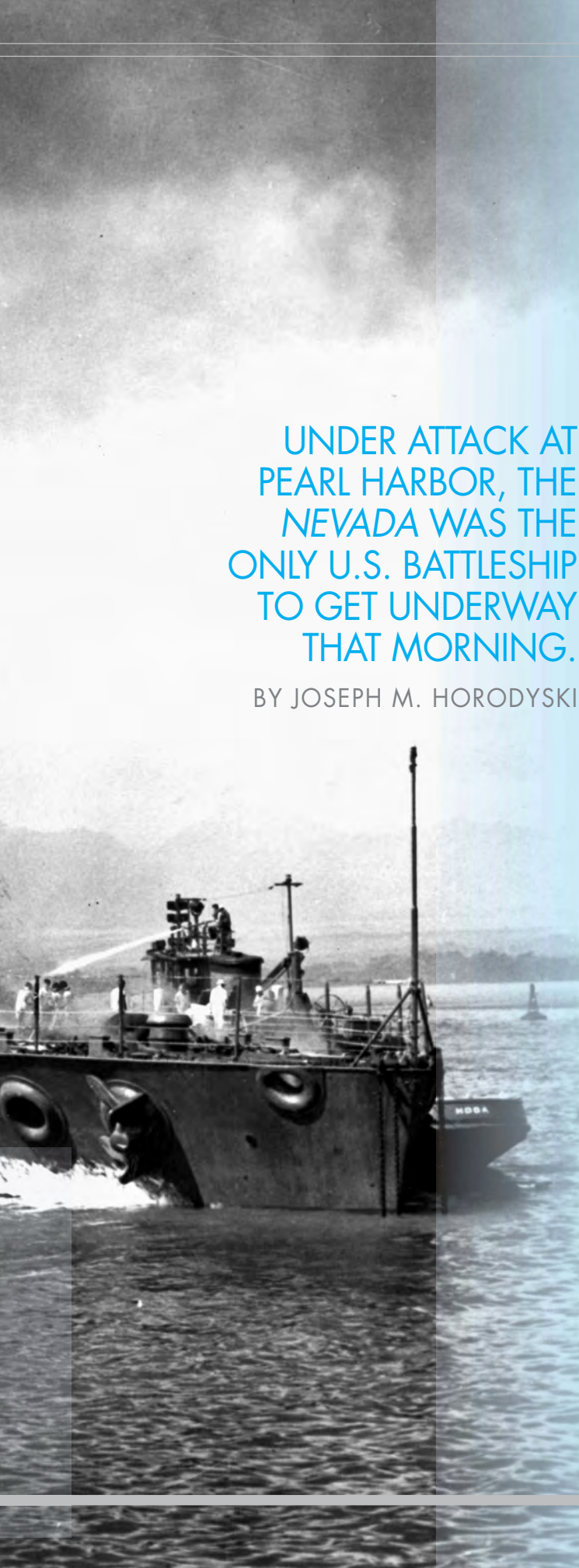


Down by the bow after being hit repeatedly by Japanese bombs and torpedoes during the attack on Pearl Harbor, the USS *Nevada* is assisted by the harbor tug *Hoga*, standing off the port bow to fight fires that continue to rage aboard the stricken battleship. The *Nevada* was the only capital ship of the U.S. Navy to get underway on December 7, 1941.

A black and white historical photograph showing the USS Nevada (BB-3) being towed by the harbor tug Hoga. The Nevada is heavily damaged, with smoke rising from its deck and a large crane on its deck. The Hoga is positioned to the right, pushing the Nevada forward. The scene is set in a harbor with hills in the background.

# *Nevada's* **RUN TO THE SEA**



## UNDER ATTACK AT PEARL HARBOR, THE NEVADA WAS THE ONLY U.S. BATTLESHIP TO GET UNDERWAY THAT MORNING.

BY JOSEPH M. HORODYSKI

**DURING THE DARK DAYS** of December 1941, when it seemed as if American and British bases were falling like dominoes across the Pacific, two incidents during the Japanese attack on the naval base at Pearl Harbor gave American morale a much needed boost.

One of these occurred when Army Air Corps lieutenants George Welch and Ken Taylor managed to get airborne in their two Curtiss P-40 Warhawk fighters from their base at Haleiwa Field and between them downed five enemy aircraft that Sunday morning, ending their attacks only when their ammunition and fuel were exhausted. But their exploits were not fully known until after the attack was over, they had been debriefed and their claims verified, and their story appeared in newspapers to a country hungry for positive war news. They achieved their exploits in the open skies over Hawaii, mostly unseen by those on the ground below.

