



MY STORY



HOWARD L. HAYES



UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Hayes, Howard L.

I was born in Washington State, up by the Canadian border. At the time, the country was in a depression, and it was kind of rough for my family. I didn't finish high school, but instead went into the Civilian Conservation Corps there in Washington. A short time after that, I got into the Coast Guard.

I went into training in Port Townsend, Washington. Right after that, I was shipped overseas and went aboard the Roger B. Taney – the cutter – which was the ship I spent the War on. I was on the Taney a year before the War, and for all four years of the War.

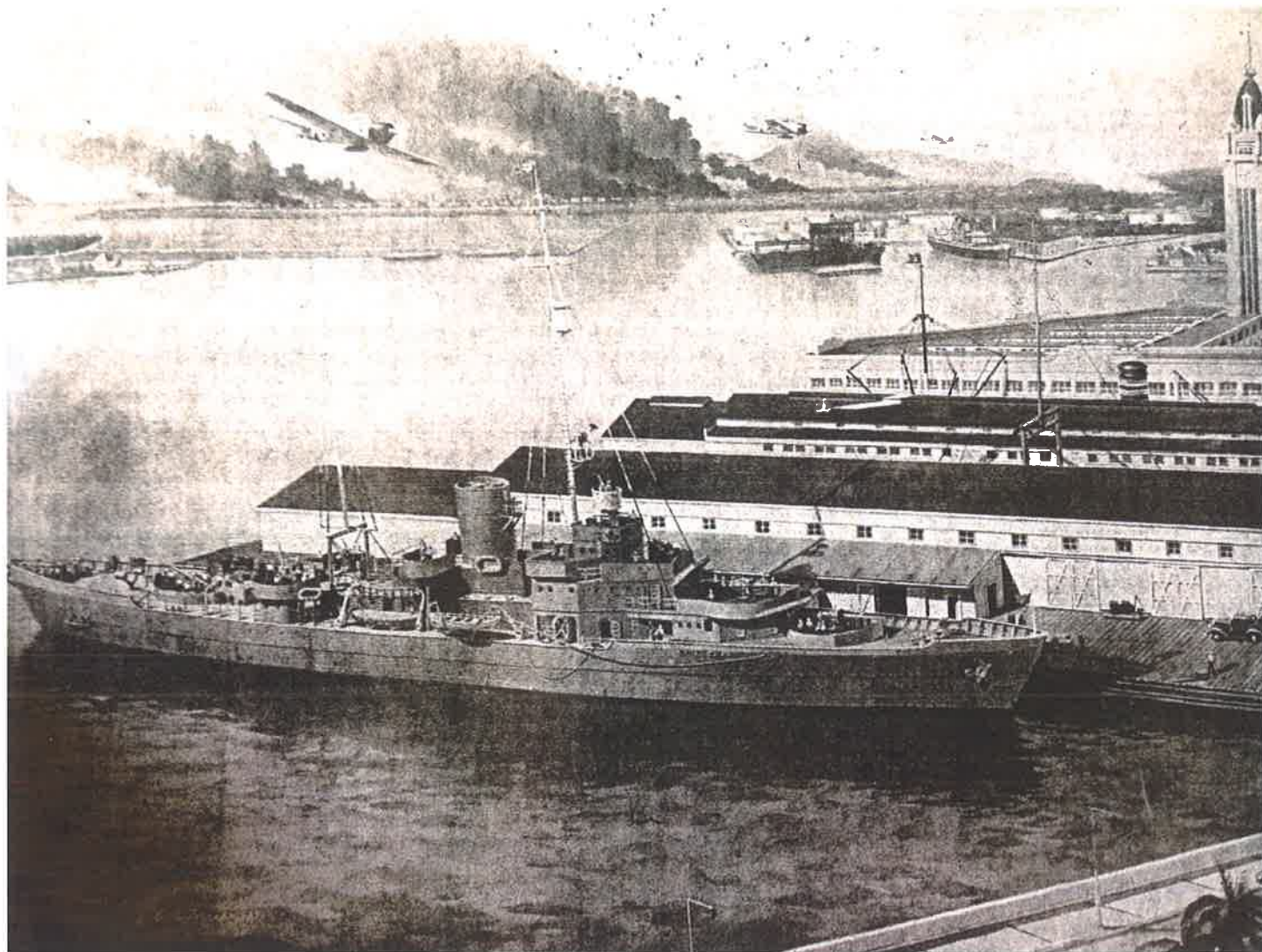
We were tied up at the pier, right outside of Pearl Harbor, when the Japanese attacked. They made the announcement: This is real; this is not a drill. Everybody was dumb-founded. As soon as they sounded general quarters, everybody got to their battle station. They moved like someone hit them with a shotgun. I went to my battle station on the range finder. I was a First Class Petty Officer – Acting Commissary Steward. I was below decks in the galley when they attacked. When they sound general quarters on board ship, you come as you are. My job was to provide range information to the targets for the guns. I was up there on the mast above the bridge – exposed – with one other guy during the attack. Those days, your rangefinder was out in the open and you were a good target.

