

SAILORS, SHIPS AT SEA, AND THE TRINITY

By John F. Hall

In a departure from the way I begin my stories about history, I will begin with a description of Diamond Head. It is a volcanic tuff cone on the Hawaiian Island of Oahu. And is known to the Hawaiians as Le'ahi. The ridge of Diamond Head resembles the shape of a tuna's fin. Nine miles west of Diamond Head is Hanauma Bay State Park. In 2016, its beach was rated as the best beach in the United States. The beach is free to locals and children. Now non-locals are charged \$12 admission to use the beach. It is also an excellent place to snorkel. In 2004, Paula and I went to that



beach just to sit on the beach sand. There was no admission cost at that time. Sitting next



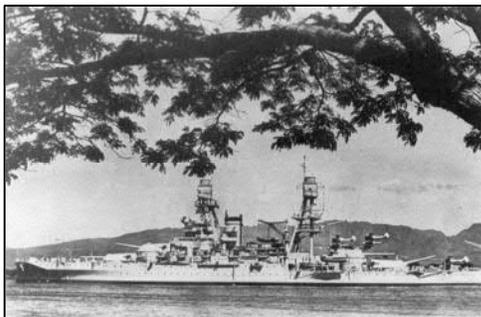
to us under a palm tree was a local Hawaiian family. I asked permission to take their picture. If you examine the picture closely, you will see a U.S. Air Force bag. I believe the mother's husband is military. I put that picture and a painting by Mary Koski in this story because I wanted this story to be more than just facts about battleships and teak wood.

We spend one day visiting Paula's friend, Dolores Cartus. She is a native Hawaiian and she has several acres of land on the other side of Oahu. She retired from the Tripler Army Medical Center. She is Paula's equal. They had similar Civil Service positions. They



attended the same Records Management Conferences. Dolores was always protective of Paula and they became friends. Dolores is living history as she shared with me what she witnessed on December 7, 1941. She was a young child when she looked into the face of a Japanese pilot flying at treetop level. I was sitting at her kitchen table as she told her story of the Japanese fighter planes, with bombs under their wings, coming over

the mountain pass and then screaming down into the valley where she lived. The planes were on their way to bomb the ships in Pearl Harbor. Historians always seem to overlook what children witness and feel.



On Sunday, December 7, 1941, four years before I was born, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and sank the USS Arizona. I was not able to find a good picture of that battleship for this story, just a black and white one taken in 1940 as it was leaving Pearl Harbor. On this third trip to Hawaii,

Paula and I went to visit the USS Arizona Memorial. Books have been written and



movies made about that tragic day, “a day that will live in infamy.” When we arrived at the memorial, I took some pictures of the names of the sailors and Marines that are engraved on one inside wall in the Memorial. What caught my attention is the name of J. R. Hall on the marble wall. Some records show that he was a Master at Arms. He was one of the 1,177 sailors and Marines killed that day. Audrey Lambert found

that his full name is John Rudolph Hall. The Memorial is accessible only by boat and it



straddles the sunken hull of the battleship without touching it. When all U.S. Navy, U.S. Coast Guard, and Merchant Marine vessels transit Pearl Harbor, and pass the Arizona Memorial, all hands come topside. They render a hand salute until the ship has passed the Memorial. This ceremony is called “manning the rails” to honor those sailors and Marines that were killed on that sad day 80 years ago.

There is a battleship that was not in Pearl Harbor when it was attacked by the Japanese. That battleship was under construction in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Construction on the USS Missouri began January 6, 1941, almost five months before the unprovoked attack



on Pearl Harbor. The battleship was launched January 29, 1944. It sailed into Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945 and became the stage to accept Japan’s surrender. It was accompanied by an armada of over 300 ships of all varieties from many nations. The surrender was very well choreographed with one eye on the past and the other eye on the future. The USS Missouri was the last battleship commissioned by the United States Navy.

For some people, history is a boring subject. The best historians are those that witness the events first hand. I was less than three months old when the Japanese surrender occurred.



Japanese diplomat Toshikazu Kase, witnessed the surrender signing. He wrote: “Never have I realized that the glance of glaring eyes could hurt so much. We waited...standing in the public gaze like penitent boys awaiting the dreaded schoolmaster.” General Douglas MacArthur conducted a fair occupation and

reconstruction of Japan. The dreaded concern of Kase was unfounded. My niece, Gabrielle Hall is Japanese American. We are very close and she has been a welcome guest in my home several times. She served in the United States Navy, on a destroyer, for almost seven years.

