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Pearl Harbor survivor finds final resting place at Pearl Harbor

Story and photo by MC2 (SW) Mark Logico
Navy Region Hawaii Public Affairs



A memorial ceremony was held for 85-year-old Pearl Harbor survivor John Wilson on Aug. 16, at the USS Utah Memorial on Ford Island.

The ceremony included a short religious service, the scattering of ashes, and a three-volley rifle salute provided by the Navy Region Hawaii ceremonial guard. A Navy bugler was also on hand to sound “Taps,” and a Sailor presented an American flag to Wilson’s daughters, Jackie Turner and Mary Wermes.

Wilson, who died Sept. 28, 2008, was an 18-year-old Sailor aboard the USS Honolulu (CL-48) during the Dec. 7, 1941 Pearl Harbor attacks.

“He was a very lucky man to survive not only the attack but the next few years in the Navy,” said Jim Taylor, a volunteer worker and Pearl Harbor Survivor Liaison for Navy Region Hawaii Public Affairs.”

Born on Sept. 2, 1923, Wilson joined the Navy in January 1941 and was assigned to Honolulu, a Brooklyn-class cruiser, right out of boot camp.

“Having discharged from the Navy, he felt a need to continue serving,” said Taylor. “So he joined the Army where he worked with training and recruiting efforts as an actor.”

Wilson was honorably discharged in the Army on Oct. 1, 1945.

Later, he worked with Pacific Telephone Company for 35 years before retiring in 1982.

Wilson's daughter Jackie Turner said the memorial service was a touching tribute to her father.

"It far exceeded any of my expectations," said Turner. "I didn't even know if it was usual practice to have a ceremony for Pearl Harbor survivors."

Turner expressed gratitude that the USS Utah Memorial was used for the ceremony, as well.

"It's a pretty private place and I'm looking forward to being able to come back in the future years and remember my dad. It's a perfect choice," Turner said.

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