

War Era Story Project 2012

Submitted by: Leon White

Current home town: Columbiana, Ohio

Age: Not given

The date: Dec.7; the time: approximately 8 a.m. I was driving home from the airstrip after an hours' flight time in our club airplane when I heard the radio saying something about a Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. I thought, "where is Pearl Harbor?" I had never heard of it.

When I entered the house, I found my father's ear glued to the radio. "The Japanese have done it; d*** their souls!" he shouted. "We were asleep, and they've hit us hard"

"Where is Pearl Harbor," I asked.

"It's in the Pacific," he snapped. I decided not to push it any further because he was upset and I had nothing to gain except to further highlight my limited knowledge of geography.

War had been raging in Europe, but it seemed too far away. We saw the Movietone news and some of Hitler's ravings, laughed at his goose stepping, but really didn't take him and his ravings too seriously, even after he overran Poland and Czechoslovakia.

My home town of West Bath, Maine, was three miles from Bath, a thriving shipbuilding city. They were building destroyers for the U.S. Navy, and anyone from seventy miles around who wanted to work could carry home a paycheck.

I have to say Dec. 7, 1941, changed my life and those of a half million other Guys around my age, I'm sure. I went to work Monday, but building ships was the last thing I had on my mind. There was a war on, and I had to get in it. I found a friend, who we shall call "Joe," who agreed to go to Portland the next day and see about enlisting in one of the services. We had no idea where we would end up. It turned out to be the Marine Corp. I really can't say why, maybe because they had the most impressive posters. We signed up in Portland and were sworn in at Augusta the day after Christmas. Tears and goodbyes out of the way we boarded the train for Parris Island at nine that evening.

The three day trip to Parris Island was something I shall never forget. The Recruiting sergeant had told us we would all be given Pullmans and pajamas for the entire trip. The Pullmans lasted less than one half an hour, and of course we didn't know it at the time, but a Marine never wore pajamas. The train stopped at just about every town and village, taking on more Recruits. By the time we got to New York City, some of the smaller guys were forced up in to the baggage racks overhead. At this point, we decided enough was enough and posted people at all the doors preventing any more from getting in the car. This caused many struggles and a couple of fist fights, but being Marines, we did not retreat. We held our ground.

I ended up as member of a ground crew attached to a Marine Fighter Squadron (VMF 311). I served a total of four years, including thirteen months in the Pacific.