

Jack R. Hammett, WO, USN. (Ret.)

WWII, Pacific, ETO, Korea, *PHSA



Pearl Harbor Survivor



Name	Jack Ray Hammett
Rank	WO1, USN. (Ret.)
Branch of Service	United States Navy
Specialty	Navy Hospital Corps
Active duty dates	4-18-37 to 6-21-59
Reserve dates	Fleet Reserve 6-21-59 to 6-1-67
Armed Conflicts	WWII and Korea Conflict
Theaters of Operations	Pacific and European
Campaigns	Pearl Harbor, D-Day Normandy, North Africa, Atlantic Anti-submarine action
Medals & Awards	Navy Commendation (with star), Navy Good Conduct (with 4 stars), Navy Unit Commendation with star, American Campaign. American Defense Medal with star, Asiatic Pacific Theater with star, WWII Victory , Korean Campaign, National Defense and Pearl Harbor Survivors Medal.
Speaking Subjects	Attack on Pearl Harbor, D-Day Normandy Invasion, North Atlantic Destroyer Hunter-Killer patrols and Navy Corpsmen serving with the U. S. Marines in combat.

Associated details from the Internet:

- [Pearl Harbor attack](#)

(More Details)

PEARL HARBOR, December 7, 1941 + 7 More

For my 17 year old wife and me, it all began like this.....

Sunday morning, December 7, 1941 was different. I was in bed with Mary Jo after a night out at Kapiolani Park listening to dance band music. There had been a light rain and the morning was bright and balmy. A lot of explosions like big guns going off jarred us out of deep sleep. We assumed it was the Army conducting their usual maneuvers. We did startle full awake however, when a loud knock sounded on our door. I jumped out of bed and opened the door a crack to see my Chinese landlord standing there asking for our rent. I immediately, clad in my navy "nainsooks" (regulation shorts), asked Mary for the money for the landlord. The landlord quietly took the money and then in a normal voice said, "the Japs are attacking Pearl Harbor"

This could have been compared to a statement that "by the way, it rained last night". The landlord then left leaving me standing there in my underwear trying to comprehend the enormity of the situation.

A quick look outside the door that served the common entrance for all the rooms convinced me that "sure as hell" something was going on in Pearl Harbor, just 12 miles down the hill. Remember, there were not any visual obstructions then to keep from seeing from one end of the island to the other.

A tremendous explosion occurred just then sending fire and smoke hundreds of feet into the air somewhere in the Naval Shipyard. It was later concluded that it was either the Arizona explosion or the Cassin and the Downs (destroyers in dry dock) going up.

I looked southward to sea and observed two naval destroyers running "with a bone in their teeth" back and forth about one or two miles off shore. At the same time I saw that plumes of water were going up adjacent to them which I interpreted as "near misses" of dropping bombs.

Mary Jo joined me on the little porch outside the "lobby" and observed two or three planes wheeling in large circles above our house and Diamond Head. They had the well known "Red Meatball" painted on their wings.

In the meantime, the radio was blaring out, " This is Not a Drill, This is Not a Drill, Pearl Harbor is being bombed by Japanese aircraft. All military personnel are ordered to return to their commands immediately"!!! This kept being repeated.

Another sailor living in our complex joined me and we ran down the street until a pickup truck came by driven by a Japanese man. We immediately commandeered his truck and told him to drive us to the Army-Navy YMCA. That was in downtown Honolulu. About 6 miles from the our house. It was also the gathering spot for taxi cabs to Pearl Harbor and Hickam Field bases. The charge was usually 25 cents per person and the cabs carried six.

On arrival at that spot, all hell was breaking loose, cab drivers were standing by their cabs holding open the doors and yelling "get aboard" for Pearl. No charge. Instead of six persons, they loaded eight. Away they went at top speed, careening through the narrow streets of old downtown Honolulu and heading out the highway for Pearl Harbor. Some cabs were strafed by Japanese aircraft..