The second incident was more widely witnessed. The World War I-vintage battleship USS *Nevada* was the only capital ship that day that managed to get underway during the attack and attempt an escape from the confining waters of Pearl Harbor to the open sea; battered and heavily damaged, her captain chose to beach her on a nearby spit of land so she could be repaired and readied to fight another day. Though her run for the sea lasted barely 30 minutes, it was later claimed (rightfully or not) to have been witnessed, at least in part, by just about every serviceman present that Sunday at Pearl Harbor from numerous vantage points. It was photographed while it was happening and gave an immediate lift to the spirits of those resisting the Japanese onslaught. Because of the vast number of witnesses, the story of her dash to the sea began to spread, either by word of mouth or telephone, almost immediately after the attack. Yet her name is little known today by the general public, and the story of how she became the only ship that day to nearly escape the Japanese attack is even less known.

The USS *Nevada* was launched on July 11, 1914. As the lead ship of her class she boasted what were then three new features that later became standard among U.S. ships: three turrets with three guns each; oil fuel rather than coal; and heavy armor plating to protect her vital machinery spaces rather than lighter armor spread over the entire ship. In the parlance of the day she was known as a “super dreadnought.”

At 583 feet long, she boasted 14-inch guns as main weaponry, achieved a speed of 20 knots, held a crew of 1,500 men, and displaced some 30,000 tons. Her World War I career was brief, mostly consisting of Atlantic convoy duty. After the war she served in the Atlantic Fleet until 1930, representing the United States at the Peruvian Centennial Exposition in July 1921.

In 1930, she was modernized with the replacement of her “basket” masts for tripod masts, a reduction in her secondary 5-inch armament, a new superstructure, new steam turbines, two new catapults for her three spotter aircraft, and eight new 5-inch anti-aircraft guns. At the conclusion of this overhaul, she joined the Pacific Fleet where she remained for the next 11 years.

On December 7, 1941, the *Nevada* and her sister ships were spending their first weekend in port in more than five months. Vice Admiral William Halsey had been given the task of reinforcing Wake Island’s Marine detachment with additional fighter aircraft. Halsey refused to take the slower battleships with him to try and keep up with his 30-knot fleet of aircraft carriers, and so they were resting at berth that Sunday morning instead of being out on patrol. *Nevada*’s position was on Battleship Row alongside Ford Island in the center of the harbor, immediately behind the USS *Arizona*, soon

to become famous in her own right. But, unlike other battleships moored nearby that day *Nevada* was not paired next to an adjacent battleship and so was free to maneuver when the attack began.

At 0600 hours Lieutenant Lawrence Ruff, *Nevada*'s senior communications officer, rose from his bunk. He had opted to turn in early following the ship's movie the previous evening. He had volunteered to escort the ship's chaplain, Father Drinnan, in a motor launch over to the hospital ship *USS Solace*, where Father Drinnan was scheduled to hear confessions and perform Sunday morning services. Upon his transfer to the *Nevada*, Lieutenant Ruff had had an opportunity to bring his wife and family over to live the idyllic lifestyle of the Hawaiian Islands, but both had decided that in the rising tensions of the day it was a potentially dangerous location to bring a family. They were soon to have their fears confirmed. Just before 0700 the *Nevada*'s launch pulled alongside the *Solace*, and Ruff enjoyed coffee and a light breakfast in the officer's lounge while Father Drinnan conducted the morning's services.

At 0600 the assistant quartermaster of the watch roused Ensign Joseph K. Taussig Jr., who had the forenoon watch. Taussig, 21, was the son of a rear admiral who had for the last two years publicly warned of the possibility of a Japanese attack in the Pacific, and so was perhaps better informed of the international situation than his fellow sailors of the same age. Taussig, a junior officer assigned to *Nevada*'s anti-aircraft section, was doubtful of any battleship's ability to defend itself against attack from the air. He felt that though they were highly trained to man the guns, load, and fire "at a rate of speed which people not involved would not believe possible," the quality of the overall marksmanship was such that "I can testify with vim, vigor and conviction that we couldn't hit the broad side of a barn except at point-blank range."

Being officer of the deck, especially on a quiet Sunday spent in port, was usually a boring affair, with little happening to break up the monotony. Taussig spent the first part of his watch trying to think of something to do. It occurred to him that only one boiler had been carrying the burden of powering the ship during the entire four days the *Nevada* had been in port. He therefore ordered another one lit. This seeming innocent act would have enormous consequences later that morning.

