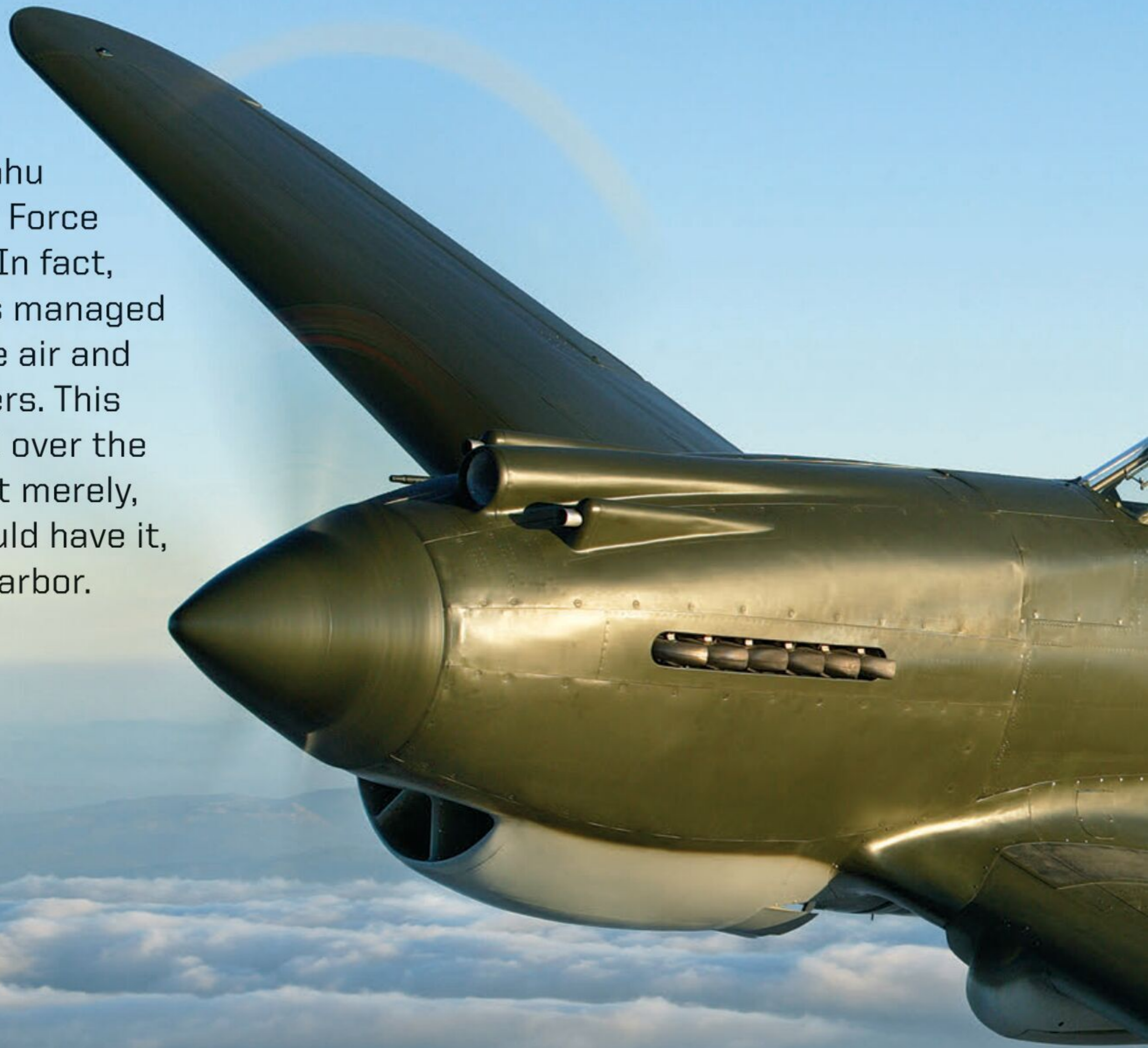


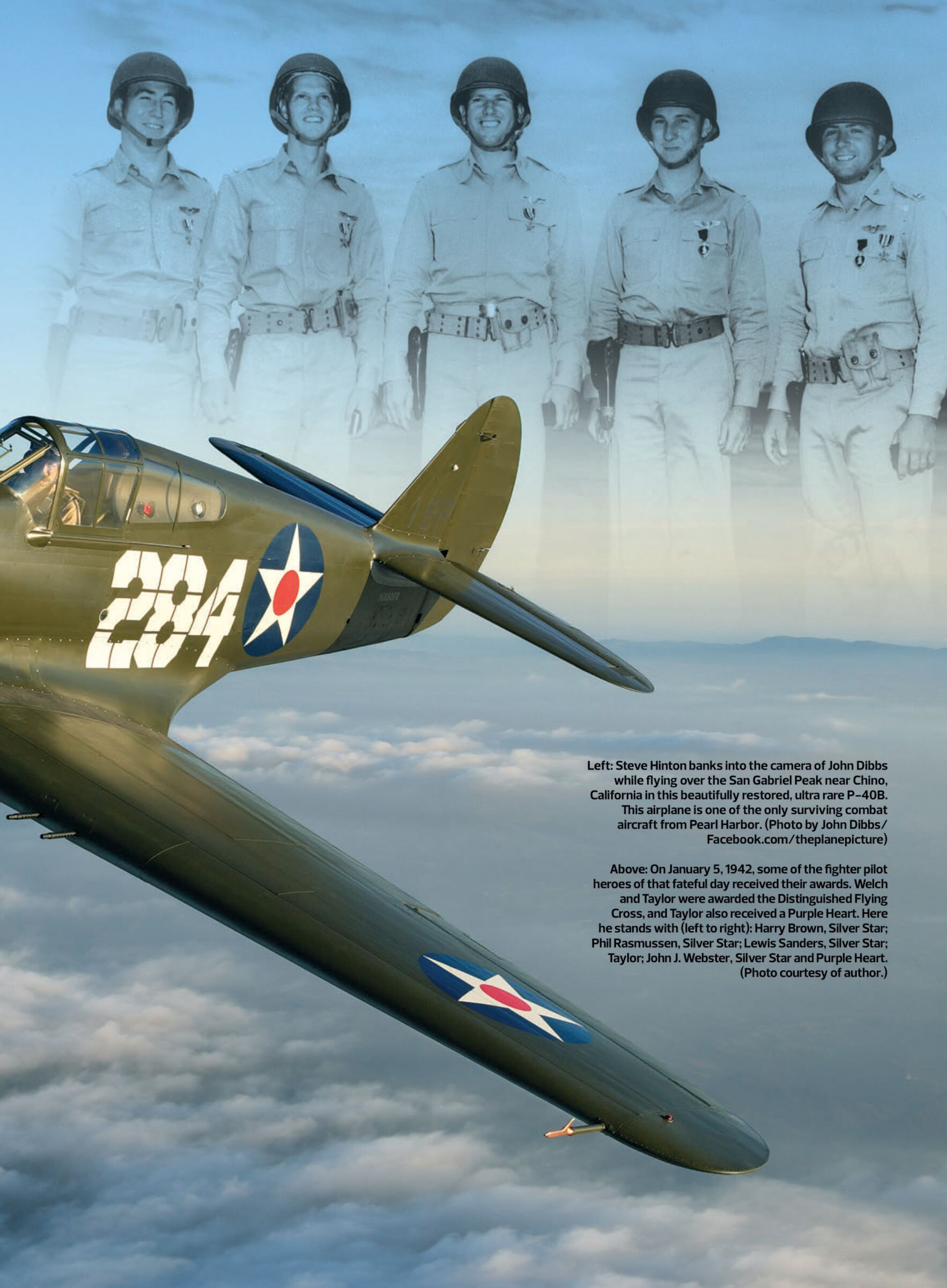
The movies “Tora! Tora! Tora!” and “Pearl Harbor” give us the erroneous impression that the only American defenders over Oahu were two Army Air Force (AAF) P-40 pilots. In fact, a number of pilots managed to make it into the air and battle the attackers. This combat ranged all over the island and was not merely, as the movies would have it, centered on the harbor.



# The Ghosts of Pearl Harbor

**THE HEROES, FACTS, & FIGURES**

BY DAVID AIKEN



Left: Steve Hinton banks into the camera of John Dibbs while flying over the San Gabriel Peak near Chino, California in this beautifully restored, ultra rare P-40B. This airplane is one of the only surviving combat aircraft from Pearl Harbor. (Photo by John Dibbs/ Facebook.com/theplanepicture)

Above: On January 5, 1942, some of the fighter pilot heroes of that fateful day received their awards. Welch and Taylor were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, and Taylor also received a Purple Heart. Here he stands with (left to right): Harry Brown, Silver Star; Phil Rasmussen, Silver Star; Lewis Sanders, Silver Star; Taylor; John J. Webster, Silver Star and Purple Heart. (Photo courtesy of author.)

Newspaper accounts and interviews with 2nd L. George S. Welch and 2nd Lt. Kenneth M. Taylor recorded months after the attack are the basis for most of the stories about their actions on December 7, 1941. The thread of facts originates with them, but further details from the Japanese Kodochosho (combat reports), U.S. witnesses on the ground, and Welch and Taylor's first reports paint a much broader picture and make the following detailed analysis unique.

