

Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

As a member of VFW Post 4900, Emmett, Idaho, and the son of a World War II veteran who fought in the Pacific, surviving the Bataan Death March, I am, of course mindful of what December 7, 1941, used to mean to this nation. Today is Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, that terrible Day of Infamy that symbolizes sacrifice, courage and the indomitable spirit of what was once a great nation. One that possessed a resolve with an unparalleled toughness.

Eighty-two years ago today, our nation changed forever. The attack on Pearl Harbor shook the United States to its very core. The Japanese thought we would sue for peace. Hitler, who declared war on the United States on December 11, 1941, didn't think we'd fight at all. Both nations discovered we would not only fight, but we would accept no less than an unconditional surrender.

In a "To Whom It May Concern" typed letter Dad wrote in November 1955, perhaps related to his application to become Lewiston Postmaster, which he succeeded in accomplishing, a typical "G.I." history unfolds. "I enlisted in the Air Corps, March 4, 1941, and shipped overseas from San Francisco, May 1, 1941. I was assigned to the Second Observation Squadron, then stationed at Clark Field on the Island of Luzon. ...On the night before Manila was declared an open city, we withdrew to the Peninsula of Bataan, where we were formed into the 2nd Battalion United Air Force Provincial Infantry."

He continues in the next paragraph: "I was wounded in action, having received several bomb fragments about the legs and lower part of my body during the Battle of Bataan. I was issued a Purple Heart with two stars. After the capitulation of our forces to the enemy, I survived the infamous Death March and was interned at Camp O'Donnell. I short time later I was transferred to Cabanatuan. There I contracted Malaria ... and I was shipped to Japan on a 500-man labor detail where we spent two years. We landed on the southern tip of the islands at a town called Omuta Camp #17 Fukuoka Fuyoshuyosho."

"Upon the unconditional surrender of Japan, I was flown to the Philippine Islands and from there was shipped by boat to the United States. My normal weight had always been 165 pounds [Dad was about 6'2"] but at the time of my liberation, I weighed 97 pounds with all my clothes on."

How common would that G.I. history be today? A recent poll conducted by Echelon Insights asking 1,029 likely voters between October 23-26 whether they would volunteer for military service found that 72 percent of those asked would NOT be willing to volunteer to serve in the armed forces should America enter into a major conflict. 21 percent said they would. 7 percent just didn't know. This makes some sense when one considers that in the fall of 2022, a Pentagon study found that 77% of young Americans would not qualify for military service without a waiver due to being overweight, using drugs or having mental and physical health problems. Let me do some quick math here...let's see...that appears to be over three-quarters of young Americans. Way to go, America!

Today on a morning news program, a 10-year-old boy, the son of an Air Force veteran, much as I was, is in the process for raising \$100,000 for the Pearl Harbor Museum in Hawaii, having visited it last summer. Why is he interested in doing this? As he explained, "When I asked my schoolmates about the attack on Pearl Harbor, they didn't know much about it." As a third grader, I knew all about Pearl Harbor and its

aftermath. Just as it changed our nation forever, it changed my father for the rest of his shortened life (He passed at 52.) Will it take another Day of Infamy to create the willingness of our military-aged youth to sacrifice and to resurrect the indomitable spirit of World War II? Every combat veteran I know prays it does not. We believe a proper education in history should suffice.

Only under two presidents, when asked by parents or young people whether the military was a good way to figure out what life was all about and the path they should take, have I said NO. First under Obama; and now, under the current administration.

When more time is devoted to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) instead of soldiering skills and battle drills, all the brass accomplishes is setting them up to DIE for no good reason. The disgraceful withdrawal (retreat?) from Afghanistan underscores this sad paradigm by killing at least 170 Afghan civilians and 13 U.S. service members at the Kabul Airport when the Taliban explosively directing ball bearings through a packed crowd.

Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin (he, with the full plastic face shield during the so-called Covid crisis inspecting troops, both foreign and domestic) thought the Afghan withdrawal was a successful operation and stated his pride in it. That should tell us all we need to know about current management of the Pentagon. Between Austin and General "Thoroughly Modern" Milley, our abilities to shoot, scoot and communicate and to close with and destroy the enemy have been seriously undermined.

My Spidey senses tell me our nation could soon be experiencing warfare in our streets conducted by foreign special operators that have been infiltrating what used to be our southern border. Pray that our state national guards will be able to meet the challenge. As the current operations in Gaza and even Ukraine demonstrate, urban warfare makes life, as Thomas Hobbes described it, "nasty, brutish, and short"