During this time the second wave of Japanese bombers and torpedo planes were still in the air. Strafing was going on, but I was not hurt. Scared, but not hit.

On arrival at the Main Gate, I immediately commandeered another vehicle driven by a civilian Navy Yard worker and ordered him to take me to the Naval Hospital.

When I arrived at the hospital grounds, I was ordered into the Navy Nurses old quarters which was being used as a collection center. I found bodies lying all around. A lot of screaming, crying and groaning was going on all the time.

Bodies kept being brought in. Some dead, some dying, some barely hanging on. First aid was just that. Check breathing, stop hemorrhage, treat shock, immobilize fractures, triage for further care. We worked around the clock four hours first aid, four hours identification of dead.

The living casualties were easy. Either you thought they had a chance, or you didn't. If you thought someone could make it, you gave them first aid and moved them immediately to surgery. If you didn't, you moved them to the lanai (porch) and made them as comfortable as possible while they died. There was no shortage of morphine tartrate syrettes nor were there any restrictions on how many to use.

I didn't remember eating at all that day. I did remember about four o'clock in the evening taking a break and walking down to the harbor. About two hundred yards. There lying directly across from Hospital Point lay the U.S.S. Nevada with her bow in the sugar can fields across the other side of the entrance channel. She'd been run aground while sinking rather than let her sink in the middle of the entrance channel. To the right on Ford Island lay battleship row with the burning and blown to hell remnants of the Pacific Battle Fleet. The U.S.S. Oklahoma rolled over and upside down like a beached whale. Motor launches and all sorts of power craft running up and down the channel like ants. They were performing all sorts of duty, but mostly casualty retrieval.

I was joined by other sailors and officers taking a break and see what was going on. We all cried unashamedly in front of each other as we began to realize the enormity of the moment. Complete and utter destruction to what before they had thought to be the invincible United States Fleet. All in a period of 1 hour and 50 minutes of combat.

After about a half-hour of relief; back to work at the Nurse's quarters. By that time, casualties had filled the downstairs and upstairs. The basement had been used for the dead. We would take a body, fingerprint it, place it somewhere on the remains and carry it down to the cellar. We couldn't get a stretcher up and down stairs, it was too difficult and took time. Instead two of us would pick up a body, or sometimes by ourselves, and carry it downstairs. The bodies were laid out on the floor with little aisles between them. Finally, because of so many, they were "stacked" one on top of another, trying to maintain the aisles. Not always well done.

Shortly after dark that same night, an air raid signal was sounded and all hell broke loose with anti-aircraft fire. It scared the hell out of me as it seemed like the whole place was on fire. The planes were directly over head and everybody who could, tried to find cover. I ran down the stairs to the cellar and stooped to look out a basement window culvert. I could see the sky alight with tracer fire of the guns and finally a plane was hit

.....Then, all at once, ...silence.....At this point I realized where I was and that it was completely dark with no lights. Believe it or not , one CAN smell Death. I did, and promptly panicked. I tried to get to the stairs leading up to the first floor, and the living. I slipped, fell over corpses, scrambled over more and finally got to the stairs and up.

Upstairs in the light, I had difficulty in realizing where I was. I can remember even to this present day the condition of my uniform, especially the odor, ...and other things I can't talk about.. (Incidentally, the aircraft that was shot down was one of our own fighters that had flown in from carriers off-shore returning to Pearl Harbor). I watched one of the young pilots die later that night on the operating table and remember the pilot's groaning... "why did you shoot at me?"

What happened later that night was another nightmare. I was detailed to take a truck load of the bodies to the Nuuanu Cemetery in downtown Honolulu. There were 26 bodies loaded on the 5 ton stake body truck. We heard rumors that the Japanese Army was landing troops on the beaches. This did not make our task that much more delightful. During the "air-raid" our anti-aircraft guns were firing "fixed" ammunition at the planes and when they missed they landed in downtown Honolulu killing civilians and destroying property in the Maikiki area. This was our first introduction to "Friendly Fire"

Of a continuing and deep concern of mine, was my wife. There was no news that one could trust. The only thing we knew was what came out of the rumor mill; and that was the Japanese had landing parties. This had prompted several incidents of friends shooting at friends that night. The only way to describe the events for that night and the following day was SNAFU.