The Japanese aircraft retreated. Pearl Harbor's battleships had been torpedoed and bombed and were sinking. The sailors in the harbor had been stunned by the quick attack. Angered, they hosed the ships with water and tried to save the wounded. Some thought that the attack was over, but the reprieve was brief. Thirty minutes later, more Japanese planes arrived. This time, it was four units of Bakugekik (D3A1 dive bombers) from the Japanese carriers Soryu, Hiryu, Akage, and Kaga—in that order.

The D3A1, identified by this designation stenciled on its fuselage, was a better dive-bomber than the German Ju 87s used in Europe. The Allies later assigned the code name "Val" to the plane, and it proved to be terrifyingly effective during the second attack.

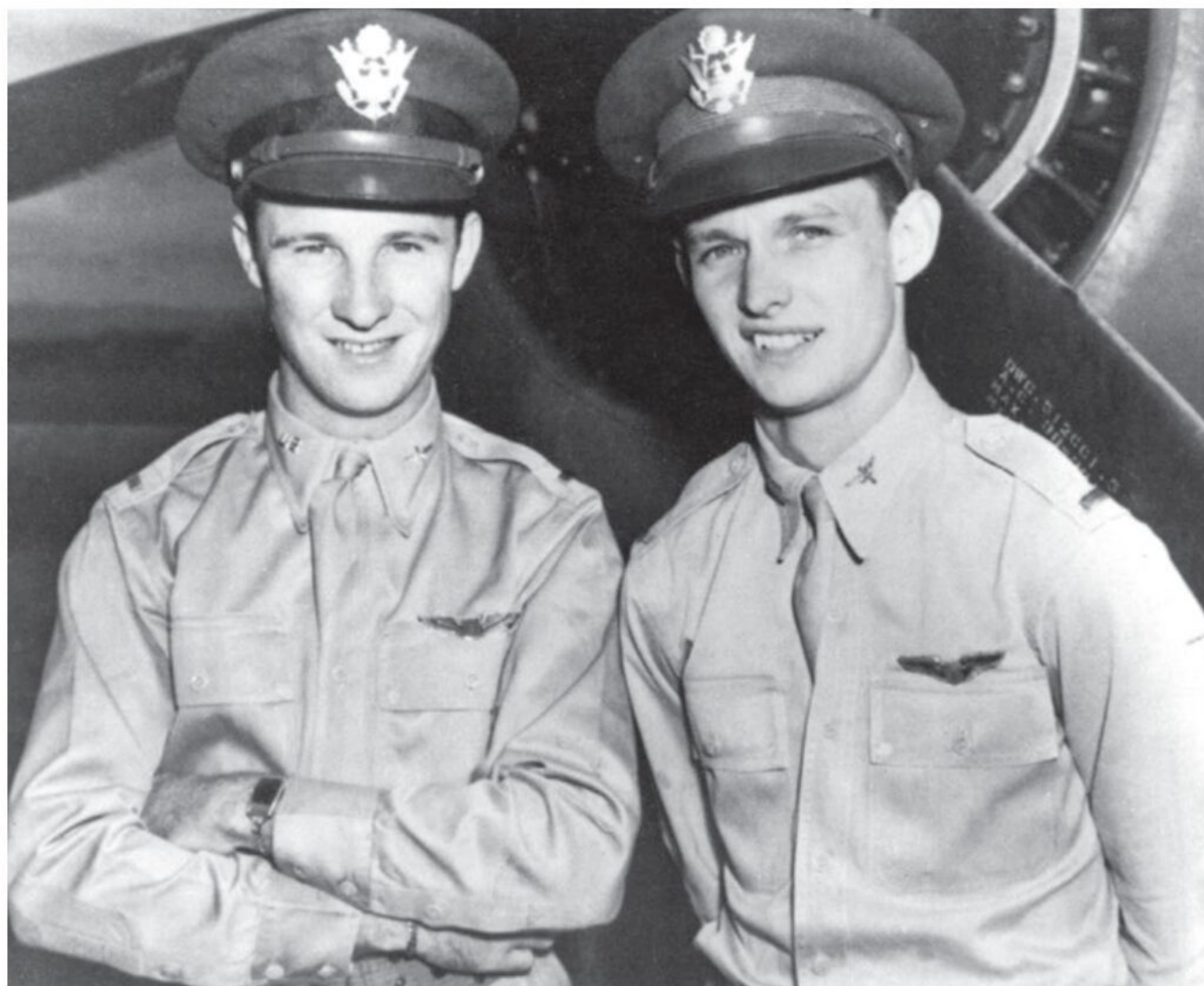
Soru air group commander Lt. Takahige Egusa was in the lead to attack the ships. He personally chose to bomb the USS New Orleans. His no. 2 wingman hit USS Cassin, which was in dry dock with the USS Downes and the USS Pennsylvania. The leader of the third plane was Petty Officer First Class Ryoichi Takahashi—the radioman. He saw his bomb hit short of the USS Pennsylvania and hit the USS Downes' chart house. His pilot, PO3c Satoru Kawasaki, lost track of Egusa and the no. 2 wingman, so Takahashi directed his pilot to set a course for Soryu—due north, and flying just west of the Koolau Mountains.

They passed east of Wheeler Field and took note of two cars heading north at high speed. One car lagged behind by a mile or two. Takahashi directed his pilot to strafe the cars. As they closed and bullets kicked up dust along the road, they almost got the second car. This was driven by 2nd Lt. Harry Brown, and also carried 2nd Lt. John Dains and the 47th PS Executive Officer, 1st Lt. Bob Rogers. The lead car was driven by 2nd Lt Ken Taylor and 2nd Lt. George Welch in the passenger seat. All were fighter pilots and were racing towards a civilian airfield at Haleiwa. There, where a dirt runway paralleled the beach, the entire squadron had been temporarily located for target practice, the armorers had only .30-caliber

ammo to load on the planes. Without any .50-caliber ammo for the nose guns, only the four smaller wing guns could be armed.

When Welch and Taylor arrived, they jumped into the first two P-40Bs that were parked under some trees and made no attempt to use the entire runway. At full power, they bolted from midfield and used what was left of it. When Brown and Dains arrived, Dains quickly grabbed the next ready P-40 and raced after them. The Japanese had yet to realize that Haleiwa was a functioning fighter base. Executive Office Bob Rogers took charge of the field and had a ground crew move a P-36 out from under the trees so that Brown would be able to get a straight shot down the runway. By that time, the

Lts. Ken Taylor (left) and George Welch are best known for their well-chronicled race over the mountains in a convertible to get to their P-40Bs at Haleiwa. They downed six airplanes and were recommended for the Medal of Honor, which was downgraded to the Distinguished Service Cross. They were 24 years old at the time.





Now owned by the American Heritage Museum, this P-40B is BuNo. 41-13297 and is a veteran of Pearl Harbor. Manufactured in March 1941 and assigned to the 6PS, 18PG at Wheeler Field, Hawaii, it was damaged in a forced landing in October and placed in a hangar, which allowed it to survive the Japanese attack on December 7. In February 1942, while being flown by Lt. Ken Sprankle, another accident occurred, and that led to the airframe being abandoned. It was recovered by Project Tomahawk in 1987, and the restoration started. The project was obtained by Stephen Grey, founder of The Fighter Collection, and fully restored by Matt Nightingale's California Aerofab in Ontario, California. Nightingale had previously restored TFC's Hawk 75. (Photo above by John Dibbs/Facebook.com/theplanepicture)



Following a forced landing in October 1941, 41-13297 sits on wooden trestles awaiting its fate. This crash was ironically the key to this aircraft's ultimate survival. This photo was essential to showing the aircraft markings during its restoration.



Of interest in the P-40B's cockpit is the gunsight (small silver tubular structure on the floor), which was a classified piece of equipment that replaced the ring and bead sights of a generation earlier. The N2 gunsight projected a crosshair onto the piece of glass that was screwed directly on the front windscreen. (Photo by John Dibbs/Facebook.com/theplanepicture.com)

attackers had realized what was happening., and as Brown reached the plane, so did Kawasaki and Takahashi; they had followed the cars to the airport and then circled to strafe it. Brown hid behind the P-36, which took the brunt of the strafing. Kawasaki was so enthusiastic that he was seen to hit the handle to drop a bomb that he did not have! He turned north over the ocean, and although Dains did not survive to file his combat reports, witnesses saw him catch up to him. Dains chased him east to the northern tip of Oahu as they traded bullets, and then south, where witnesses watched him shoot the plane down just east of the tiny community of Kaawa. Although the Victory Credit Review board may need to convene to rule on this officially, John Dains not only achieved the first AAF aerial victory of the day but also the first U.S. one of WW II.