The *Nevada*'s captain, Francis W. Scanland, and her executive officer had both gone ashore that morning, leaving the ship in the care of its junior-grade officers. Scanland was visiting his

wife in nearby Honolulu and had promised to spend the day with her. After all, it was expected to be a leisurely tropical Sunday; some of the crew was organizing a tennis tournament against sailors from some of the nearby battleships, while others were looking forward to a swim at nearby Aiea Beach. The *Nevada*, the northernmost ship in Battleship Row, was also the oldest in harbor that day but stuck to a very rigid tradition of presenting colors every morning while in port at precisely 0800, to the accompaniment of the "Star Spangled Banner" as performed by the ship's band.

Ensign Taussig, as officer of the deck, was also in charge of the morning's proceedings. But this was the first time Taussig had ever stood watch for the morning colors, and he was uncertain as to what size flag to fly. He quietly sent a sailor over to the *Arizona* at 0750 to find out which size flag they were flying. While everyone waited in the morning sun, some of the bandmen later recalled spotting specks of aircraft in the sky far to the southwest. Band



**ABOVE:** Chief Boatswain Edwin Hill (left) and Lieutenant Donald Kirby were two of the heroic U.S. Navy personnel that fought the Japanese and struggled to get the *Nevada* underway during the surprise Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. **BELOW:** The main 14-inch guns of the *Nevada* and its array of secondary 5-inch turrets are clearly visible in this photograph taken from the deck of a vessel forward. The *Nevada* had undergone an extensive overhaul and modernization effort in 1930.



leader Oden MacMillan later recalled seeing planes diving on the far side of Ford Island and a lot of dirt and sand thrown upward, but thought it was all part of some elaborately staged drill. The sailor soon returned with the welcome news that they had the correct flag after all. The ceremonial group, now assembled at the ship's fantail in splendid dress whites, was in the process of running the colors up on the flagstaff when the first Japanese planes began diving on Battleship Row.

According to acclaimed author Gordon Prange, the first bomb dropped nearby was actually aimed at the *Arizona*, not the *Nevada*. As the first reports of an attack began filtering up the chain of command, Mrs. John Earle, a neighbor of Admiral Husband Kimmel, the naval commander at Pearl Harbor, recalled watching the opening moments of the attack on her front lawn overlooking the harbor along with Admiral Kimmel, who had stepped outside to see for himself. She described him as staring "in utter disbelief and completely stunned."

"I knew right away that something terrible was going on," Kimmel later recalled. "This was not a casual raid by just a few stray planes. The sky was full of the enemy."

"Gazing toward Battleship Row, they saw the *Arizona* lift out of the water, then sink back down—way down. Neither uttered a word; the scene was beyond speech," wrote Prange. "The strike that had transfixed both Admiral Kimmel and Mrs. Earle may have come from the torpedo plane which, having dropped its missile aimed at the *Arizona*, angled upward over the *Nevada*'s stern at the exact moment the battleship's 23-man band struck up the national anthem and the Marine color guard began to raise the flag. The Japanese rear gunner loosed a burst of machine-gun fire; by some freak of chance he missed a solid target of some 25 or 30 men, but ripped the flag as it slid along the pole. The bandmen kept right on playing." It had never occurred to band leader Oden MacMillan that once he started playing the "Star Spangled Banner" he could possibly stop. Another strafing run kicked up bits of the wooden deck nearby; the entire band paused and then started again in unison as if they had practiced it that way. Not one man broke formation and ran. "Not until they finished the last note did they break for cover and sped to their battle stations."

Noted historian Walter Lord points out that the *Nevada* bandmen calmly put their instruments away before reporting to their battle stations, "except one man who took along his cornet and excitedly threw it into a shell hoist along with some shells for the anti-aircraft guns above."



This famous Japanese photo of Battleship Row under attack reveals the USS *Nevada* at lower left while the white wakes of Japanese torpedoes streak toward the battleships *West Virginia* and *Oklahoma*, moored outboard of *Tennessee* and *Maryland*, respectively. The battleship *Arizona* lies moored just forward of the *Nevada* with the repair ship *Vestal* outboard. *West Virginia* has already taken torpedo hits and is hemorrhaging oil and beginning to list. Note the rings on the water's surface generated by the concussions.

Shortly after 0802, the *Nevada* went to battle stations and swung into action under the command of her senior officer present, Lt. Cmdr. Francis J. Thomas, with Ensign Taussig as acting air defense officer. Taussig pulled the alarm bell for general quarters. As the ship's bugler began to blow the call, Taussig took the bugle and threw it overboard; instead he shouted over the ship's public address system, "All hands to general quarters, this is no drill!" In spite of Taussig's earlier doubts as to the ability of the *Nevada*'s antiaircraft gunners, the ship's log states that at this point: "Machine guns opened fire on torpedo planes approaching on port beam. Members of crew state one enemy plane brought down by *Nevada* machine gun fire at 100 yards on port quarter." This may well have been the first Japanese plane shot down that day. The *Nevada*'s gunners had quickly found the range.

