect themselves. They were shocked and frightened. They were brave and resourceful. They were young men who never went home. It now falls to us to protect their memories and honor their sacrifice.

*We heard the
shrapnel hitting the
ground all around us.*

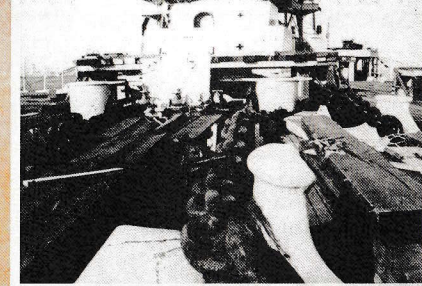
For nearly twenty years the *Utah* served as a training ship, honing the skills of countless U.S. servicemen. The *Utah* acted as a remote control target for other warships,



a stationary target for bombers, and a place where men sharpened their anti-aircraft gun marksmanship. Yet, on a ship solely dedicated to practice, rigor, and training—nothing could have prepared its men for the morning of December 7, 1941.

“I actually saw one of the Japanese planes come in, release the torpedo. . . . Then I felt the. . . reverberation,” remembers Clark Simons, MA13c. Two torpedoes later, with the ship rolling over sideways, the men abandoned ship—they had to get above deck. Officers stopped them as they came up, protecting them from planes strafing the deck. “I seen lieutenant . . . killed right in front of me. . . with a machine gun,” recalls John Eichman, WT2c. Wooden beams slid across the deck (above right) blocking exits and trapping men inside. They ran for the portholes; the smaller men squeezed through and slid down the ship’s hull, their backs shredded by jagged barnacles.

More danger waited outside as the *Utah* slowly capsized. Huge timbers crashed off of the deck and onto the crew swimming for safety. Fighter planes mowed them down as they slid down lines and fled along the bottom of the ship. More fortunate men covered behind debris amidst the chattering rain of bullets.



Massive timbers, placed on deck to protect the crew from practice bombs, slid off and crushed them in the water.

Back inside the *Utah*, a frothing, swirling, upside-down world of water engulfed the *Utah*'s men. They fiercely pounded the walls in hope of rescue. S.A. Szymanski, MM1c heard their pounding, grabbed a blowtorch, and headed into the fray. Blocking out the gunfire, he followed their tapping, cut into the hull, and rescued John Vaessen, F2c. Szymanski later received formal commendation for his heroism.

Others had no heroes. Clark Simmons remembers his friend George Smith, MA11c, “He aimed to please. He was going to make the navy his career. . . he was machine gunned . . . he had bullet holes in his chest.”

Dying so Others Might Live



U.S. NAVY HISTORICAL CENTER # 95929

Among the heroes of the *Utah* was Chief Watertender, Peter Tomich. He received the Medal of Honor for courage and disregard of his own safety. Tomich realized the ship was capsizing, yet remained at his post in the engineering plant. He worked feverishly to stabilize the ship’s boilers, for he knew an explosion would kill hundreds of his shipmates. After securing the boilers and hurrying those around him to safety, Tomich was out of time. He died inside the *Utah*, giving his life so others might live.



USAR PHOTO COLLECTION # 500

After years of searching, this Medal of Honor was finally awarded to the Tomich family on May 18, 2006, aboard the USS *Enterprise* in the Adriatic sea, near Peter's homeland.

We Regret to Inform You . . .

. . . your boys are never coming home.

Death of Fort Worth Youth at Pearl Harbor Is Revealed

STANDARD TIME INDICATED
RECEIVED AT
MAY 21 1942
FORT WORTH, TEXAS
(21)
TELEPHONE YOUR TELEGRAMS TO POSTAL TELEGRAPH

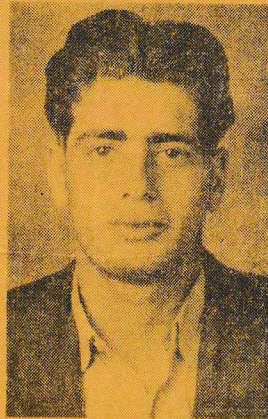
Postal Telegraph
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D250 D.BMA382 BM.WA350 LA550W 58 GOVT 6 EXWT XZOR=
RY PFDMY OL CHGES=DX WASHINGTON DC 10 707P
MRS ETHEL HOWARD
4657 WHITE SETTLEMENT ROAD FORTWORTH TEXAS=
1942 FEB 10 PM 6 56

AFTER EXHAUSTIVE SEARCH IT HAS BEEN FOUND IMPOSSIBLE TO LOCATE YOUR SON LEROY DENNIS APPRENTICE SEAMAN US NAVY AND HE HAS THEREFORE BEEN OFFICIALLY DECLARED TO HAVE LOST HIS LIFE IN THE SERVICE OF HIS COUNTRY AS OF DECEMBER SEVENTH NINETEEN FORTY ONE X THE DEPARTMENT EXPRESSES TO YOU ITS SINCEREST SYMPATHY=
REAR ADMIRAL RANDALL JACOBS CHIEF OF BUREAU OF NAVIGATION.

of Leroy Dennis L. Howard, son of L. Howard Road, was notified of his death not his family. North Side listed in the his mother, his father and his mother's name Adylene Fort Worth, Dennis, was River several ed a letter in which he him a pack- es and ex- of the family gifts he had



LEROY DENNIS.