Directed by radio to the southwest tip of Ohau, Welch in P-40B "160" and Taylor in "155" located the second unit of dive-bombers that had hit the ships; they were Hiryu-based D3As. Finished with Pearl Harbor, they were strafing Ewa Mooring Mast Field, where U.S. Marines aircraft were based. Welch tied into one Hiryu Val flown by PO1c Hiroyasu Kawabata, whose radioman/tail gunner, CPO Masao Ishii, did not see him coming. Welch damaged the Val's left wing fuel tank. The stream of fuel was such that Welch later claimed a victory. He quickly noted that one of his four .30 caliber guns had jammed. Though very low on fuel, Kawabata got the dive-bomber back to the Hiryu.

Taylor had to chase his target Hiryu Val east along the south shore. Its pilot was PO2c Koreyoshi Sotoyama, and his radioman was Flyer1c Hajime Murao. The plane was coded "BII-233" and had targeted the USS Pennsylvania. Trying to avoid Taylor, Sotoyama turned directly across the bow of a B-17E on its landing approach. They were followed by two more Hiryu Vals whose pilots hoped to fight off the P-40 and save Sotoyama and Nurao. Taylor gave them a telling burst, and Sotoyama's BII-233 crashed inland from Ewa Beach. Its crew's bodies were later "buried" by the U.S. Army soldiers in a fissure in the volcanic rocks next to the wreckage. They are still there, but their "headstone"—the wreckage of their aircraft—was moved long ago, so we don't know exactly where they lie. Another Japanese unit of Akagi D3As arrived just as Welch returned to the area over Ewa Mooring Mast Field. They were from the third unit of dive bombers to attack the harbor and had targeted the USS Raleigh, Welch picked on Squadron Commander Lt. Zenji Abe's no. 2 wingman in D3A (coded A1-211). The D3A made a tight, level bank to the left as its alert tail gunner returned fire. An incendiary round hit behind Welch's seat in the baggage compartment. The ensuing smoke briefly alarmed him, so he broke off contact and headed for a cloud just as Taylor arrived. Taylor mortally wounded the D3A's gunner and got its engine. The plane crashed into the ocean just southwest of the airfield, and Welch was credited with the kill.

When the Val crashed, pilot PO2c Gen Goto got out, dragged his radioman PO2c Michiji Utsugi out of the wreckage, and took him ashore, where he died. Goto quickly buried him in a very shallow grave. Two days later, Goto was discovered by beach defenders from the 55th Coast Artillery, and in a last-ditch battle, Goto used both of their pistols and fought until he was finally dispatched.

## ATTACK TIMELINE

**0342** Mine sweeper Condor sees periscope in restricted area near harbor entrance and radios USS Ward to investigate.

**0600** Adm. Nagumo delays launch of first wave because of high waves rough sea.

**0615** 183 aircraft off six carriers are launched.

**0620** 200 miles west of Oahu, USS Enterprise launches 18 SBDs on a routine scout mission. They land at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor.

**0637** USN PBY on patrol sights submarine and drops smoke pot. USS Ward views sub tower and opens fire. Second shell hits sub; PBY completes circle and drops depth charges on target; hits conning tower; air attack by PBY follows.

**0653** Ward's commander, Capt. Outerbridge, sends message to Bishop Point radio station: "We have attacked, fired on and dropped depth charges on submarine operating in defensive sea area." The PBY sent a coded transmission about the sinking to PatWingOne, and PatWingTwo monitored the signal.

**0702** Signal Corps Privates Lockhard and Elliott of Opana Radar Station pick up flight of unidentified aircraft bearing in 132 miles north of Oahu. Private Elliott phones switchboard operator Joseph McDonald at Information Center, Ft. Shafter.

**0715** USS Ward's message is delivered to duty officer, 14th Naval District; Japanese launch second wave of 168 planes.

**0720** Joseph McDonald finds an Air Corps officer at the Information Center calls Opana and connects Lt. Tyler to Private Joe Lockard, who describes the large flight picked up on radar and is told not to worry about it. Tyler remembered that when the civilian radio is on all night, U.S. aircraft arrive from the mainland the next morning.

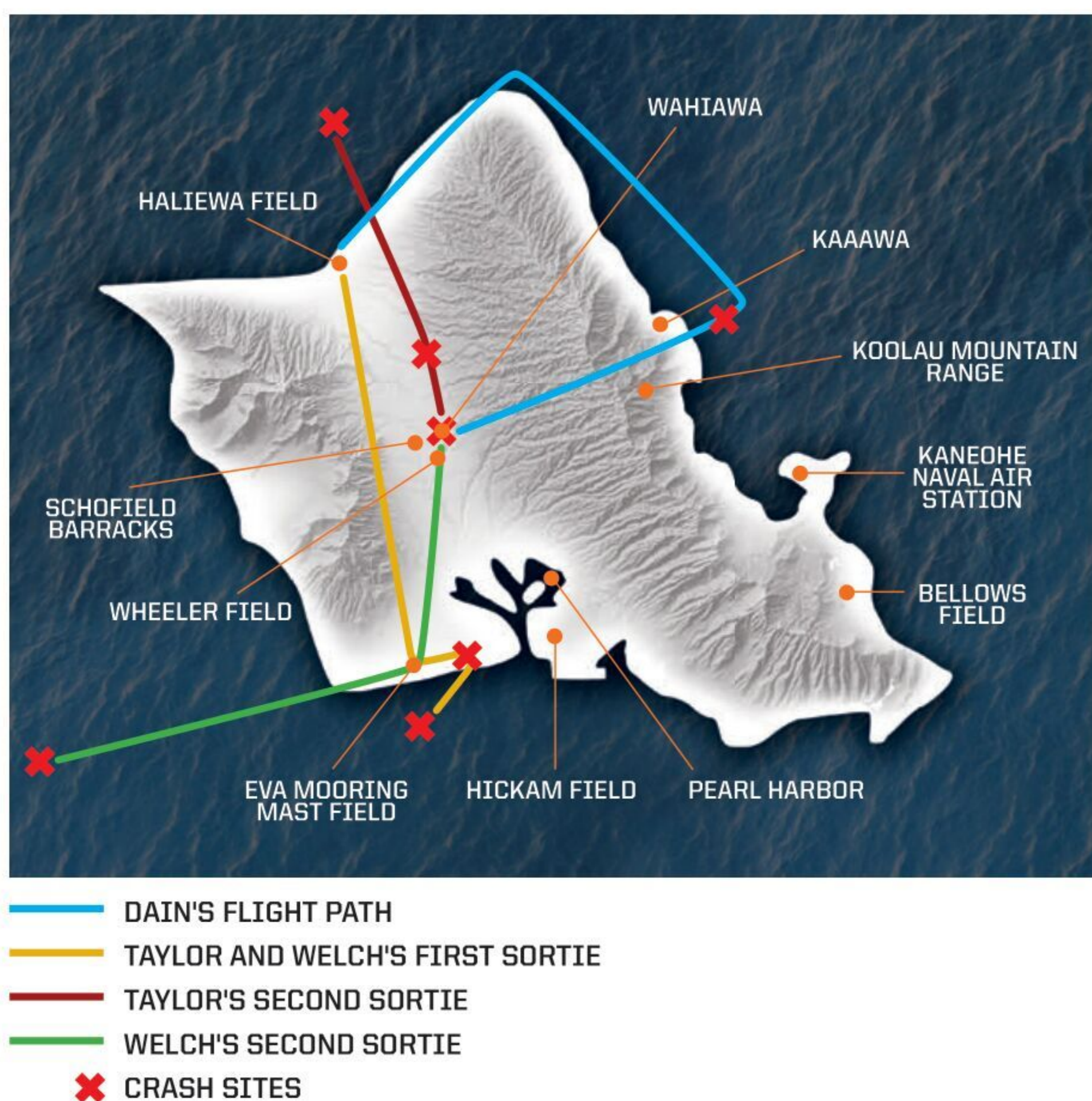
**0735** Recon E13A1 (later coded Jake by the Allies) from cruiser Chikuma reports main fleet in Pearl Harbor.

**0740** Cmdr. Fuchida fires flares to signal attack formation.

**0749** Cmdr. Fuchida radios "To" code for attack; all pilots to begin assault on military bases on Oahu.

**0751** Zuikaku D3A and escort attack Wheeler Field.

*Continued on page 12*



Low on ammo, Dains, Taylor and Welch headed for Wheeler Field. Dains arrived first and told the armorer that he had got into some combat, and the armorer reported seeing a few holes in the P-40. Dains quickly got back into the air just as Welch landed. One sergeant climbed up onto Welch's plane and asked what he needed. Welch wanted ammo, and the sarge directed him to taxi to a particular hangar. Two armorers loaded Welch's "160" with belts of .50-caliber ammo just as Taylor landed. Welch ran into the hangar, found a pair of coveralls to go over his tuxedo pants (he was still dressed from a party the night before), and scrambled back into the plane. While the armorers serviced his airplane, Taylor had a major bawling him out for taking off without orders. Then Japanese planes came roaring at the field strafing everything in sight. Ignoring the major, Taylor opened his throttle and ran right over the ammo dolly in his haste to get off the ground before the strafers got him in their sights. Taylor and Welch got airborne opposite each other. According to witnesses, Taylor fires his guns before his P-40 even left the ground.

