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Pearl Harbor survivor finds final resting place at Utah Memorial

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The memory of Earl R. Hinz, a 90-year-old Pearl Harbor survivor, was honored during a scattering of ashes and memorial ceremony held Aug. 17 at the USS Utah Memorial on Ford Island.

The ceremony also included a short religious service and a three-volley rifle salute provided by the Navy Region Hawaii ceremonial guard. A U.S. Marine Corps bugler was also on hand to sound “Taps,” and a Sailor presented an American flag to Hinz’s son, retired U.S. Navy Reserve Cmdr. Eric Hinz.

Earl was born on July 25, 1919 and was raised in Minnesota. In 1937, he joined the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve as a private. While studying aeronautical engineering at the University of Minnesota, his Reserve unit was activated in December 1940.

Earl was based at the Ewa Marine Air Base, Oahu, Hawaii, when the Japanese attacked on Dec. 7, 1941. In his remembrances, Earl recalled the attack as the first waves of aircraft arrived just in time for the morning flag-raising ceremony. Morning colors sounded and with the first notes of colors, they realized they were under attack. The bugler sounded general quarters, and Earl headed to his assigned attack station.

“My assignment was with the fire truck, which I started up and headed to the ramp where we saw the first airplanes on fire,” Earl said. “A Japanese airplane came gunning for us and flattened all the tires, but missing those of us on the truck. We ducked under the truck until the attack subsided and ran like hell back to our barracks to get our rifles,” he recalled.

In April 1942, Earl was commissioned in the U.S. Naval Reserve as an aeronautical engineering officer with duty at Naval Air Station Pearl Harbor. One of his first assignments was to analyze battle damages on the only Grumman Avenger, a torpedo bomber, to survive the Battle of Midway.

Earl also served in California and Washington, D.C. during World War II. In 1945, he left active duty to attend graduate school. His Naval Reserve affiliation continued until 1949 when he left the Reserves with the rank of lieutenant commander.

Following graduation, Earl pursued his engineering career in the southern California aerospace industry. He was involved in numerous Cold War aerospace projects, including the X-13 Vertijet, F-106 Delta Dart and the Atlas ICBM.

In 1975, he began a new career as a yachtsman and writer, as he sailed on two long Pacific cruises with his wife, Betty. His travels took him to New Zealand and Micronesia, providing background for writing more than 900 articles and seven books.

Eric Hinz said he attributes his own naval career to his father for all the experiences he shared with him sailing together.

After living aboard their cruising yachts in Hawaii, Earl and Betty moved to Las Vegas, Nev. After 65 years together, Betty passed away in July 2009. Earl followed in November 2009.