Events continued much the same for the first 72 hours before any of the corpsmen got any relief. Married men were allowed four hours liberty providing they had transportation. Fortunately for me one of my shipmates lived in Kaimuki near me and he had a car.

I can't remember whether it was Tuesday or Wednesday following the raid when it was my turn to get to go home. I got a ride and was dropped off at my house to meet my wife. She promptly had me strip off my bloody clothes, take a shower and hit the sack. That's all I remember until she woke me and said my friend was outside blowing the horn. I got up, put on a clean uniform, kissed my wife goodbye and headed back to the hospital and two or three more days of continuous work caring for the injured and dying.

The entire tennis courts behind the Hospital was covered with rows of bodies. Grave detail became my responsibility for the next few days. There were no such things as "body-bags" then. It was strictly wooden coffins made by the Japanese, and most of them too small for our American bodies. We would stuff bodies in a coffin, breaking arms, legs, etc. to get them in. Nail a copy of the Form N (death certificate) to it, and transport it to the Nuuanu Cemetery. There, it was placed in a common grave dug by a steam shovel, and covered over with a layer of dirt.

The worst part was when we were on the docks, collecting the bodies of the "floaters". These were the bodies of those who had either drowned or casualties who came to the surface bloated. Many had extreme injuries displayed. As a matter of fact, that was the primary cause of death listed on the Form N—Diagnosis: "Multiple injuries, extreme, due to enemy action". The bodies stank so bad, the corpsmen had to wear gas masks. These bodies were put in those damn small coffins also. They were stacked one on top of the other and when it rained, the corpsmen would take cover under the stacks. One never was quite sure whether the source of the water dripping on them was from rain or residue leaking from the boxes. Needless to say the white uniforms were not ready for inspection.

Enough now about death and destruction.....On returning to my home every fourth day, I had an excellent chance to see how the other half had fared.

I was told that during the night of December 7th, army patrols were roaming the streets enforcing blackout regulations. No one could show a light after sundown. Remember, everyone thought that Japanese forces had landed somewhere on the island. MaryJo said that military patrols would yell out if a light was showing and if it was not extinguished immediately, the military threatened to fire into the house.

The married girls sharing our apartment complex had banded together for safety. They had organized a " butcher knife brigade". They had heard that the Japanese were landing and raping and killing the women. MaryJo had considered cutting off her long hair, however, she decided that it would not deter them. For that, I was grateful.

Food was hard to obtain. All the markets around that area were operated by the Japanese. All of them had closed and were serving Japanese out the back doors. Mary was not going to succumb to starvation because she was a haole. She told them to serve her or she would call the M.P.s. That did the trick and she was able buy groceries.

The gathering of the girls included a "lady" from across the street who was a "working girl". There was no stigma attached during the crisis. However, as an aside.....Many of the "ladies of the night" who worked in the "hotels" on Hotel Street, Beretania Street and River Street in Honolulu, volunteered as nurses aides at the naval hospital. They would work side by side with our navy nurses and corpsmen in the burn wards. These were our worst casualties. They carried bed pans, help de-bridge body burn wounds and generally performed extremely valuable tasks. That was until the Navy Wives Association heard of this and required that they be expelled from the wards.

That was two kids introduction to history in the making. "Remember Pearl Harbor, Keep America Alert"..... WO1 Jack R. Hammett, USN (Ret.)

Still More



Medical Replacement Battalion (80 Navy Hospital Corpsmen)

Enroute to Korea 1953 1st Marine Division,

Mary Jo Hammett

"A Navy Wife's Pearl Harbor Memories"

I arrived in Honolulu on April 1, 1941 aboard the Matson Liner Matsonia and was met by my husband and Raymond Buckles, our best man at our wedding. We had been married for just one year and this was to be my honeymoon.