Targets were everywhere the two P-40 pilots looked. They were Kaga Vals—the final dive-bomber unit to attack the harbor (primarily the USS Nevada during its sortie). Welch went into a max climb to the left as an enemy Val tried to lock on to his tail while firing at him. This lasted for about 10 seconds before the Val fell off to the left because it couldn't match Welch's rate of climb.

At last, Welch saw Taylor, who was sandwiched between several D3As and was being fired at by Val AII-250. The pilot was Lt. Saburo Makino, leader of all Kaga dive-bombers; he was trying to save one

## ATTACK TIMELINE

*Continued from page 10*

**0751** Shokaku fighters strafe a civilian plane in their flight path.

**0752** Fuchida radios "To-Ra" to Akagi and to D3A leader Takahashi: "Surprise achieved." Takahashi does not alter his D3A mission and hits Pearl before torpedo planes.

**0753** Shokaku and Zuikaku Zeros hit Kaneohe Naval Air Station, and Hiryu Zeros hit Ewa Mooring Mast Field.

**0754** Akagi Zeros shoot down a civilian plane in their flight path.

**0755** The attack on Pearl Harbor begins with Takahashi's D3A bombs on NAS on Ford Island and at Hickam Field.

**0756** First torpedo drops hit USS Utah and USS Raleigh.

**0757** First torpedo hits Battleship Row. The torpedo strike lasts 11 minutes.

**0805** High-level bombers begin their run down Battleship Row.

**0810** USS Arizona explodes.

**0812** "Radio Pearl" sends message to Washington D.C.: "Hostilities with Japan commenced with air raid on Pearl Harbor."

**0815** KGMB interrupts music with second call ordering all military personnel to report for duty.

**0820** A dozen B-17s from the mainland reach Oahu after a 14-hour flight, and 18 SBDs from USS Enterprise arrive over Oahu; both flights are caught between enemy and friendly fire.

**0830** Final drop by circling high-level bombers miss USS Nevada. First wave begins to retreat to the carriers and strafes airfields.

**0835** Tanker Neosho moves from Ford Island mooring.

**0839** Several ships sight a midget sub in the harbor and they fire—USS Monaghan sub.

**0850** Second wave arrives east of Oahu. Lt. Cmdr. Shimazaki signals "To" code for attack.

**0854** Attack run begins over Kaneohe NAS.

**0905** Lt. Egusa begins the dive-bomber attack on the ships in the Harbor.

**0930** USS Shaw explodes; USS Nevada completes a sortie short of the main channel; bombers focus to sink it and block the channel. Japanese second wave strafes airfields to ensure a safe departure.



Left: A small portion of the devastation and destruction of the Pearl Harbor attack is evident in this photo.

Below: Five JRS flying boats were able to takeoff to search for the enemy carriers. (Photo courtesy of author.)



## WRONG PLACE, WRONG TIME

### Other aircraft airborne that day

At 0620, three PBYs were ordered into the air on a routine submarine patrol that had nothing to do with any knowledge of an impending attack. One found a midget sub and helped the USS Ward to sink it. When the attack on Pearl Harbor started, they were diverted to search for the Japanese carriers. At 0700, four PBYs took off on a training mission with submarine USS Gudgeon off the island of Lanai. They, too, were diverted to search for Japanese carriers. One flew into a Japanese Val formation and managed to survive an air-to-air battle.

Eighteen unarmed SBDs from the USS Enterprise were unwittingly flown into battle (six were lost—one, to ground fire), and 12 B-17s came in from California (two were lost). They arrived just after the Japanese began the war in the Pacific. At 0915-0930, while USS Nevada was being hit by Vals, a courageous PBY pilot Lt. Cmdr. Massie Hughes and a full crew braved all the strafing and plodded down the seaplane ramp at Ford Island. In the midst of the smoke and explosions, they plowed through the water of the main channel and took off, intending to search for the Japanese carriers. They had an uneventful 12-hour flight northwest of Oahu. Another PBY pilot, Ens. Ted Marshall, was so angry about losing his aircraft at Pearl Harbor Naval Air Station that he dashed over to the old Luke Field side of Ford Island, braved the fires and bullets and climbed into the available aircraft until he found a TBD

torpedo bomber that could still be flown. Even though this aircraft was hardly suitable for air-to-air combat, the citation for his Silver Star simply says that he followed and attacked a Japanese unit until his fuel gauge said "return."

The crew of a B-18 on Molokai were told to return to their duty base at Wheeler, and when they arrived over Oahu, they were fired on by Ft. Ruger fire and then Hickam fire; they landed at Wheeler just after a Japanese strafing attack. Within 300 miles of Oahu, the USS Enterprise put up a four-plane combat air patrol, an inner air patrol of two bombers and then more planes. Although some Japanese units, with their ammunition and bombs expended, were still over Oahu surveying the damage, Pearl Harbor NAS continued to get aircraft airborne to search for Japanese carriers. Four SOCs were assigned sectors. One ran out of fuel and was found floating in the ocean two days later. The pilot was OK—but thirsty.

Two bomb-damaged, hastily repaired Kingfishers were assigned the southern sector just west of the Big Island. The one from the USS Pennsylvania made it back to Ford Island, but bullet holes in the main float allowed it to fill with water, and the plane sank. The USS Maryland OS2U ran out of fuel and crashed offshore at Barbers Point. Its gunner tried to save the pilot, but he died en route to the hospital. The gunner was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross. Five "slow

and Sikorsky" JRS flying boats from Ford Island fanned out over the Pacific. Normally used as transports, the planes' defenses were augmented by sailors armed with bolt-action rifles. One volunteer defender was an oil-soaked Marine from the USS Oklahoma. Two JRSs had the due north sector. The one on the west side of the track was briefly attacked by a combat air patrol Shokaku Zero, yet the one on the east side, JRS I-J-1, went closest to the Japanese fleet—but not close enough. The five JRS pilots were awarded the Navy Cross for the mission, and JRS I-J-1 is stored at the National Air and Space Museum's Paul E. Garber Preservation, Restoration and Storage Facility in Suitland, Maryland.

The nine SBDs from USS Enterprise that arrived at Ford Island in the early morning were given a mission early in the afternoon. The Enterprise task force put up three pairs of SOC's from some cruisers. One pair engaged an Akagi fighter just north of Nihoa Island. After playing "through the waves" over the ocean, the damaged Akagi fighter returned to its carrier. The ground crews at all the AAF bases checked for undamaged planes and quickly repaired the damaged ones. At Hickam, four A-20s were hastily loaded with 600-pound bombs and then trekked west to bomb the four landing craft that were reported to be steaming in off Barbers Point. They were discovered to be sampans from Oahu carrying Japanese-American fishermen. The next day, the sampans were strafed by AAF fighters, a PB4Y, and an SBD; six fishermen were killed and several injured. Three B-17Ds based at Hickam were ordered to cover a sector northwest of Oahu to fill in for a PB4Y that had been attacked and was thought to be lost. For some reason, the first to begin its takeoff run wound up on its nose and ruined its four propellers. The other two had an unproductive flight.

More surviving planes at Hickam Field and the B-17s from California were put to use. Two B-18s were sent on a mission due north, but they saw neither the Japanese fleet nor the JRS flying boats that preceded them. An afternoon mission by four more A-20s got a long sector along with three B-17s that went southeast.

At 0950, from remote Bellows Field on Oahu's east shore, an 86th Observation Squadron O-47 circled Oahu, and three more followed at 1020. The 44th PS ground crews at Bellows hastily repaired more P-40s and had a flight of five in the air just after noon and six P-40s up by 1600 hours.

Late in the afternoon, a large unit of torpedo planes was launched from the USS Enterprise to attack a carrier that turned out to be a U.S. ship. The F4Fs returned to the Enterprise but were waved off and directed to Ford Island. Then the TBDs arrived, and the ship allowed them to come aboard. That evening, as the F4Fs arrived over a dark Pearl Harbor, the tragedy was all too evident. Tracers—a few at first and then many—searched for enemy aircraft, and several F4Fs were shot down by U.S. harbor firepower. Guided by that anti-aircraft fire, a AAF B-18 came in from Hilo, Hawaii and landed at nearby Hickam Field.

As the moon rose, a P-40 unit led by 2nd Lt. Charles McDonald was vectored by radio to intercept an unknown plane that had its lights on. As the P-40s kept climbing, McDonald eventually asked the tower, "Where is Venus this time of year?" Thus ended the first U.S. night-fighter mission of WW II. (McDonald went on to score 27 kills and was the third-highest ace in the Pacific; he also commanded the 475th FG.)

of his men from Taylor. Makino's 7.7mm bullets tore through Taylor's canopy, fractured a control wheel and grazed his left arm, which "... didn't hurt much ..." and the bullet fragments ruined his tuxedo pants.

Welch dived and fired on the group: the radioman in Flyer 1c Gen Ono's AII-246, PO2c Naoto Sato, to the right and forward of Taylor, returned his fire. Ignoring the gunner, Welch lowered his flaps to avoid overshooting Makino. The radioman, CPO Sueo Sukida, had been filming events with a movie camera and tried to switch his rear gun, but it was too late. Welch's .50-calibers hit the fuel tank. The plane burst into flames and immediately crashed into a home in Wahiawa, just outside the gate to Wheeler Field. Relieved of the pressure from behind, Taylor focused on Kaga D3A Civilian Conservation Corps Camp Brody No. 2 north of Wahiawa.