Lieutenant Lawrence Ruff, still awaiting Mass aboard the *Solace*, heard the first bombs begin to explode nearby. He raced to the starboard side of the officer's lounge and witnessed the *Arizona* erupting in a huge cloud of smoke and flame. The blast from the *Arizona*'s magazines blew gunner Carey Garnett and dozens of other men off the *Nevada*'s decks and into

the water. As he watched, horrified, a Japanese plane flashed by, its red meatballs clearly visible on its wings. Ruff then knew exactly what was going on.

Father Drinnan immediately dismissed his flock; he and Ruff caught the launch to return to the *Nevada*. From their little boat afloat in the middle of the harbor they had an excellent vantage point from which to witness the attack. Ruff saw tracers arcing up toward the Japanese planes from all directions and found himself wondering, "What the hell is keeping those Jap planes up there?" He soon realized that the shells were exploding too far below the planes to do much damage; their fuses had all been set incorrectly in the haste to open fire. Alone and undefended in the middle of the attack, the *Nevada*'s launch was strafed only once, bracketed in the water by a passing fighter's machine guns before they reached the relative safety of their ship. Ruff ordered the helmsman to swing the launch under the *Nevada*'s stern as protection from further Japanese attack. As soon as both men climbed aboard the *Nevada*, the launch returned to the *Arizona* to assist in removing the wounded.

Ruff served as *Nevada*'s communication officer. As soon as he boarded the ship he discov-

ered that most of the *Nevada*'s senior officers were absent and that those present would have to assume duties for which they had not been trained. Ruff made his way to his station in the *Nevada*'s conning tower, where he checked on those personnel present and tested the communication circuits. Lt. Cmdr. Thomas was the most senior officer present. However, Thomas was several decks below at his duty station, close to an interior ladder that ran through a tube 80 feet up the height of the ship. As soon as they were able to communicate, they quickly agreed that Thomas should remain in charge of the ship below decks while Ruff took care of topside duties.

Ensign Charles Merdinger was just getting dressed when the first bombs fell. As he pulled on his clothes, he heard someone outside his stateroom yell, "It's the real thing! It's the Japs!" In his haste to complete dressing he remembered putting his foot completely through his sock.

A group of planes from the Japanese carrier *Soryu* soon began a bombing run on Battleship Row, scoring hits on both the *Tennessee* and *West Virginia*. A second group of five aircraft followed shortly, dropping five near misses in perfect echelon alongside the *Nevada*. Japanese

strike commander Mitsuo Fuchida still had a group of high-level bombers orbiting in a great circle over Honolulu. He now brought them in, ordering them to make another run over Battleship Row. This time heavy smoke obscured the *Nevada*, Fuchida's original target of choice, so the bombers shifted their attention to a ship alongside the inner row of battleships that appeared not to have been hit yet, the *Maryland*, scoring several hits in the process.

Below decks Warrant Machinist Donald Kirby Ross had just completed shaving when the attack began. It was the day before his 31st

and began turning the large screws that moved the fighting ships through the water. Such large ships then usually required the assistance of anywhere from two to four tugs to maneuver through the confines of a landlocked harbor, and the services of a civilian harbor pilot, an experienced and skilled captain, and a navigator.

Most battleships at port, sitting idle, usually kept no more than one of their four boilers lit, usually to power the generators that provided electricity needed for life aboard ship. Thanks to Ensign Taussig's foresight, two of the *Nevada's* boilers were now fired up, the second

ebbed, the big vessel slowly began to move away from the dock. Hill jumped from the pier and swam to the slowly moving battleship to help direct its escape. Time was quickly running out; an ocean of burning oil from the *Arizona* was slowly moving toward the *Nevada's* bow, threatening to engulf her in flames.

Against all odds, Ruff began moving *Nevada* out of the harbor aided by excellent cooperation from the two engine rooms below and from helmsman Chief Quartermaster Robert Sedberry at the wheel. From his post high up in *Nevada's* conning tower, Ruff selected two landmarks on Ford Island to help him navigate the 30,000-ton ship out into the main channel. He suddenly heard someone demanding to be let in and discovered that Francis Thomas had climbed the 80-foot ladder from below. Ruff and his men removed the floor gratings, opened the hatch, helped Thomas up, and briefed him on what Ruff was trying to do. Thomas quickly agreed with Ruff's plan of action, and at 0840 the *Nevada* was officially underway with Thomas at the conn and Ruff acting as navigator in the conning tower.