When I gave them the range, they opened fire. The Japanese didn't see us. Our ship was right behind the pier. They flew up over the power plant, and when we opened fire on them, I don't know what they must have thought. They must have thought the world was coming to an end. We had three-inch anti-aircraft guns, and some bigger guns on the Taney, but you couldn't elevate those. Anyway, they headed back towards the sea, but four of the five that flew over



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went down in the sea. We got four of the five.

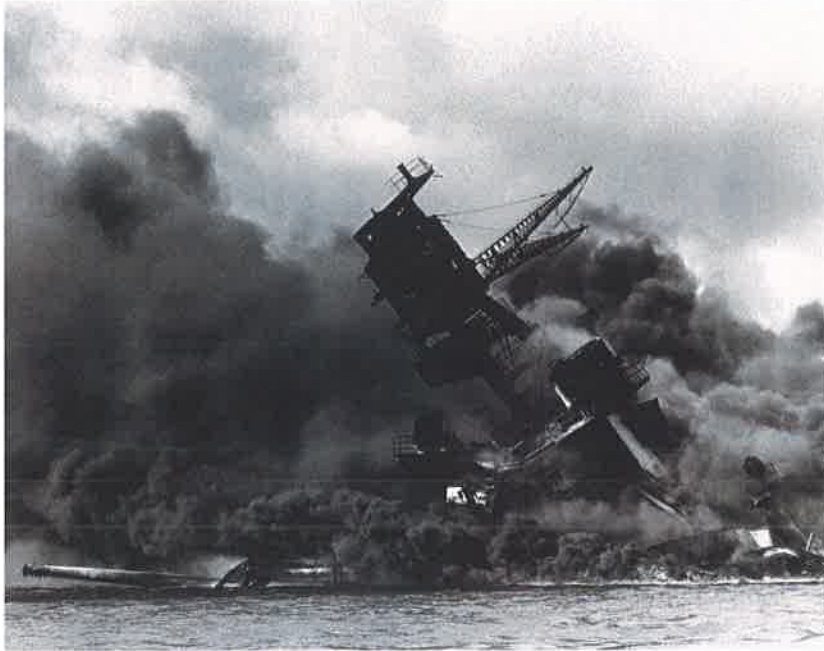


We were supposed to have been in Pearl that day. But the Navy had decided to put some ships in for repairs where we were supposed to be. They put two destroyers and a cruiser there, and they were sunk (or damaged). We were tied up outside, waiting to get in. We were lucky. We'd probably have had the hell bombed out of us if we'd have been inside. We had three (aircraft) carriers in Pearl, but they were ordered out the night before the attack. I had a brother on one of them – the Enterprise.



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I knew a lot of guys on the Arizona – not by name, but by sight. My daughter and I went to Pearl Harbor. The ship (USS Arizona) is lying in the water there. The memorial goes right over it. They wanted to know why I wouldn't go over the memorial. I said: Well, I knew a lot of those guys, and I believed if I was walking over the memorial, I was walking over the dead.



I do not appreciate walking over the dead.

To tell you the truth, the United States got caught with their pants down.

After the attack, we were trying to help out wherever we could at Pearl. They were setting up radio stations and little, tiny lookouts all over the Hawaiian Islands. I went out with them to help set up galleys. I also traded with the

Army a lot. We were at this small base in Hilo, and the Army had a little base behind us. They couldn't get pork, so they'd come over to us, and I traded our meat to them for what they had. They'd bring over quarters of beef, and they'd get pork from us.