Following their attack, the D3A formation scattered. Taylor singled one out and chased it over the ocean north of Oahu where, after being hit many times, it crashed. That Kaga D3A was piloted by PO2c Nobuo Tsuda with radioman PO1c Fukumitsu Imai.

Welch turned and flew solo back to the southwest tip of Oahu to look for targets. According to his combat reports, he saw another plane just like the rest: "Light bomber, retractable landing gear, rear gunner," and he attacked. "His rear gunner was either dead or asleep, for I didn't get fired at." He chased the plane some five miles offshore and put several bursts in it until it crashed. The plane was a Kaga Zero, not a Val, as Welch reported.

Welch and Taylor at last returned to Haleiwa, got into Taylor's car and headed for Wheeler. They stopped next to the crashed AII-236 (just off the road) to see the results of Taylor's handiwork. Just as they did, the 47th Squadron Commander Maj. Gordon Austin arrived in his car. He had just returned to Oahu from Molokai, where he had been hunting deer. He started to reprimand the two for not going straight to Haleiwa, but they set him straight; they had already downed a number of Japanese aircraft, and this was one of them.

John Dains returned to Wheeler after his second sortie, and he switched to a silver



A crashed Kaga D3A Val is being investigated by technical intelligence.  
(Photo courtesy of author.)



The destruction at Wheeler Field included the loss of this burned-out P-40B. Note the P-26 on the right.  
(Photo courtesy of author.)



## CIVILIAN PLANES INVOLVED IN PEARL HARBOR ATTACK

**Aeronca**—Gambo Flying Service; Marguerite H Gambo, instructor (owner of flying service)

**Aeronca**—Gambo Flying Service; Roy Vitousek, renter (aircraft now exhibited at Pacific Air Museum)

**Aeronca**—Honolulu Jr. Chamber of Commerce Flying Club; G.H. “Tommy” Tomberlin, instructor (first plane attacked on December 7).

**Interstate “Cadet”**—Andrews Flying Service; Cornelia C. Fort, instructor

**Piper Cub**—K-T Flying Service; Robert Tyce, instructor (owner of flying service). Tyce was killed by strafing fire after he had landed.

**Piper Cub**—K-T Flying Service; M.F. Poston, student (solo, flying with Tyce on wing); first plane shot down on December 7, pilot bailed out; OK.

**Piper Cub**—K-T Flying Service; Clyde Brown, renter (shot down; crew missing)

**Piper Cub**—K-T Flying Service; Henry Blackwell, renter (shot down; crew missing)

## Going to war in a Piper Cub? Civilians in the air at Pearl

In the movie “Tora! Tora! Tora!,” do you remember the woman instructor who joined up with a Japanese formation? She depicted a half a dozen or more stories in one character. There were actually eight single-engine civilian planes in the air; all but one were attacked, and three were shot down. Of these, two are still missing. The first civilian-plane attack was the first American/Japanese air-to-air encounter of the day. The aircraft was the Honolulu Junior Chamber of Commerce flying club’s Aeronca flown by G.H. “Tommy” Tomberlin and a student.

Two Piper Cubs were attacked over the Koolau Mountains. One was shot down—the day’s first aircraft crash—but its pilot, M.F. Poston, bailed out safely. Roy Vitousek and his son had rented an Aeronca for a Sunday flight around Oahu. They flew into a Soryu torpedo plane formation and were shot up by rear gunners. This plane is now in the Pacific Aviation Museum, Ford Island, Pearl Harbor.

Two Piper Cubs were shot down, and they and their pilots were never found.

Pilot instructor Cornelia Fort had her student—an Interstate Cadet—practicing touch-and-gos at John Rogers Field (now Honolulu International Airport). They were strafed, but she was able to make a quick landing. Flying an Aeronca, instructor Marguerite Gambo was able to dodge the Japanese planes and land at John Rogers during a break in the action.

The Pan Am Clipper ship Anzac was soon to arrive from California, but when they heard the news of the attack as they approached the coast of Oahu, they turned towards Hilo, Hawaii. The Ambassador to the U.S. from Burma and his secretary were aboard.

P-36. He took off and was joined by nearly 25 pilots from both Haleiwa and Wheeler. On his return, Schofield Barracks opened up with BARS and small-arms fire, just as shown in the movie “From Here to Eternity.” Second Lt. John C. Wretschko, 47th PS, was flying his P-40 near Dains during the landing approach and got a hole in his left wing. Unfortunately, John Dains—the young man who scored the first American victory in WW II—crashed and burned in a pineapple field just short of Wheeler Field. He was the victim of friendly fire.

It was about two weeks before the first commendations were handed out. Every Senator and Congressman in Washington, D.C. pored over the commendations hoping that a hometown boy’s efforts could be put up for consideration for the Medal of Honor. Many recommendations were read to Congress but few actually made the grade of “Above and beyond the call of duty.” Then came the awards. On January 5, 1942, Welch and Taylor were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, and Taylor was awarded a Purple Heart for that gash on his left arm. Posthumously, John Dains was awarded a Silver Star and the Purple Heart.

It took 40 years for a witness to some forward with testimony about a combat near

Kaawa, Oahu—an account that was later connected to John Dains. The Japanese unit, type of plane and crew names have now been identified. In the late 1990s, a dive team noted the tail of what might be that D3A sticking out of the silt on the ocean floor.

In September 1992, Hurricane Iniki uncovered shards of AI-211 that had washed ashore near Barbers Point. In June 2005, members of the Hawaiian Aviation Preservation Society and a Joint MIA-POW BII-233 crash coordinates east of the old Ewa Mooring Mast Field. They had hoped to find the Japanese crew burial site before developers damaged the frail landmarks.

George Welch had 16 kills in WW II. After the War, he went back to civilian life and became a test pilot for North American Aviation. One of aviation’s more enduring but hard to confirm rumors is that in 1947, just before Chuck Yeager’s famous X-1 flight, Welch broke the sound barrier in a dive with the XF-86. His death came on May 25, 1953 in a prototype YF-199 crash.

Ken Taylor also scored one more victory in January 1943 in the South Pacific, and he finished the War with five kills. He continued his military career and eventually commanded Alaskan ANG. Brig. Gen. Ken Taylor died on Nov 26, 2006, at the age of 86.✈

Hollywood has made the entire planet aware of the heroics of Lieutenants George Welch and Ken Taylor as they scrambled to get their P-40s into the air at a moment's notice. All across Oahu, however, other pilots were also doing their best to react to an attack that caught them completely off guard. These are some of their stories.



# **DEFENDING THE FLEET**

The amazing response to total surprise

BY DAVID AIKEN

When more than 350 Japanese fighters, dive-bombers, and torpedo bombers attacked Pearl Harbor, limited numbers of Curtiss P-40B/Cs and Curtiss P-36As (in foreground) were the only aerial defense in Hawaii. Although the initial surprise was complete, enterprising pilots rushed to outlying fields and got a few undamaged Curtiss fighters into the air. Today, these warbirds are part of the Fighter Collection based at Duxford Airfield in Cambridgeshire, England. (Photo by John Dibbs/Facebook.com/theplanepicture)



In 1941, the U.S. Army Air Force was tasked with the defense of the Hawaii-based Pacific Fleet while in Pearl Harbor. Wheeler Field in central Oahu was home of the Army fighters. The 18th Pursuit Group was the senior fighter unit, receiving enough new P-40s for all its squadrons. The new 15th PG got hand-me-down P-36s for two squadrons and added some P-40s amid the 47th Squadron's P-36s. Yet training accidents and maintenance for both groups caused squadrons to borrow aircraft. The 15th Group occasionally borrowed P-40s from the 18th to upgrade pilots.

Two outlying training airfields were needed for boresighting guns and conducting gunnery training. A civilian airfield was leased at Haleiwa on Oahu's North Shore, and the newly built Bellows Field was on Oahu's southeast coast. These locations helped ease crowding at Wheeler and gave opportunity for field training. Pursuit squadrons rotated bases. On November 7, 1941, the 44th Squadron's dozen P-40s of the 18th PG moved to Bellows Field for a month.

On December 3, the 15th Group's 47th Squadron replaced the 46th PS at Haleiwa. The 47th had so few P-40s that two pilots were assigned to each Warhawk. One P-36 was borrowed from 15th PG headquarters to get the 11 P-36s and eight P-40s, plus a couple of hack P-26s, necessary for field training.

## Unprepared at Every Level on Every Base

Pilots were given the night off on Saturday, December 6, for a formal dance at Wheeler's officer's club. New to Hawaii and the 47th, 2nd Lt. Karl F. Harris got the short straw as officer of the day for his first assignment in the squadron. As the only officer left at Haleiwa that night, he was nervous. He asked 2nd Lt. Charles Kneen to return early to help him, if the need arose. Kneen returned at midnight.

