

## Remembering Pearl Harbor and Ensign Herbert Jones

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Ensign Herbert Jones

On the morning of Dec. 7, 1941 at 7:48 a.m. Hawaii Standard Time, the Imperial Japanese Navy launched a massive surprise attack on the U.S. Pacific Fleet's base at Pearl Harbor.

Japanese forces attacked Pearl Harbor in two waves, as a preventative action to keep the U.S. from interfering with its military actions in the Pacific Theater.

Thousands of men and women lost their lives while defending their ships, their fellow Americans, and their country. We must remember these people and their countless acts of valor during the attacks.

One act of valor came from Ensign Herbert C. Jones, U.S. Navy Reserve. Jones was commissioned Nov. 14, 1940 and reported to the battleship USS California (BB 44) at Pearl Harbor two weeks later.

On Dec. 7, 1941, the 23-year-old ensign was about to relieve the officer of the deck on the USS California when the attacks began. During the first wave, a torpedo and a bomb hit the ship. Jones dove into a smoke-filled hatchway and crawled along oil-slick decks to rescue a wounded Sailor before passing out in the fumes. Once he regained consciousness, Jones saw an anti-aircraft battery without a leader and without waiver, took command, as he staggered to his feet.

When the second wave of Japanese planes came in, Jones fired his guns until he was out of ammunition. USS California's ammunition hoist was damaged during the attack, so Jones quickly organized and led a party of volunteers to go below decks and pass ammunition up by hand.

Just as the shells began to reach the battery, Jones was wounded by a bomb explosion. Two men tried to remove him from the ship, which was on fire, but he refused to let them do so. Jones feared for the lives of his rescuers, who heard him say, "Leave me alone. I am done for. Get out of here before the magazines go off."

For his heroism during the attack, Jones was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

At the headquarters of Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet onboard Naval Amphibious Base (NAB) Coronado, the Flag Mess is dedicated to Ensign Jones and the sacrifice he made.

There is no higher honor than to serve and do so in harm's way, just as Ensign Jones did. Sailors today carry on this legacy of toughness, initiative, integrity, and accountability. As we remember Pearl Harbor and those lost, please remember and pass on these stories of heroism and sacrifice.

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