I also had to go down to Navy Supply and order supplies for our ship. It was up to me to make sure we had enough (food), if we were going out to sea for a couple of months. Before the war, we had gone out to look for Amelia Earhart when she went missing. We never did find any sign of her. We always believed the Japanese had gotten her. They never found any sign of her plane, either. We went all the way to Australia.



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We had a Filipino Chief Commissary. He had four hash marks (Editor: He indicates on the sleeve of his coat; each would indicate four years service) – gold – that was good conduct, see. He wanted the key to get into the store room. It was around on a ring around my neck. I told him: You know that between 11 o'clock and one o'clock, nobody gets into the store room. And he grabbed them, and the next thing I know he's got a knife out there. I hauled off and smacked him, and he just went backwards, right down the ladder (stairway on the ship). It's a wonder he didn't get killed. They were going to court martial me. The Commissary Officer said to the Captain: We train these guys that when they are attacked, what are they supposed to do? The Captain said: They are supposed to defend themselves. The Commissary Officer said: That's exactly what the cook did – defended himself.

Instead, the Chief Commissary was no longer a Chief, and he no longer had gold hash marks on his uniform.

There were seven Coast Guard cutters like the Taney – six of them were on the East Coast chasing (German) subs. We were the only one on the West Coast chasing subs and doing patrols. We escorted destroyers and transports. We also shot some kamikazes down when they tried to crash into the ship we were escorting.

Later, during the War, we went over into the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. I don't remember too much about that. Then we came back to the Pacific, and were at Okinawa during the fighting for that island. We did shoot down some Kamikazes there. (Editor: The Taney was credited with four aircraft shot down



at Okinawa, and numerous assists.) As I said, I was in the service a year before the War, and all four years of the War. And while the War is going on, you do not get out of the service. So



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when the War was over, then I got out. My captain tried to talk me into staying in, but I had family and refused.

I had two brothers also in the War – the one on the Enterprise, and another who was in the Philippines and part of the Bataan Death March, but he escaped the Death March. They're dead now, but we all came back from the War alive.

I was married at that time. After the War, I worked for a logging company for a couple of years. I did some pretty dangerous things when I was young. I did high rigging work. I knew it was dangerous – damn dangerous. You had better have your head together. I just tried to take care of my health.

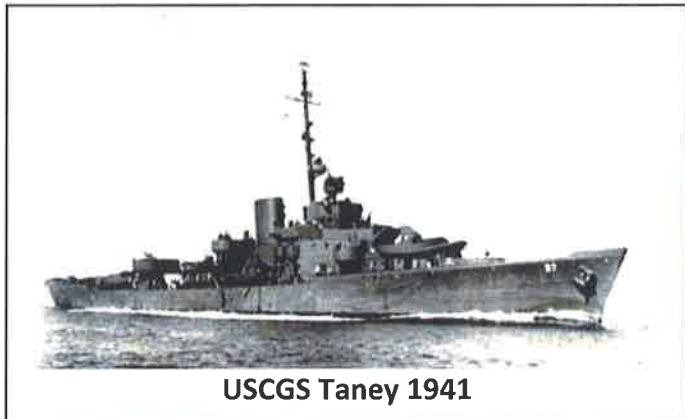
Then I went to driving truck. I drove for Consolidated Freightways for over fifty years. Consolidated is no more – they went bankrupt. They were the largest trucking company in the country. My wife and I had three children, and I adopted my daughter Shirley here, who I live with now. She was second to the oldest. My wife and I always said we wanted to adopt her, but we couldn't very well do it while her mother was alive.

My ship the Taney was at Pearl, in World War II, Korea, Vietnam and South Africa. It was retired in 1986 and given to the city of Baltimore for a museum ship. I went there and visited the ship this year. I was on the Honor Flight to Washington, DC, but I went a day early by special arrangement so I could tour my old ship. When we landed in Baltimore, there were two firetrucks on each side of our plane, shooting water over the plane as a water salute. At the ship, they had a band playing, and a banner stating that I was the last surviving Taney crewman who had been on the ship during the December 7th attack at Pearl Harbor. Then we had a police escort from Baltimore all the way to Washington. It was quite a thing to see how he stopped traffic for us.



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Ten days before the War started, the Coast Guard had become part of the Navy. But, they never gave us credit for the planes we shot down at Pearl.



USCGS Taney 1941



Taney converted to "WAGC" – Amphibious Command Ship – in Pacific in 1945