The next morning, on the other side of the mountains, Japanese planes began bombing and strafing. Wheeler was the first airfield bombed, and the 18th PG P-40s on the east end were badly hit. Ground crews and pilots made frantic efforts to save the undamaged aircraft amid the burning wrecks despite the fact that Japanese planes were still strafing everything in sight. It was hell on earth, an image bolstered by smoke from the burning P-40s that drifted west to cover and help protect the 45th and 46th Pursuit Squadrons.

In the 47th PS orderly room at Wheeler, chief clerk Sgt. Jimmy Bird dialed Haleiwa with trembling fingers: He was almost incoherent about the attack. Suffering an anxiety attack, Harris shook Kneen awake. Kneen agreed to take over; he gathered the enlisted men and ordered everyone to wartime status. They were to preflight all aircraft, have them fully fueled and armed, and place parachutes in each cockpit. Without .50-caliber ammo, the two-gun P-36s could only have one .30 caliber armed. In the midst of this hour-long effort, a second call came from Wheeler—2nd Lt.



This is a nice formation shot of the 6th Pursuit Squadron's P-40Bs and Cs from the 18th Pursuit Group at Wheeler Field in August 1941 prior to hostilities. This was before the advent of large white radio call numbers on fuselage sides.



A gathering of pilots that got into combat during the attacks. From left, 2nd Lts. Harry Brown (47th PS), Phil Rasmussen (46th PS), Ken Taylor (47th PS), George Welch (47th PS), and Lewis Saunders pose by a P-36A Mohawk after the December 7 attack. (Photo from the Honolulu Star-Bulletin)

## MIXED SIGNALS

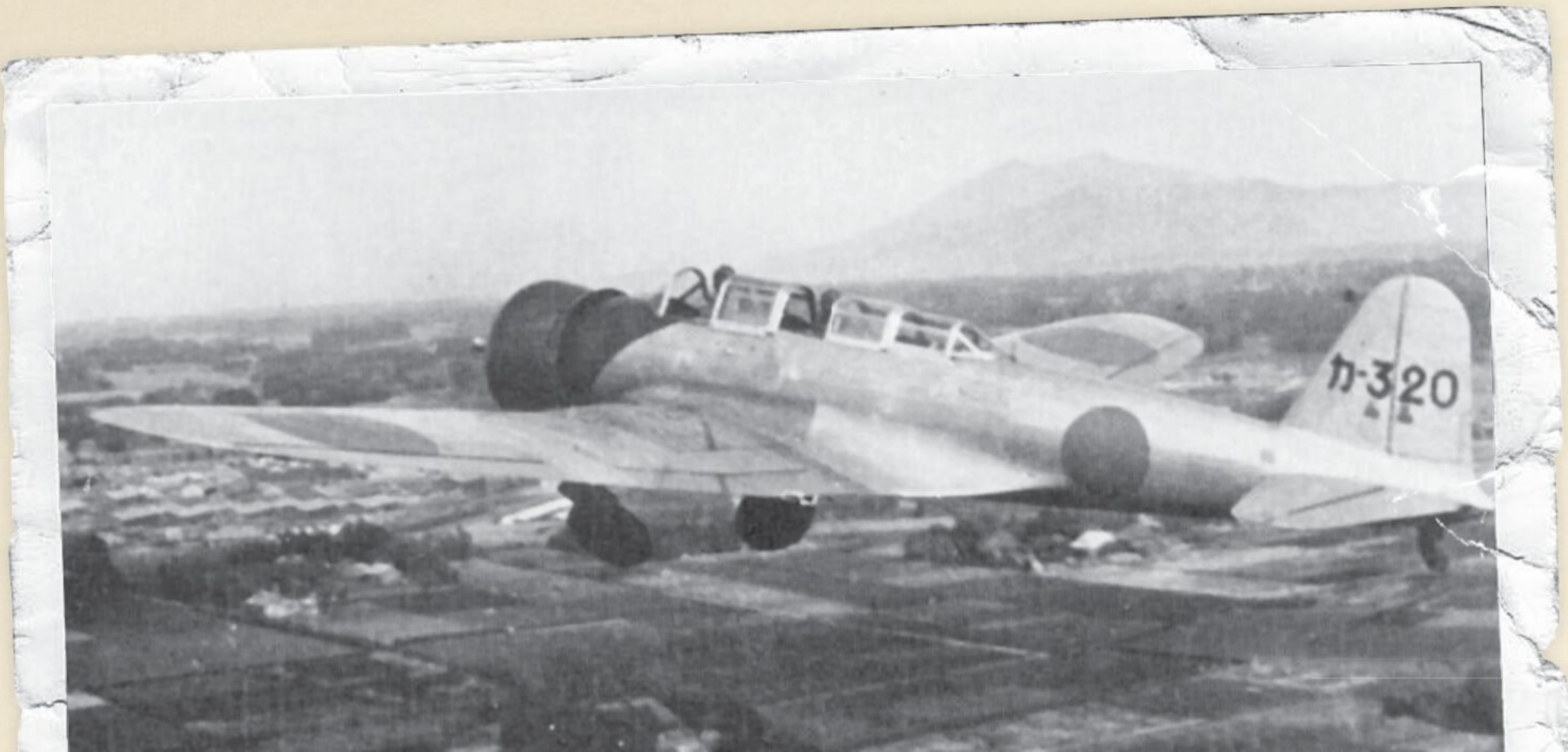
At 0740, December 7, 1941, Cmdr. Mitsuo Fuchida had his radioman fire a flare signaling the change to "surprise attack" formation. The Zero fighters were high above the rest of the attacking units to assure defense if U.S. interceptors found them first. But from that perch, the Zeros did not see the single flare and did not initiate their close role—a Zero Buntai (squadron) escorting each subunit of attacking planes. Frustrated, Fuchida ordered a flare fired directly at the lead Mitsubishi. The Zeros began their formation change.

Two flares, however, meant "surprise lost," meaning that the Aichi D3A dive-bombers were to lead the charge. Lt. Cmdr. Kakuichi Takahashi of Shokaku then heard the "To" signal to initiate the attack. He signaled the Zuikaku D3As to strike Wheeler Field while his own unit forged ahead to blaze a path.

Fuchida witnessed the error and, immediately after the Zuikaku D3As hit Wheeler, moved to rein in his dive-bomber leader. Fuchida signaled the "Tora" signal, meaning surprise was a success. Alas, Takahashi's radioman had already turned away from his set to charge his guns. Fuchida's fear was that the smoke from the dive-bombing at NAS Pearl Harbor would blind the low-level torpedo attackers.

The Rising Sun shone favorably on Japan that morning. Attacking NAS Pearl Harbor on Ford Island, Takahashi and his second wingman hit in the midst of parked Consolidated PBVs, while his number three caused a huge hole in the concrete ramp that the Catalinas used to get airborne. The smoke from Ford Island went westerly rather than over Battleship Row.

**The Nakajima B5N Kate torpedo bomber was devastatingly effective. Its torpedoes had been modified to function in the shallow depth of the harbor, and it scored a number of direct hits. Kates in the attack were a dark color.**



George Welch called to have them prepare the aircraft for combat.

As the first wave of Japanese aircraft strafed Bellows Field, wounding a medic, that field frantically prepared for the war that had descended. At Wheeler, four 44th PS pilots piled into a car and headed across the Koolau Range for Bellows. It took almost an hour to get there.

### A Tragic Rush

Second Lt. George Whiteman got to his assigned P-40 to find another second

lieutenant already in the cockpit. Whiteman yelled, "Get out of my plane!" Although he saw enemy planes coming, he got in the air but crashed at the end of the runway as the Zeroes caught up with him. First Lt. Sam Bishop was able to use that diversion to get in the air, but was caught and crashed in the ocean about a mile north of the airfield. Ready to start his engine, 2nd Lt. Hans Christiansen was alerted by the mechanics. He was able to get out onto his wing just as a strafing Zero killed him. His body fell into the arms of 2nd Lt. Phil Willis, 86th Observation