By this time the starboard anti-aircraft conveyor was now out of action, so men began passing ammunition to the battery by hand. As the *Nevada* crept past the smoldering wreck of the *Arizona*, intense heat from the fires forced some men to turn their backs and hug shells with their bodies to keep them from exploding. Someone threw a line to three *Arizona* survivors in the nearby water; they were pulled aboard and helped man one of the *Nevada's* guns. Seeing the *Arizona* totally destroyed came as a "terrible shock" to Ruff, and in spite of the ongoing attack he could not help but speculate about the fate of many of his Naval Academy classmates and friends aboard her. They passed so close to the *Arizona*, Thomas felt he could have lit a cigarette from the blazing wreck.

While Fuchida's second wave began its assault on the helpless ships below, incredibly, under the guidance of junior grade officers and without the assistance from a single harbor tug, the old dreadnought backed out of its berth, away from the blazing hulk of the *Arizona*, and began steaming away from Ford Island, heading toward the open sea just outside the harbor. The *Nevada* had taken less than 45 minutes to get underway, a procedure that would normally have taken two full hours. It was a totally unexpected event, and men on all sides began cheering and waving their caps as the *Nevada* slowly built up speed, knot after agonizing knot, and passed the carnage that was being inflicted on Battleship Row, its battered stars and stripes proudly fluttering from its flagstaff.



**"ISN'T THIS A HELL OF A THING," he said to Owens. "The man in charge lying flat on his back while everyone else is doing something." Taussig survived his wounds, losing his leg in the process, but spent the rest of the war recovering in various hospitals.**

birthday. As a youngster he had spent his life moving among numerous foster homes. The Navy had given him a home, and he felt as if he had finally found his place in the world. At the first sounds of battle, Ross reported to his duty station at the forward dynamo room, which contained the controls for the large electrical generators that powered the battleship, fed power to the guns above, and illuminated the darkened passageways below. In an emergency, he reasoned, the *Nevada* might need power to get underway.

The difficulty in raising steam and getting underway that all capital ships of the day suffered from was also one of the chief causes of their destruction that December 7. It usually took a minimum of two hours to fire the huge boilers that powered a battleship, raise steam,

having been online for nearly an hour. Two were normally insufficient to raise enough steam to move a ship out of harm's way, but on that Sunday morning that was enough to make the difference between life and death. While the nearby *Arizona* mushroomed in a fireball from a direct hit to her magazines and bombs rained down across Battleship Row, Chief Boatswain's Mate Edwin Hill led a hastily gathered crew to the wharf where *Nevada* was tethered. Below, thanks to Donald Ross's efforts in the forward dynamo room, the *Nevada* was quickly coming to life.

Japanese Zero fighters swooped down out of the bright morning skies to continually strafe the *Nevada's* decks. Oblivious to the danger, Hill managed to reach the pier and cast off the mooring lines. Just as the first attack wave

A few of the smaller ships, such as tugs and ferries, blew their horns beneath the din of battle to speed the *Nevada* on its way. Baker First Class Emil Johnson aboard the minesweeper *Tern* saw *Nevada* slipping down the main channel and remembered thinking, “Well, there’s one that’s going to get away.” Many Pearl Harbor survivors later recalled the thrilling sight as an event that gave them not only pride but a renewed determination to resist the Japanese with whatever it took.

The *Nevada*’s effect on those watching could not be underestimated; it was immediate and electric. Photographer J.W. Burton watched from the Ford Island shore, snapping a series of historic photographs. Lt. Cmdr. Henry Wray stood transfixed, watching from 1010 dock. Quartermaster William Miller stood watching

awestruck from the deck of the stores issue ship *Castor* in the Navy’s sub base. To most men she was the finest thing they saw that day. Through the thick, black smoke Seaman Thomas Malmin caught sight of the flag on her fantail and recalled that the “Star Spangled Banner” had been composed under similar conditions.

Ten minutes before getting underway, the *Nevada* took her first torpedo hit near frame 40. “The plane came in very close, about midway down the channel, dropped its torpedo and turned right,” recalled Ensign John L. Landreth, stationed in the antiaircraft directory. The torpedo jarred loose the director’s synchronizer from the range finder, forcing it to temporarily switch to local manual control. Landreth did not witness the attacker being shot down but understood it had been hit and

riddled by one of *Nevada*’s machine gunners, crashing just astern of the ship. This may have been a Mitsubishi B5N Kate from the Japanese carrier *Kaga*, the *Nevada*’s second reported kill of the morning. The pilot struggled to get clear and floated face up past the ship until he was dispatched by a well-aimed shot.