The boys piled leis around my neck and up to my chin and then we took a lot of pictures. Jack had rented one room in a house in Kapahulu just a mile from Waikiki Beach. Two other married couples, one civilian Oahu Prison guard and his wife and one by a sailor name Frenchy and his wife, shared the house. Frenchy was stationed at the Submarine Base in Pearl Harbor.

The room we shared was about 10-x 12 foot room on the corner of the house, with windows on two sides, one looking north and the other east. We all shared a common bathroom with an ancient stall shower. It was two stories with the bottom space used as an open carport. Later it served as an "air raid shelter" that we never used. Our Chinese landlord did not permit cooking and the rent was \$35.00 a month. A tidy sum then when Jack was only making \$60.00 a month as a third class petty officer. He was able to get "commuted rations" from the hospital which was .50 cents a day to eat off base. That was \$15.00 a month and now was able to have a total of \$75.00 a month to live on. After the rent, we obviously had a problem as neither of us had any savings.

We solved the cooking problem by buying a hot plate and cooking our meals on it. I became quite proficient at learning how to plan a whole meal and keep everything relatively hot for our meals. Obviously, our food was not the expensive kind. In addition, we had to hide the hot plate and try not to be doing any cooking when the landlord was supposed to be around.

Life was idyllic and wonderful. There I was a 17-year-old girl, married only a year and living in beautiful Hawaii. It was only a territory then, not a state. It was very romantic and in effect was our honeymoon. However, one cannot live on love alone and it was necessary for me to find a job to help support us. Jack would bring some tea bags from the hospital and I could buy rice from the Japanese storeowners at the foot of the hill below our house. So I decided to look for work.

I found an opening for a waitress at a little restaurant on Kalakaua Ave. directly across the street from Fort Derussy, a military coastal defense fort. It was called "Chapman's Chicken Coop". A man and his wife that owned who were haole (white) and they were a delightful couple. I would be the only haole waitress and the cook was a nice little guy by the name of Freddie. He was Japanese and after the raid, I never saw him again. At any rate, they asked me how old I was and I was supposed to be 21 years old because they served beer. They asked me for my birth certificate and I told them I would have to send for it, as it was "back in the States". They asked if I had any experience and I assured them I had. (I had none). At any rate, they hired me and probably knew I had no experience by the haphazard way I waited on tables, carrying one plate at a time and not really knowing how to order food from the kitchen. However, Freddie, the cook, felt sorry for me and was a great help and my tutor in my rapid indoctrination.

I didn't ask them for a salary, I was just glad that I got the job. I started getting great tips from the sailors, soldiers and marines. They were great clients. The tips ranged from 25 cents to a dollar. At one time a sailor gave me a \$20.00 bill and I'm sure he did not give it to me for my waitress skills. He intimated that he was a big spender and wouldn't I like to go out with him. After accepting the tip, I told him that I would have to ask my husband first. He never returned.

Finally at the end of the first month I was given my salary. It was a dollar a day. I did not say a word because my birth certificate, which I had not sent for, had not come yet. I did not want to rock the boat. Finances were no longer a problem for us. With what I made, my tips and Jack's \$75.00 we were on "easy street". Jack would often drop in for supper and would eat free.....

In August, Jack made second class petty officer. That was a 12-dollar a month jump in salary. Things were looking up. We would attend other restaurants when I was off and Jack was on liberty. He used to have the "duty" every fourth day so we had three out of four days together and 3

out of 4 weekends also. Prices were not too high and we could splurge a little. We even bought a radio, record player console for our one room and would entertain with hot meals and drinks. Jack would sometimes liberate some ethyl alcohol from the hospital and it took very little to mix with Coca-Cola to have a party.