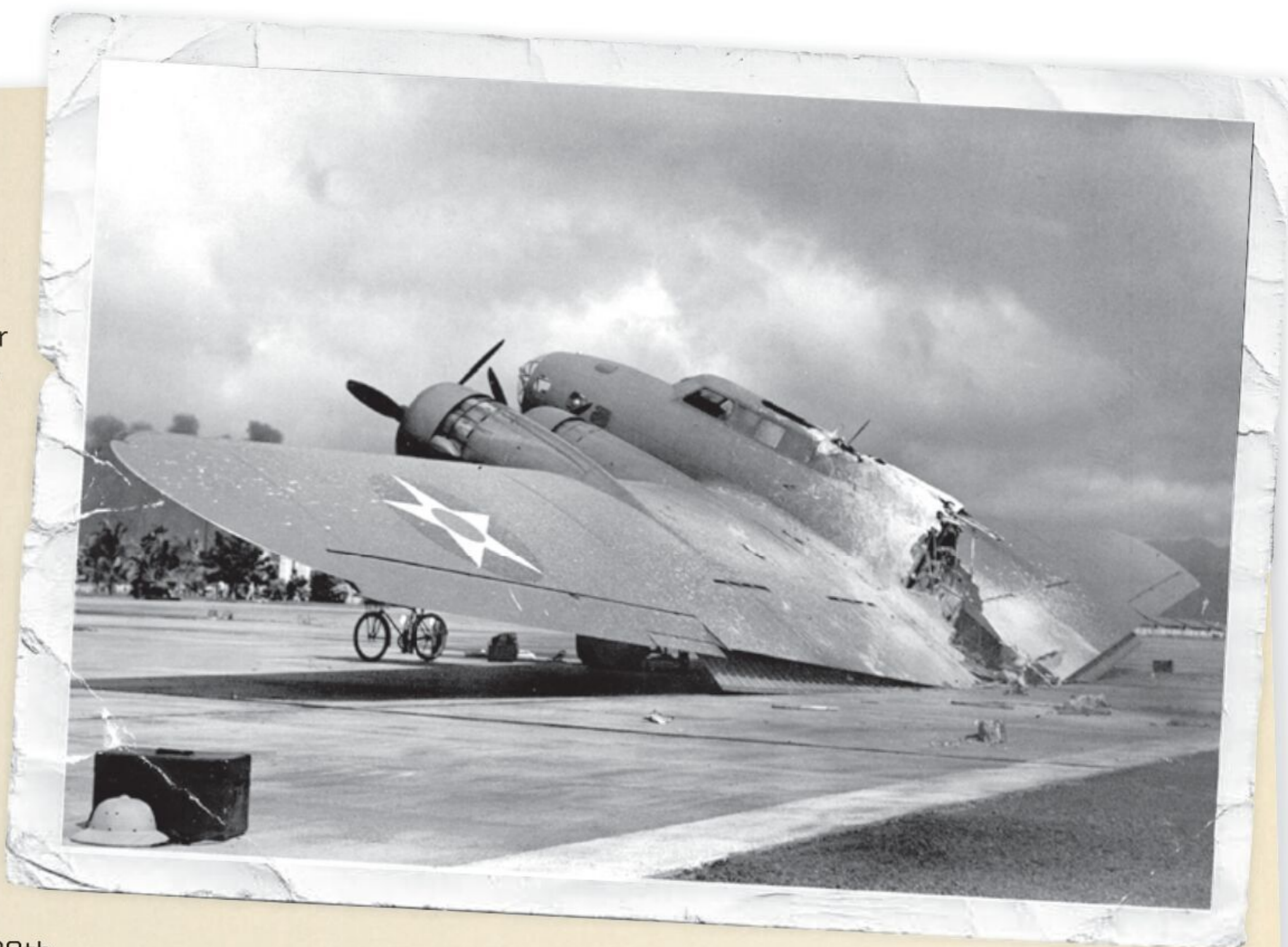
## BOMBER FLIGHT INTO INFAMY

On that fateful morning in December 1941, 12 unarmed B-17s on their way to reinforce the Philippines arrived over Oahu to find Pearl Harbor and Hickam Field under attack.

Six bombers, led by Major Truman Landon, were from the 19th Bomb Group's 38th Reconnaissance Squadron. Two of them, Landon's 41-2413 and 41-2408 piloted by Lieutenant Karl Barthelmess, were brand-new B-17Es. The other four were obsolescent B-17Cs that would never see combat again.

Following were six B-17Es from the 88th Reconnaissance Squadron, 7th Bomb Group, led by Captain Richard Carmichael in 41-2429.

Carmichael decided to fly northeast, "just off the ground," and try Bellows Field. At Bellows he encountered more chaos, and at Kaneohe and Wheeler, too. With little choice left he turned into the wind, lowered the landing gear and flaps and, in a near stall, dragged the Flying Fortress onto the runway of the short auxiliary strip at Haleiwa. Lieutenant Harold Chaffin had landed there five minutes earlier in 41-2430. Lieutenants Robert Thacker in 41-2432, Harry Brandon in 41-2433, and David Rawls in 41-2434 braved Japanese and friendly fire to land at Hickam. Lieutenant Robert Ramsey, Brandon's copilot, recalled "getting shot at, muchly, by both countries." Lieutenant Frank Bostrom in 41-2416 landed on a golf course at Kahuku. One B-17C was destroyed on landing and another damaged beyond repair,



but all eight B-17Es and two B-17Cs were safely down by the time the Navy issued orders to "cease firing on B-17s attempting to land at Hickam."

The 88th Squadron arrived shortly after the 38th. Captain Richard Carmichael and later 1st Lt. Harold N Chaffin passed up Hickam and Barbers Point, but was intercepted each time. Dodging other enemy aircraft, he landed on the Kahuku Golf Course.

Two more 88th aircraft landed at Hickam, timing their landings between Japanese attacks. The fate of the last B-17E was less certain and there were several conflicting reports on where it landed. Regardless, these pilots and aircrew were extremely lucky to have made it through the melee, and most of these bombers were operational again in a few days.

—Louis DeFrancesco

**A low-flying Zero fighter shot up this B-17E as it was landing, and that caused a magnesium flare fire in the radio operator's compartment, which burned the plane completely in half. The unit's Flight Surgeon lost his life as he made a desperate run from the stricken bomber to safety.**

Squadron. Strafing left the squadron with just four flyable P-40s.

Meanwhile, several 47th pilots tore down the back roads for Haleiwa: Welch and 2nd Lt. Ken Taylor were first to arrive. Few understand that following in the dust of the Welch/Taylor car had been another with the Squadron's executive officer, 1st Lt. Robert Rogers, with 2nd Lts. John Dains and Harry Brown. Dains piled into the first available white-spinnered P-40 and took off after the strafing Japanese Aichi D3A that had followed the two cars. He was reputed to have caught and shot down that aircraft, which would have given him the first American kill of World War II, but if this happened, it never made it into the record books.

Welch and Taylor made their often-told combat over Ewa Mooring Mast Field. In P-40, number 160, Welch claimed two, and in number 155, Taylor got a pair as well. (For more information, see "The Ghosts of Pearl Harbor," in this issue.)

Meanwhile at Wheeler, 2nd Lt. Henry W. Lawrence, of the 45th PS, got a P-36 ready. He located his commanding officer, Capt. Aaron Tyer, and asked for orders. "Get to Hickam [the Army bomber base] to escort any bombers." On return, Lawrence saw "his" royal blue-cowled P-36 take off behind



three red-cowled P-36s. First Lt. Lewis M. Sanders, the 46th PS CO, along with 2nd Lts. John M. Thacker, Philip M. Rasmussen, and Gordon Sterling were directed to attack aircraft above Kaneohe Naval Air Station on Oahu's east shore. They battled several Zeros; Sterling is still missing in Kailua Bay.

First Lt. Samuel M. Bishop, 44th Pursuit Squadron, survived when he was shot down off Oahu's east coast. (Photo from USAF, courtesy of John W. Lambert and David Aiken)



Haleiwa, on Oahu's North Shore, was overlooked during the attacks because it wasn't an official USAAF/USN field; it was a civilian field temporarily leased by the military to use for gunnery training. A number of P-40s and P-36s had been moved to that field for that purpose and formed the bulk of the friendly fighters aloft during the attack. The small "roads" (top) are taxiways to aircraft parking under the trees. (Photo courtesy of David Aiken)





## Fly What Was Available

At Wheeler, as soon as the next aircraft was ready, 1st Lt. Malcolm "Mike" Moore got a red-nosed P-36, number 91, airborne and went north for the first of two missions. At Haleiwa, Brown got airborne in the borrowed 15th PG P-36 with a tricolored cowling, followed by 1st Lt. John J. Webster in a P-40. Rogers was then able to fly a white-cowled P-36.

Webster located two Zeros flying west along the North Shore. They were from the unit that had left the battle with Sanders and company. Webster only had three of his P-40s .30-caliber guns operating. On sighting the fighters, he dived from 8,000 feet but gained speed too quickly and overshot his quarry. Webster zoom-climbed and dove on them again, but this time, they saw him coming and turned into him.

In the fight that ensued, the lead Zero got two bursts into Webster's plane: The first cut part of the rudder-control cable, and the second splintered in the cockpit, sending metal into Webster's left calf, earning him a

Purple Heart. Brown and Moore from Wheeler joined the fight and attacked the two Zeros that had hit Webster. One immediately burst into flame; neither Zero returned to its carrier.

## Traffic Became Fierce

More pilots made hurried arrivals at Haleiwa and more got aircraft in the air. First Lt. John C. Wretschko launched in a P-40, while 2nd Lt. Irvin W. Henze got his P-40 in the air without gun covers. And 2nd Lt. Besby F. Holmes, still wearing his pinstripe suit from church, was so new to the P-36 that he was confused how to start it and got help from the ground crew.