Marine Private Payton McDaniel vividly recalled seeing the torpedo’s silver streak heading toward the port bow, just below the two main turrets. From pictures in magazines of other torpedoed ships he fully expected the *Nevada* to erupt in flames and break in two. He was more than a little surprised when all he felt was a slight shudder followed by a brief list to port.

Then a bomb dropped from a Japanese Aichi Val dive bomber struck near the starboard anti-aircraft director. Joe Taussig was at his station there, standing in the doorway, when it hit. He was thrown against the solid steel deck by the explosion and was amazed to find his left leg tucked under his arm. “That’s a hell of a place for a foot to be,” he thought, then was surprised to hear Bostwain’s Mate Allen Owens, standing next to him, say the exact same thing. Either a bullet fragment or a piece of shrapnel had passed through his thigh and struck the ballistics computer in front of him. Dazed from shock, Taussig felt no pain; despite repeated attempts to remove him to a first aid casualty station, Taussig refused to leave and insisted on continuing his command of the antiaircraft station until the end of the attack.

“Isn’t this a hell of a thing,” he said to Owens. “The man in charge lying flat on his back while everyone else is doing something.” Taussig survived his wounds, losing his leg in the process, but spent the rest of the war recovering in various hospitals. For him, at least, his contribution to World War II was over.

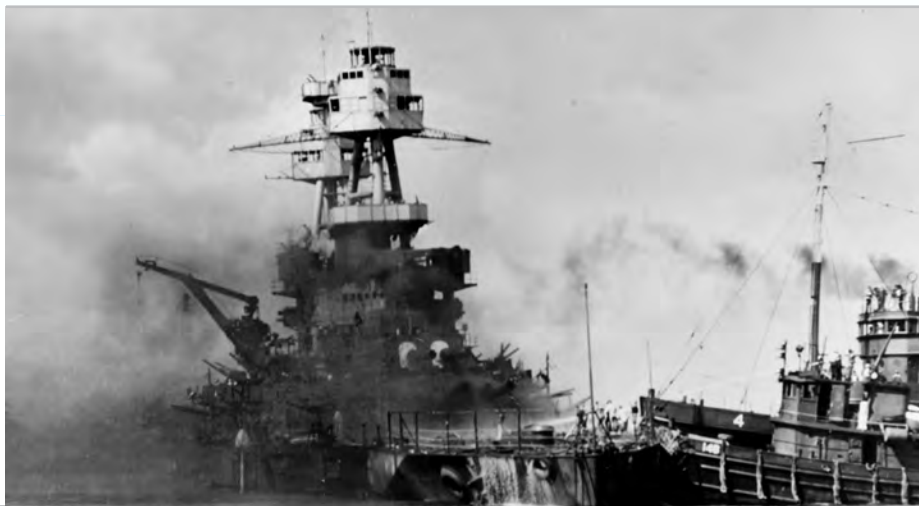
In the plotting room five decks down, Ensign Medringer felt like this was all part of a drill he had been through many times before. He realized things were different when he learned through the onboard phone circuits that his roommate Joe Taussig had been hit.

Down in the forward dynamo room, Chief Machinist Donald Ross finally was forced to order his men to leave when smoke, 140-degree heat, and escaping steam overwhelmed his position. He continued to perform their duties on his own a short while longer until he became virtually blind and fell unconscious, ensuring that the *Nevada* had the power necessary to enable her to continue the fight.

*Nevada* gradually passed *West Virginia*, which was slowly settling in the mud. Next came *Oklahoma*, now capsized, trapping



**ABOVE:** Smoke billows from the stern of the *Nevada* as the battleship gamely puts up a fight against marauding Japanese aircraft and heads down the channel at Pearl Harbor toward the open sea. **BELOW:** *Nevada* lies beached at Waipio Point after making its run for the open sea. The harbor tug *Hoga* and the minesweeper *Avocet* have come close to render assistance. **OPPOSITE:** The *Nevada* steams down the channel past the U.S. Navy Yard’s 1010 dock at Pearl Harbor, and the battleship has already sustained damage from the attack.



scores of men within. Farther away came the flagship *California*, fully afire and settling on an even keel. *Nevada* cleared Battleship Row shortly before 0900. The slowly moving battleship now attracted nearly every Japanese bomber over Pearl Harbor; she became too good a target to pass up. *Nevada* was hit repeatedly and shaken by near misses, opening her forecastle deck, adding more leaks in her hull, and starting numerous gasoline fires forward and around her superstructure.

