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Pacific Fleet Band pays homage to USS Arizona Band during commemoration concert

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The U.S. Pacific Fleet Band honored the members of U.S. Navy Band Unit 22, the last band to ever serve on the battleship USS Arizona, during a commemoration concert at the Pearl Harbor Visitor Center at the World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument on Dec. 5.

The band performed popular hits from the late 1930s and early 1940s.

"It is a real honor to be out here. The location with the USS Arizona Memorial as the backdrop is perfect, and more importantly to have some of the Pearl Harbor survivors in attendance is truly the highlight of this evening," said Senior Chief Musician Tom Lawrence. "This is a very important highlight in my career."

Lou Conter, a USS Arizona Pearl Harbor survivor, offered the opening remarks during the concert.

"During the attack, the entire band was at their general quarters station passing ammunition beneath gun turret number one when a bomb hit the ship, sinking it in 13 minutes," Conter said. "My thoughts coming out here each year are with the 1,177 shipmates that died that day, and the 2,403 service members that gave their lives for our country."

Throughout the concert, audience members had the opportunity to listen to music from NBU 22's era.

"I thought the concert was great," said Linda Jones. "The band did a fantastic job in honoring the USS Arizona's band."

According to the U.S. Pacific Fleet website, "On the night of Dec. 6, 1941, there was a band competition called the "Battle of Music" at Bloch Arena at Naval Station Pearl Harbor. It featured Navy bands from "capitol ships" homeported at Pearl Harbor and those attached to shore installations in Hawaii. The USS Arizona band had already won the first round on Sept. 13, 1941, and was not scheduled to play again until the final competition."

"During the elimination tournament on the evening of Dec. 6, bands from the USS Pennsylvania (BB 38), USS Tennessee (BB 43) and USS Argonne (AG 31) competed against one another. Several members of the USS Arizona band attended the contest to see their upcoming competition, and to visit with school of music shipmates in the Tennessee band."

The narrative further describes what happened the morning of the attack. "On the morning of December 7th, 1941, while the band from the USS Nevada (BB 36) played Morning Colors, the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor occurred. The entire USS Arizona Band, while at battle stations passing ammunition under gun turret number one, was killed in the attack. In the weeks to follow, all the bands that had participated in the "Battle of Music" voted to posthumously award the tournament trophy to Unit Band 22, renaming it the "Arizona Trophy."