Lawrence who had "lost" his P-36 to another pilot, finally got airborne from Wheeler and headed for Hickam. Tyler chose as his wingman 2nd Lt. Francis S. "Gabby" Gabreski. First Lt. Woodrow B. Wilmot, a flight leader with the 45th, teamed with 2nd Lt. William F. Haney in a P-36, who also over flew over Hickam but at higher altitude. Haney got hit in his engine by friendly



The early long-nose Warhawks, the P-40B/C, were in short supply, with many of them destroyed in the first-wave attack on Pearl Harbor. A number got into the air, however, and scored well against the enemy. The B/C P-40s are among the rarest flying warbirds today. This P-40C 41-13357 began its service life in 1941 at Patterson Field, Ohio and was shortly shipped to Puerto Rico for coastal and anti-submarine patrols. Later in the war it was overhauled for the Lend-Lease program with the Soviet Union. Today it is a part of part of the Fighter Collection based at Duxford Airfield. All Pearl Harbor P-40s were in dark olive drab paint at the time of the attack. (Photo by John Dibbs/Facebook.com/theplanepicture)

fire and dead-sticked into Wheeler, with the flight as cover. Angered, Haney located another P-36 and got back into the air, but AA from a cruiser again caused him to dead-stick back to Wheeler.

First Lt. Tarleton H. Watkins and 2nd Lt. Verle Jett got in the air, but the fate of their planes are unknown. Second Lt. Sam Hitchcock, of the 6th PS, got one of the 18th Group P-40s airborne. That was a miracle, as so many 18th PG aircraft had burned.

Second Lt. Fred E. Shifflet, of the 46th PS, picked his way through the wreckage that covered the ramp and got a P-40 in the air to fly south to Hickam Field. He tried to let those at Hickam know that U.S. fighters were now airborne by making a low pass across the field. His plane was riddled with small-arms fire, and he landed his sputtering plane at Wheeler with two flat tires.

Dains flew on to Wheeler for more ammo and departed just before the arrival of Welch and Taylor.

As that pair got ammo, a departing D3A unit began strafing Wheeler. Back in the air, Welch shot an Aichi

off of Taylor's tail, giving Taylor time to focus on a D3A that still had a bomb. Then Taylor latched onto another D3A and chased it north to Kauai where it crashed (unconfirmed) in the ocean along the northwest shore.

Rogers finally got a P-36 airborne and attacked one of the departing D3As from the squadron that Welch and Taylor had fought. Brown saw that Rogers's target was still flying and dispatched the plane near Kaena Point.

Welch flew back to Ewa to locate a departing D3A unit and a single Zero protecting that unit. He chased that Zero for five miles west of Barbers Point, where it crashed.

Yet again, Haney found a flyable aircraft, his third for the day. The P-40 crew chief had pounded shrapnel shards from a hole in the wing and replaced the prop spinner just as Haney arrived. Having learned the hard way, Haney flew north to avoid friendly fire, but the Japanese were gone by then.

Dains returned to Haleiwa after his second sortie, and a crew chief spotted many bullet holes in his P-40.

## THE FIRST U.S. AERIAL VICTORY

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The question of which pilot scored the first American victory of World War II may never be known with any certainty because of the lack of official claim confirmation of 2nd Lt. John Dains's actions. But we present the facts, as they are now known, below.

Soryu's air group commander, Lt. Takashige Egusa, was in the lead to attack the ships. He personally chose to bomb the cruiser USS New Orleans. His wingmen hit the destroyers Cassin paired with Downes, in dry dock with the battleship Pennsylvania.

The second Shotaicho (leader of three planes) aimed for the fuel tanker Neosho during its sortie. Both his wingmen went for the cruiser Helena next to the long "1010 Dock." As the third bomber in the Shotai pulled up, PO2c Hideyasu Kuwabara, the radioman and aircraft commander, must have seen their bomb miss the ship.

As they pulled away from their dive, Kuwabara's pilot, PO3c Kenji Maruyama, lost track of the Soryu aircraft ahead of them. Kuwabara directed his pilot to set a course for the carrier Soryu due north, flying just west of the Koolau Range.

They passed east of Wheeler Field and noted two cars headed north at high speed. One car was lagging behind the other by a mile or two. Kuwabara directed his pilot to strafe the cars. They almost got the second car, driven by 2nd Lt. Harry Brown; with his roommate, 2nd Lt. John Dains; and the 47th Pursuit Squadron executive officer, 1st Lt. Bob Rogers. The lead car was driven by 2nd Lt. George Welch with 2nd Lt. Ken Taylor. All were fighter pilots racing for a civilian airfield at Haleiwa.

There, a dirt runway paralleled the beach, where the entire squadron of P-40s and P-36s had been temporarily relocated for gunnery practice. As they were to do only target practice, the armorers only had .30-caliber ammo to load on the planes. Without .50 caliber for the cowling guns, only the four smaller guns could be armed.

Welch and Taylor got the first two P-40Bs in the air direct from the parking area under the trees. When Brown arrived, Dains quickly grabbed the next ready P-40 and got in the air. The executive officer, Bob Rogers, took charge of the field and told a crew to move a P-36 out from the tree line so that Brown could get a straight shot down the runway.

Brown got to the plane just as Maruyama and Kuwabara, who had followed the cars to the airport, circled to strafe the airfield. Brown hid behind the P-36, which took the



**John Dains during flight-school training. He is unofficially credited with a kill, but he died before he could file a claim. (Photo courtesy of the Dains family and David Aiken)**

brunt of the strafing. Maruyama was so enthused that he hit the handle to drop a bomb, which he did not have!

Maruyama turned north over the ocean, and although Dains did not survive to file a report, witnesses saw him catch up to the bomber. He chased the Aichi east to the northern tip of Oahu as they traded bullets, and then south, where witnesses watched him shoot the plane down just east of the tiny community of Kaaawa.

Dains swapped his P-40 for a P-36 and made another sortie with some 25 fighters. As they returned to Wheeler to land, AA from Schofield Barracks shot down Dains's aircraft. Those souvenir hunters first on the scene became really quiet when the U.S. insignia came into view.

While the Victory Credit Review Board may need to convene to rule officially, Dains achieved not only the first USAAF aerial victory of the day but also the first of WW II in American service. As of now, however, the record books don't give him that credit. Either Taylor or Welch hold that claim, but it isn't known which was actually first.

The search continues to determine the aircraft that got airborne that morning. The Wheeler aircraft marking system is still unknown. Guidance to the witnesses, photos of aircraft and people, and documents or letters that may solve such details would be greatly appreciated.

—David Aiken

## FRIENDLY FIRE DOWNS FIGHTING SIX WILDCATS

Launched by the carrier Enterprise shortly before 1700 on December 1941, six Fighting Six Wildcats escorted a strike consisting of 18 Torpedo Six TBDs and six VB-6 Dauntlesses fitted with smoke generators to mask the TBDs as they approached their targets. Unable to locate an enemy carrier reported to be 100 miles southeast, the strike returned to the Enterprise after nightfall. The VF-6 Wildcats under Lt. (jg) Francis "Fritz" Hebel were directed to land on Oahu instead of risking night carrier landings.

At 2100, VF-6 approached the Army's Hickam Field near Pearl Harbor. Although multiple broadcasts to all ships and batteries in the vicinity warned of their arrival, the Wildcats were immediately challenged for recognition signals, which they did not have. Within seconds, the night sky was bright with tracers. Ens. Herbert Menges was the initial victim of the storm of anti-aircraft fire and became the first U.S. naval fighter pilot to die in the Pacific War. Lt. (jg) Hebel suffered a severe skull fracture ditching his shot-up F4F near Wheeler Field, and Lt. (jg) Eric Allen bailed out at low altitude over Pearl Harbor with a bullet wound and internal injuries before landing in oily water near the minesweeper Vireo. Both Hebel and Allen succumbed to their injuries the next day.

Ens. James Daniels was the only one of the six airmen to land on an airfield, Ford Island Naval Air Station. Ens. Gayle Hermann landed on a small golf course on Ford Island, and Ens. David Flynn's F4F ran out of fuel, forcing him to parachute into a cane field near Barbers Point.

With a loss of three pilots and four aircraft, December 7, 1941 saw VF-6's worst casualties through June 1942.—*Debra Cleghorn*

An F4F of Fighting Squadron 6 aboard the USS Enterprise in early 1942. Four VF-6 Wildcats and two pilots were lost to friendly fire when they tried to land after the attacks.



Capt. Gordon Austin got orders to search the Kauai Straits. He gathered the available 47th PS aircraft and made an unproductive sortie, starting at 1100. Dains flew a white-cowled P-36, number 149.

The pilots of the 47th returned to Wheeler, intending to get .50-caliber ammo. On a paired-landing approach, Wretschko was flying his P-40 off of Dains's right wing when AA fire came up from Schofield Barracks. Both planes were hit, and Dains crashed at 1143. In "From Here to Eternity," author James Jones wrote a fictional account of the crash of Dains as he was shot down

near Schofield Barracks: "Tough...din't have no business there."

On April 4, 1942, five P-36s and three P-40s were proclaimed "distinguished" aircraft to be marked for their combat above Oahu. Alas, no further photos or documents support the award, and who flew which plane is unknown.

There are still many secrets and truths to be discovered about the frantic action that took place over Oahu that morning. And lost pilots are still yet to be found. May they never be forgotten. ➔