Just ahead lay a harbor dredge, the *Turbine*, still attached to the mainland by its pipeline. Easing between 1010 dock and the floating dredge would have been a real challenge on a normal day. Chief Sedberry recalled doing some “real twisting and turning” to maneuver around the dredge and avoid Japanese attacks at the same time. The Navy always forced Captain August Persson of the *Turbine* to unhook the pipeline every time a battleship entered or left port, claiming there was not enough room to pass. Persson had always claimed they could do it if they wanted. Now he had seen it with his own eyes. Japanese aircraft, currently diving on the drydocked *Pennsylvania*, now shifted over to the *Nevada*; if they could sink her in the channel they could bottle up the harbor for months.

Every available Japanese plane now converged on the *Nevada*. She was soon wreathed in smoke from her own guns, from numerous bomb hits, and from fires that raged out of control on her forward decks. One bomb penetrated and exploded in *Nevada*'s stack, sending heat and acrid smoke throughout the ship's ventilation system. Sometimes she disappeared entirely from view when near misses threw huge columns of water into the air. Ensign Victor Delano, on the *West Virginia*'s bridge, witnessed a tremendous explosion from somewhere within the ship that threw flames and debris into the air above her masts. The whole ship seemed to rise up and shake violently in the water.

Bosun's Mate Howard C. French was in Ford Island's administration building where he had a perfect view of the action. He watched anxiously as “one dive bomber after another peeled off and went after the *Nevada*. She hesitated and shuddered,” he recalled, “and I thought she was a goner, but she made it down channel.” Admiral Patrick Bellinger happened to be on the telephone to General Frederick Martin when the *Nevada* drew opposite the administration building. Like French, Bellinger also thought the battleship was “a goner” and broke into the conversation to exclaim, “Just a minute! I think there is going to be a hell of an explosion here!”

Ensign Landreth later estimated that 10 or 15 bombs missed the *Nevada* before the Japanese found the range. Then several bombs struck the forecastle in quick succession and exploded below decks, one or two near the crew's galley, starting numerous fires both fore and amidships. “The bombs jolted all Hell out of the ship,” Ruff recalled. “I could see the Japanese bombs—big black things—falling and exploding all around us.” Ruff's legs were black and blue for days afterward from being knocked about by the explosions.

Shrapnel and bomb fragments decimated those on deck; one gun crew after another was cut down at its post, but still *Nevada* continued to put up a murderous barrage. The trio of officers in command of the ship—Ruff, Thomas, and Sedberry—were convinced that the *Nevada* could make it to the open ocean. But a signal from Vice Admiral William S. Pye, the battle force commander, ordered the *Nevada* not to try for the outer channel, fearing the threat of Japanese submarines lurking beyond.

Thomas and Ruff reluctantly decided to nose *Nevada* into the mud off Hospital Point to avoid her being sunk in the channel. *Nevada*

was by now a battered ship. Shortly after 0900 the outgoing current caught the *Nevada*, wrenching control from her navigators and swinging her completely around. Chief Boatswain's Mate Edwin Hill rushed forward to drop the anchor and keep *Nevada* from being crushed against the rocks. Three Japanese bombs landed near the bow, and all trace of Hill vanished in the explosion.

Fires raged around the conning tower, threatening to cut the men off from the rest of the ship. Ruff relayed a plan to a sailor on the dangerously exposed fantail that he would wave a hat as a signal for the sailor to drop the stern anchor. Leaving the main channel between buoy No. 24 and floating drydock YFD-2, Ruff ordered the engines backed full, ran to the bridge wing, and gave the signal. With a clatter and a cloud of rust, the stern anchor plunged into the water and took hold on the bottom. It was 0910 hours on December 7, 1941. The *Nevada* was at rest at Hospital Point on an even keel.

Having accomplished the near impossible, Thomas now turned his attention to damage control. Ruff left the conning tower and made



**ABOVE:** The cleanup and salvage operations at Pearl Harbor stretched for months after the Japanese attack. In this February 1942 photo, the *Nevada* is readied for dry dock at the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard. **BELOW:** Repaired and modernized, the USS *Nevada* thunders off the coast of Iwo Jima in February 1945 in support of U.S. Marine landings on the island. **OPPOSITE:** The 14-inch main batteries of the *Nevada* bombard German strongpoints on the coast of Normandy, France, on D-Day, June 6, 1944. The battleship also participated in actions in the Aleutians and off Okinawa.



his way aft. There he briefed the skipper, Captain Francis Scanland, when he finally came aboard at 0915. Within five minutes two tugs were moored alongside, and all men who were not manning the guns keeping the Japanese at bay busied themselves fighting the numerous fires raging aboard. Casualties began to be transferred to the hospital ship *Solace* or the nearby naval hospital.

