

Dear Dad, I tell this story with the greatest humility.

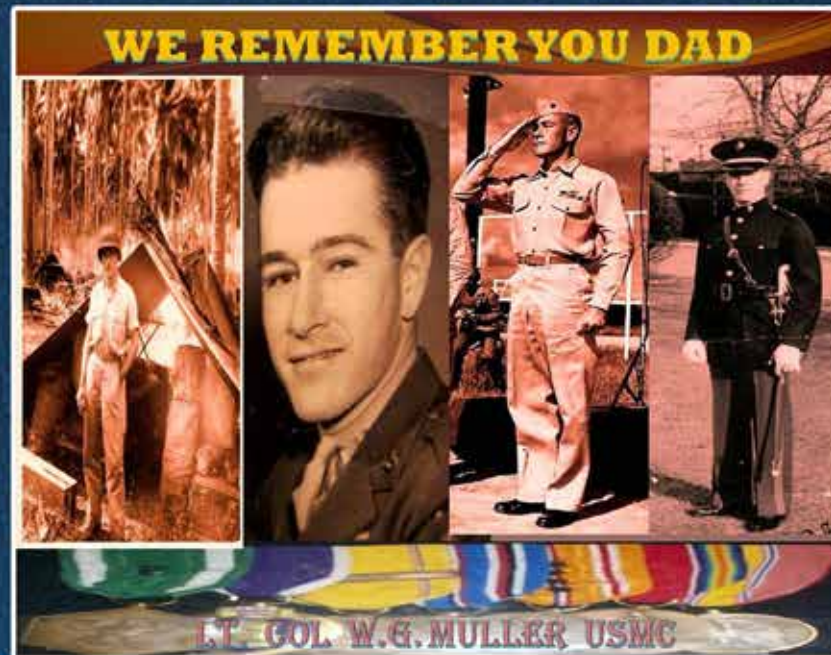
ESCAPE FROM THE BATTLESHIP OKLAHOMA, DECEMBER 7TH, 1941.

PUBLISHERS FORWARD

It is very sad, actually pathetic that on December 7, 2022, not a single news medium of any kind recognized the terrible disaster that struck the United States, in terms of the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii that brought us into World War II.

The recollection by Jim Muller, son of William G Muller Jr., Lt. Col, US Marine Corps of his father's exploits beginning with his escape from sure death when the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor is my way of keeping this man's heroic history alive:

John H. Vargo, Publisher



"My father escaped from The USS Oklahoma In Pearl Harbor, 81 years ago today!" (Jim, the son sent me this story on December 7th, 2022)

81 years ago my father, 24 years old, escaped out of The USS Oklahoma Battleship in Pearl Harbor.

The story begins with Jim's father. Partying heavily at The Royal Hawaiian Hotel until 5:45am, on December 7th, 1941.

At 7:12am he caught the ferry out to the Battleship Oklahoma, staggered to The Galley to drink coffee. Just as he was sipping the hot coffee another hero of this tragedy, Father Schmidt came over to say hello.

"Good morning Father, as soon as I sober up and get some shut eye, I am going to visit your confessional!"

(Father Aloysius Schmidt, another wonderful hero of the tragedy deserves his own story)

The time was 7:51am. Leaving the cafeteria Dad climbed down a series of ladders heading back-to his cabin.

Then the bombs hit at approx.: 7:57am.

He was thrown from the ladder onto a pile of dead soldiers.

The loudspeakers blasted:
"this-is-not-a- drill, this is the real thing!"

The bombs were relentless. Within 35 min. The Oklahoma was listing to one side. Soon it was almost upside--down, taking in tons of water.

Dad soon found himself in a death chamber with 3 other terrified men. The water had risen to their necks. The air was hard to breathe. The panic of impending death was etched on everyone's faces. Dad prayed for help. This was his moment to somehow - escape & live or stay & die.

He remembered that he had left his cabin-room's porthole "open". His mind raced with every second. The air pockets were closing fast, panic ruled!

Remembering that he had left his cabin window open, he decided that he had to get to it in order to survive! By this time the ship had rolled over with the super structure hitting the bottom, preventing it from going any further. With that in mind he somehow figured out the ship's layout from the perspective of somewhat-upside down & in reverse. The air pockets he and the other men were in were shrinking fast; remembering that his cabin was a long way off, never the less it was his only option, get to the open porthole! He asked himself, "Will I have enough air to make it?" He took the deepest, most daring breath of his young life. Daddy...then swimming under water down through 2 decks past a number of compartments he found his compartment! He held his breath for over 2 minutes. It seemed like an eternity. There was an air pocket in his cabin that allowed him to grasp another gulp of air, and then, with all his might, he wiggled and scrapped his naked body, through the open porthole.

He popped to the surface finding the waters ablaze with burning oil, with bodies everywhere. Swimming for shore, he had to dive under the flaming areas and then gulp another lung full of putrid air, before moving on.

Finally reaching Ford Islands beach, he crawled up on the shore, a survivor from death's grasping hands.

He was charred black & naked, but he was alive. He had escaped; sadly, the fate of thousands was a watery grave.

Dad would live to tell his tale. He would live to have a son that would record his story for all posterity. It is history. But for me it was Dad's story! I used to jump on my father's lap begging, "please tell it!"

I was so proud of my father's 20-year service to our country. His medals are testimony to his many, many close calls and experiences throughout World War II and then Korea!

He was a winner throughout his life!

He would have grandchildren & great-grandchildren. Future generations would read of his miraculous survival on December 7, 1941.

He was given the best even in death; as he was buried with full honors along side his wife in Arlington National Cemetery.

I miss you Dad! Rest in peace!"