A large burly fellow by the name of Bill Razor befriended us. He addressed me as "twinkle toes". I had taken up the hula and had become quite proficient. We used to dance at the various clubs and had a great time. Bill also managed the Kapahulu Theater just down the block from where we lived and he would let in for free. He had also been a surfer in his younger days and knew the famous Duke Kahanamoku. He would often bring snacks and goodies up to our one room and regale us with stories of the "old days" in Hawaii. Bill was about 45 years old. He had also been having cockfights and had one of his pet fighters stuffed and gave it to us as a present. I couldn't say no, but tried to hide it unless he was coming over.

Then.....it happened. Jack and I were in bed when we heard a lot of, explosions. We thought that the army was practicing again. At the same time there was a loud knocking at our door. Jack got up in his undrshorts and answered the door. It was our Chinese landlord who asked for the rent. Jack asked me to get the \$35.00, which I did; I gave it to Jack who gave it to the landlord. He took the money, and said in a matter of fact voice "the Japs are attacking Pearl Harbor."

We went out on our lanai (porch) facing Pearl Harbor and saw and heard massive explosions. Three Japanese aircraft flew over our heads circling toward the harbor. Out at sea, destroyers were dashing about with geysers of water "near misses" popping up around them.

We immediately turned the radio on and it was blaring ' THIS IS NOT A DRILL, THIS IS NOT A DRILL, JAPANESE AIRCRAFT ARE ATTACKING PEARL HARBOR, ALL MILITARY ARE ORDERED TO RETURN T THEIR BASES:"

Jack immediately jumped into his white uniform, and ran out on the lanai, where he was joined by Frenchy and his wife. They kissed us goodbye and ran down the steps to the street. Coming down the street was a pickup truck driven by a Japanese man. They stopped him and commandeered his truck and directed him to drive them to the Army-Navy YMCA in Honolulu.

That was the last that I saw of my husband for three days. I had no idea what was happening or whether he would return or not. Everything was chaotic. All the wives, service and civilians would gather together to listen to the radio with its continuing accounts of happenings. Both Frenchy's wife and I had no idea whether our men were safe or not. We could view the tremendous columns of black smoke from Pearl Harbor and knowing that our husbands were down in that melee .

A lot of rumors were spreading. We heard that the Japanese were landing on the other side of the island and were pillaging and raping the women. The girls discussed the possibility of cutting their long hair off so that we would not appear attractive. I took the stand, that the length of our hair would have little difference in the eyes of a Japanese soldier. The radio kept advising everyone to maintain blackout security. That meant shielding all light from the outside at night. Easier said than done. We had no blackout curtains and were concerned. The M.P.s would patrol the streets at night and threaten to shoot out the lights that might show. Whether they would or not, we weren't sure...so... we painted our windows with black paint. That solved that problem, but created another. With the windows shut in these little rooms, it was stifling.

I suggested that we arm ourselves, just in case. So, we all had butcher knives and at night we would gather together and discuss what we would do if and when Japanese soldiers would come. Later on, after the emergency, we would call ourselves the "butcher knife brigade".

Another thing. We had no stored provisions. Remember that we had no icebox to store perishables. That meant that our only source of food was to buy from the Japanese stores at the foot of the hill. Although scared, I decided to go down and see if I could buy some. When I got to their store, it was closed. I found out that they were operating in the back and selling to their Japanese customers. So, I went around to the back and threatened to call the M.P.s unless they sold to me also. They didn't hesitate.

I think it was about three days later, on Wednesday or Thursday that Jack appeared around noon. He was a mess. His white uniform was terrible and had to be thrown away. He had been working for 72 hours at the Navy Hospital in triage and body identification. I can't express what I felt other than total relief to not only know he was alive, but physically whole. We hugged and he said he had only four hours and would have to return. He stripped, showered and fell into bed and was "out like a light".