The beaching of the *Nevada* at Hospital Point imposed an additional burden on the already overloaded hospital; a number of *Nevada*'s men simply dived off her and swam toward the hospital. Between wounds received in combat and the fires spreading throughout the harbor, many of these men could not walk the short distance to the hospital and collapsed; they were among the worst burn cases treated that day.

Ensign Landreth recalled looking around the now beached *Nevada*. "We couldn't get communication with the guns, and everything was apparently abandoned on the boat deck. We had great casualties. The signal bridge was ablaze and had gone up the navbridge and came out on top of our own platform. This fire continued for quite some time and practically destroyed most of the structure up there."

Despite her severe damage, the *Nevada* crew was never ordered to "Abandon Ship." Most officers who had missed her sortie were now coming aboard and organizing firefighting parties despite the handicap of having no ready water on the boat deck. Most of the firefighting came from two tugs while the *Nevada*'s water mains were either spliced or repaired. "We were trying to get all the ammunition out of the ready boxes to keep them from exploding," Landreth explained. "We got all the ammunition out of the port side, but on the starboard side one ready box did explode." By this time other officers had come aboard and taken charge of Landreth's anti-aircraft battery.

Captain Scanland sent Ruff to Admiral Kimmel's headquarters to report on the *Nevada*'s condition. Kimmel remained calm but was obviously "in a state of shock," plying Ruff with questions as to when the battleship would be ready for sea again. But information arrived that the *Nevada* was in a far worse state than originally thought.

At least one torpedo and six bombs had hit *Nevada*, mostly forward, with additional damage from as many as a dozen near misses. In his report Scanland added, "It is possible as many as ten bomb hits were received, as certain damaged areas were of sufficient size to indicate that they were struck by more than one bomb." Everything below decks was wrecked and filled



with seawater. Engineering was flooded, salting the boilers and steam piping.

And now another problem loomed. With no bow anchors to hold her fast, *Nevada* might still slide backward and block the South Channel. At 1035, with the damage control situation stabilized, Captain Scanland prepared to move *Nevada* to a safer location well clear of the shipping lanes. The two tugs pushed her stern sideways until her bow slid free, then escorted her across the main channel to Waipio Point, where she grounded herself, stern first, at 1045. Her journey had finally come to an end. There she remained until she was refloated for repairs more than two months later.

The *Nevada*'s fires were reported under control by 1530, and 20 minutes later efforts to remove her dead, totaling two officers and 60 men, and more than 109 wounded out of a complement of 1,500 (two more men were to lose their lives during salvage operations) began. Fires broke out again around 1830 and were not finally extinguished until 2300. Meanwhile, Ruff had found shelter for *Nevada*'s uninjured survivors in a nearby open-air theater.

Thomas remained aboard, overseeing damage control. Captain Scanland's after-action report highly praised Thomas, a naval reservist, not only for his skillful handling of the ship during the attack but also for his determined repair efforts. A full two days after the attack Thomas was still on duty, on the verge of collapse from almost continuous work with no sleep. In the months following the attack, both Donald Ross and Edwin Hill would receive the Medal of Honor for their actions that day; Hill's was presented posthumously to his family.

As darkness fell over Pearl Harbor, rumors began to spread of Japanese landings at various points on Oahu. Almost everyone was certain the Japanese would return with the morning's light. The men on *Nevada* were told to be doubly alert for any movement among the sugar cane that ran down to the shore near where the ship lay beached. However, no one remembered to tell the trigger-happy sailors that the ship's own Marine detachment was patrolling the same area. As Private Payton McDaniel moved through the cane, a man aboard ship shouted that he saw movement. A spotlight was switched on, and Payton froze, hoping that it would not find him. Other Marines quickly understood the situation and passed the word not to open fire. But it was a terrifying moment, for McDaniel knew that this was a night when the men were inclined to shoot first and ask questions later.

Ruff admitted, "Actually I was more afraid of our jittery and trigger-happy American gunners that first night than I was of the Japanese during the morning attack." Unlike most of his shipmates, Ruff did not believe that the Japanese would return. After surveying the scene of destruction around him, he could see no reason why they should come back.

By the day after the Pearl Harbor attack the *Nevada* had settled to the bottom, still upright and in fairly shallow water, making later salvage and repair efforts that much easier. The *Nevada* was finally refloated on February 12, 1942, and underwent temporary repairs at Pearl Harbor that allowed her to steam to the Puget Sound Navy Yard in Washington State

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