COURTESY BILLY SCRIBNER

Misery in an Envelope

Families around the country could no longer protect their boys. They could merely wait for letters. Every trip to the mailbox, every ring of the doorbell, they hoped for something reassuring. Amelia Perez cherished her son's letter sent from Pearl Harbor in September 1941 (at right). Three months later, a navy telegraph arrived with much sadder news. Her boy, Rudy Martinez, was dead.

Amelia was not alone; telegraphs and newspaper articles about Leroy Dennis (above) and his shipmates arrived in communities across the country. Families in California, Iowa, New Hampshire, and beyond read their boys' names and saw their faces—and knew they were never coming home.

Dearest Mother -
Family got here and it's really warm! Had a good cruise but too slow. Really had a good time at home Mom, everyone treated me swell, why - I don't know! Especially you, you were wonderful to me Mom!
You know Mom I haven't a picture of you, I had a real small one but I can't find it. Can you send me one so that I can hang it in my locker?
Love
Leroy

USAR COLLECTION #3418A

Preserving What We Could Not Protect



Will write to you
later even if you don't Reply

Fifty-eight men died aboard the *Utah* protecting their ship, their country, and each other. Their memorial was dedicated in 1972 for "the preservation of heroic memories." May this white stone, the *Utah's* copper hull, and our efforts protect their memory forever.

William D. Arbuckle, S2c
Joseph Barta, F3c
Rudolph P. Bielka, LCDR
Virgil C. Bigham, S1c
John E. Black, LTJG
John T. Blackburn, F1c
Pallas F. Brown, S2c
William F. Brunner, F3c
Feliciano T. Bugarin, OC2c
George V. Chestnutt, Jr., S2c
Lloyd D. Clippard, S2c
Joseph U. Conner, F1c
John R. Crain, F1c
David L. Crossett, S1c
Billy R. Davis, F2c

Leroy Dennis, S2c
Douglas R. Dieckhoff, SM1c
William H. Dosser, S2c
Vernon J. Eidsvig, S1c
Melvyn A. Gandre, QM1c
Kenneth M. Gift, BM2c
Charles N. Gregoire, S2c
Herold A. Harveson, LTJG
Clifford D. Hill, S2c
Emery L. Houde, Bkr2c
David W. Jackson, ENS
Leroy H. Jones, S1c
William A. Juedes, SC2c
John L. Kaelin, Y3c

Eric T. Kampmeyer, GM3c
Joseph N. Karabon, F1c
William H. Kent, S1c
George W. LaRue, GM3c
John G. Little III, LTJG
Kenneth L. Lynch, S2c
William E. Marshall, Jr., S2c
Rudolph M. Martinez, EM3c
Charles O. Michael, LCDR
Marvin E. Miller, S2c
Donald C. Norman, S2c
Orris N. Norman, F2c
Edwin N. Odgaard, EM2c
Elmer A. Parker, CSK (PA)
Forrest H. Perry, SC3c

James W. Phillips, S1c
Walter H. Ponder, MM1c
Frank E. Reed, SF3c
Ralph E. Scott, S1c
Henson T. Shouse, F1c
George R. Smith, Matt1c
Robert D. Smith, S1c
Joseph B. Sousley, S2c
Gerald V. Strinz, F3c
Peter Tomich, CWT (PA)
Elmer H. Ulrich, F3c
Michael W. Villa, F3c
Vernad O. Wetrich, FC1c
Glen A. White, F1c

Visiting the *Utah*

The USS *Utah* Memorial (shown above) is located on Ford Island, within Pearl Harbor Naval Station. Access is restricted on this active military base. Active Duty/Retired Military, Military Reservists or DOD/Civil Service personnel with a valid DOD ID card and vehicle decal can visit the memorial. If a member does not have a DOD decal, they must obtain a vehicle pass. Anyone not affiliated with the Military/Civil Service that would like to visit the memorial must be sponsored by someone who is.

For current visitor information contact the Navy Public Relations Office at (808) 473-2888.



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BACKGROUNDMANAGE:USN/USAF/PHOTO