

Chuck Davis Remembering Pearl Harbor



U.S. Navy Veteran Charles "Chuck" Davis was in the post office addressing Christmas cards the day his life forever changed.

Davis, a 96-year-old member at the Wisconsin Department of

Veterans Affairs' Veterans Home at King since 2012, was surprised to hear an overpowering whistle and emergency announcement the morning of December 7, 1941.

"All hands, man your battle stations now!" the announcement over the P.A. system declared.

Davis had spent just about one month at Pearl Harbor, and assumed the commotion was just a training drill. But when he stepped out of the forecandle on the U.S.S. Argonne, the feeling was surreal. He saw planes and heard bomb blasts coming from the battleship row across the harbor from the ship he was on board.

Pearl Harbor was under attack.

"When I asked what was going on, a shipmate yelled, 'The Japanese are attacking us!'" he said.

Davis rushed back aboard the ship, hiding a photo album and a pair of boots he'd just purchased under a set of life jackets and sprinting back to

help. He boarded a motor launch and began lifting survivors and those wounded from the chilly depths of the Pacific Ocean.

"We took them to the Aiea Landing to be taken to the Naval Hospital, and we went back for more," he said.

With a solid swimming background, Davis jumped into action and raced to help as many more as he could from the water. There was an oil fire on the water at the time, but he thought that he would be able to swim underneath the fire and help survivors to dry land on nearby Ford Island.

However, as he approached, the intense flames on the water burned his face and the oil spilled in the water damaged his eyes. He was taken to a nearby medical facility for recovery.

"He got his face burned, his eyes full of crude oil, blinding him," Davis' son Jay said at a 2016 remembrance ceremony at King.

Three days later, after the dust had appeared to settle, Davis was sent to the U.S.S. Arizona to help recover seamen who had gone missing. He declined to comment on his experience performing the duty.

The Pearl Harbor attack killed 2,335 people, wounded 1,143 and destroyed hundreds of military ships and planes.

Davis was discharged from the Navy in June 1941 and went on to serve in the U.S. Army Air Corps. After his service, he went to radio school at Truax Field Air National Guard Base, graduating and working as an instructor until the conclusion of World War II.