In 2004, I conducted a two-week security inspection of Tripler Army Medical Center. Paula was with me. She wanted to visit her friend, Dolores who lived on the other side of Oahu.



(Pictured: Lieutenant Colonel John Fl Hall (far right) at Tripler Army Medical Center).

It was June 29, 2004, my birthday. On the way to her house, we stopped and picked up a birthday cake. We celebrated my 59th birthday at Dolores' house. I left the remaining cake for her granddaughters to eat. The next day we drove to Fort Shafter to visit my friend, Colonel Paul

Wingo and his wife Vickie. Paul was the "Troop Commander at the Tripler Army Medical Center. I was not able to visit him at his office when I was conducting the security inspection. Paula and I went on to visit the USS Missouri battleship.

Because I was military, I obtained a one-day pass to drive onto Ford Island and visit the battleship Memorial. Tourist buses normally bring visitors to see the ship. We drove up in a rental car. The official birthday of the United States Army is June 14, 1775. We went to purchase a ticket. The general admission (today) for a guided tour is \$29.99 for adults and \$13.99 for children ages 4-12. The ticket person asked me if I was military. I told him that I was an Army Officer. I showed him my military identification card. He said

there was a special because of the Army's birthday. There will be no charge for you, soldier, and for your wife. We did a self tour.



The USS Missouri has a colorful history. It provided gunfire support in the Pacific theater in the battle of Iwo Jima and Okinawa. It participated in the shore bombardment of the Korean Conflict between 1950 and 1953. This came from its nine 16-inch guns in three triple turrets with a range of 23 miles, and its twenty five-inch guns in 10 twin mounts with a range of nine miles.

From 1954 to 1984, the USS Missouri was decommissioned and placed in "mothballs" at the Puget Sound Naval shipyard in Bremerton, Washington. In

1984, the battleship was towed to the Long Beach, California Naval Yard. It was renovated, refurbished, and fitted with 32 nuclear-tipped Tomahawk cruise missiles, 16 harpoon anti-ship missiles, and four Vulcan Phalanx Gatling Guns. The Gatling guns

launch a wall of bullets to stop enemy missiles. The ship's engines and main guns were only slightly changed from its World War II design.

In 1986, the USS Missouri was recommissioned in San Francisco and sent on an around-the-world Shakedown cruise. That made it the first battleship to circumnavigate the world since 1909. In 1987, the USS Missouri was sent to the Persian Gulf for six months to protect American flagged oil tankers near the Strait of Hormuz during the Iran Crisis. In 1991, the ship was deployed to the Persian Gulf where it launched 28 Tomahawk missiles at Iraq-held targets and participated in land bombardments with its 16-inch guns. The ship's final mission was a visit to Hawaii on December 7, 1991 for the 50th Anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. In 1999, the USS Missouri was guided into Pearl Harbor and docked at Ford Island, only 1,000 yards from the USS Arizona.

When Paula and I were walking on the USS Missouri's deck, I looked down at the ship's wooden deck. I remember what a college professor once told me: "There is no such thing



as a stupid question." So I asked one of the memorial employees this question: "Why is the deck of this ship made of wood?" The employee answered: "The reason the deck of the Missouri is made of teak wood is because of the massive amounts of gunpowder that was transported on and off the battleship for the long guns. The teak wood serves as

protection by preventing metal-on-metal scraping, which could potentially create sparks and fires. Also, the teak serves as insulation. The Missouri has 1.2 acres of deck that gets very hot. The ship has no air-conditioning and the space under the deck would get very hot if it was just made of steel."

My mind drifted back to 1965 when I was on a Merchant Marine cargo ship that was caught in a typhoon. The Rev. William Whiting wrote the hymn: "Eternal Father, Strong to Save." His lyrics, though changed over time are as follows: "Eternal Father, strong to save, whose arm has bound the restless wave, who bids the mighty ocean deep its own appointed limits keep; oh hear us when we cry to Thee for those in pearl on the sea. Oh Christ! Whose voice the waters heard and hushed their raging at Thy word, who walked on the forming deep, and calm amidst its rage didst sleep; oh hear us when we cry to thee for those in peril on the sea. Most Holy Spirit! Who didst brood upon the chaos dark and rude, and bid it angry tumult cease, and give, for wild confusion, peace; oh hear us when we cry to thee for those in peril on the sea! O Trinity of love and power, our brethren shield in danger's hour, from rock and tempest, fire and foe, protect them where so ever they go; thus evermore so rise to Thee glad hymns of praise from land and sea." I did not know this hymn back when I was 19 and thought the ship would break in half and I would become food for the sharks. But I was saved by the Trinity.

*Read other stories by John F. Hall at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>