I got out another uniform for him and it seemed like only a few minutes, before another sailor in a car outside was blowing his horn to get Jack up. He was one of Jack's shipmates at the hospital who worked in x-ray and had a car. Jack dressed in a hurry, kissed me and left to go back. He didn't tell me much of anything except that things were horrible. He did say that he would be home in four days as the hospital was granting married men, liberty every four days.

I can't remember a lot of detail after that. Days blurred one into the other. Jack later on was able to get liberty every other day and then overnight as the emergency decreased. Many women of service men were trying to be evacuated to the States. Priority was given to women who had lost their husbands. I was not interested in leaving and did not seek to go. Life seemed to settle down and again we had time together.

I tried to go back to work, but things were not the same. My friend, the Japanese cook, was gone. Don't know what happened to him. The owner said that with marital law in effect, he couldn't take the chance in losing his license with the authorities by employing me, so sorry..... and I was unemployed.

Another funny thing... for a while...many oriental people wore signs hung around their necks saying "Me Chinese".

Jack was transferred from the hospital to the Section Base at Bishop's Point. That is the entrance to Pearl Harbor and conducted the anti-submarine net operations. He was promoted to Pharmacist Mate First Class in April, which was a welcome increase in salary. His base pay was \$84.00 per month. He was in charge of the Pharmacy at the Dispensary. He was glad to get out of the hospital. For two weeks after the raid, he had been on the recovery of bodies detail at the Pearl City landing area. It was horrendous and for a while he would wake up with nightmares.

This was not the best duty for either him or me. His liberty was only every other day, while people at the hospital were getting three out of four days liberty. However, we enjoyed life as best as we could UNTIL the Japanese hit Midway Island on June 4-6, 1942. We had no idea at that time whether we won or lost the battle, it was secretive. We thought the Japanese were coming back again. Jack said that was it and arranged for me

to get on the next transport leaving for the States.

I can't remember the exact date, but it was after Jack had been transferred to the Sand Island Dispensary on independent duty. I think it was in August 1942. It was quite an experience. It was one of the "General" ships. I can't recall which one. We were crammed into what I thought was a small cabin. Four women to a cabin. I drew a top bunk, I guess because I was small. To use the bathroom was also an experience. A lot of struggling with clothing and stowage and traffic area.

Smoking was also permitted in the cabin and it could get pretty close and uncomfortable. I seem to remember that one could not go on topside to smoke during the night. I guess it had something to do with visibility to enemy submarines. The meals were strictly military style. One type of meal was served and we did not have a selective menu. At any rate, I can't complain about them.

We ran at "darken ship" without any escort or convoy due to our speed. I understood that our ship was fast enough and it ran a zigzag course all the way to San Francisco. It took us five days to arrive in San Francisco where we disembarked.

What a reception! I felt like someone special. Red Cross and Salvation Army persons meet us and treated us as refugees. They plied us with coffee and donuts and offered any assistance that they could for whatever we needed.

Here I was in San Francisco, 18 years old, first time on my own and I admit I was scared. At the time of this writing, I remember just how I got back to my home in San Pedro, California. It was on a bus. My husband waited anxiously for notice of my safe arrival and I did notify him to his great relief.

I received notice that Jack had been transferred to Hilo, Hawaii on Independent Duty as the Medical Department Representative to set up a dispensary and take care of the 200 personnel. It was another Section Base for the protection of the Hilo harbor. I felt better knowing he was not in active combat and now I had to do something.

I joined the WADCA (Woman's Ambulance Drivers Corp of America) as a patriotic gesture. That's all that it was and nothing else. I didn't have a driver's license and besides I didn't know how to drive. I did however, get a job in defense. I was hired as a mail messenger at Western Pipe and Steel in Wilmington, California. I later left and went to work at California Shipbuilding Corp. on Terminal Island as an apprentice machinist. Later I earned the job of journeyman Machinist. This paid \$1.12 per hour, which at that time was excellent money. Now with my pay and Jack's pay as a first class petty officer, things were looking up financially.

I moved in with my family in San Pedro and was able to stay there until Jack returned to the States in 1943.