

# Remembering West Loch...

the 'second Pearl Harbor disaster'



Donald Davis, a West Loch disaster survivor, and his wife Agnes tour the site of the disaster area and memorial at Naval Magazine Pearl Harbor in Nov. 2006.

U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Corwin Colbert

**Karen S. Spangler**

*Editor*

It was a typical sunny, beautiful day at Pearl Harbor – a quiet Sunday afternoon for American servicemen enjoying life in Hawaii's tropical paradise. But that all changed at 3:09 p.m. on May 21, 1944 when, without warning, a series of explosions blasted ships apart at the West Loch Ammunition Depot.

On that day, 163 Sailors, Marines, Soldiers and Coast Guard members died as explosions ripped through the troop carriers moored at West Loch. Another 396 were wounded.

As flames shot up into the blue Hawaii skies, black smoke permeated the air, and bodies of dead servicemen floated in the waters of Pearl Harbor. In the years since, the West Loch tragedy has frequently been referred to as the "second Pearl Harbor disaster."

The explosions sank six landing ship tanks (LST) and three landing craft tanks. Although the cause of the explosions has never been determined, it has been speculated that it may have been triggered by defective fuses on mortar shells that were being loaded onto a truck aboard an LST. That explosion triggered a chain reaction of explosions.

According to historical reports, the explosions were so massive that the fires weren't brought under control until the following day and the blasts were heard throughout the island of Oahu and out to sea.

Because of wartime censorship, few details were given about the event until 1962 when the information was released from Navy confidential files. The explosion occurred as the Navy was preparing for the invasion of Saipan, an invasion which would mark the beginning of the 'big push' against Japan. The tragedy was kept secret to prevent the Japanese from learning about the massive troop concentration at Pearl Harbor.

The 29 LSTs were part of more than 100 vessels belonging to

'Operation Forager' – posed for the invasion of Saipan and Guam, according to Daniel Martinez, U.S. Park Service historian.

But despite the tragedy, the invasion of Saipan was only delayed by one day. The men and ships that had survived the disaster were quickly reorganized, rearmed and refitted – and stormed ashore at Saipan right on schedule, 23 days after the tragedy at Pearl Harbor.

West Loch survivors still make the journey back to Pearl Harbor to honor those who were lost in the tragedy. The visit to the memorial brought back painful memories for one such survivor, Donald Davis, who visited in November 2005.

Davis was an 18-year-old Marine private assigned to the Marine 2nd Division when his LST exploded. "I was topside on a bright sunny day, sunbathing near the ship's elevator shaft," reflected Davis. "The next thing I remember was a violent explosion that blew me off the ship."

Davis, who was hit on the left side of his head by flying shrapnel, said he is lucky to be alive. "Fires broke out everywhere and there was thick black smoke billowing in the air. There was oil burning on the harbor's surface. There were people running everywhere. It was horrible," he related during an interview with a Hawaii Navy News journalist.

In May 2004, survivors of the West Loch disaster revisited the site of the tragedy to hold a commemoration ceremony and remember what it was like. The foc'sle of Landing Ship Tank 480, which ran aground on that day, still serves as a poignant reminder. Rusted and wrecked, LST 480 remains as evidence of the heroic actions and loss of life from 'Pearl Harbor's second disaster.'

During the ceremony in 2004, Walt Slater, a seaman first class who was playing poker on the mess decks of Landing Ship Tank 274 when the disaster occurred, threw a rose into the waters at West Loch and remembered. "I was thinking as I watched that rose in the water how I could still see the faces of my shipmates. I've never forgotten and I'll never forget," he said.



Photo courtesy of Navy Region Hawai'i Fleet and Family Readiness, Marketing

Young cheerleaders learn some moves while being coached at a cheerleading clinic. The keiki will perform routines that they learned from the Tampa Bay Buccaneer Cheerleaders at the upcoming Morale, Welfare and Recreation Wellness and Fitness Fair on May 23.

## MWR offers fun with fitness

Sara Mizushima

*Navy Region Hawai'i, Fleet and Family Readiness, Marketing*

Everyone finds their own unique way of living a healthy and fulfilling life that best suits them. Some people walk, run, eat certain foods, or practice a particular discipline. On May 23 from 3 to 6 p.m. at Bloch Arena fitness complex, the free Navy Region Hawai'i Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Wellness and Fitness Fair will introduce and educate people on numerous fun, innovative and alternative ways to be healthy and well. "Fitness doesn't have to be hot and sweaty. You can do what makes you feel good," said Judy Kosaka, MWR fitness program director.

Being well and fit can also translate into having fun. The fair will feature entertainment by the Tampa Bay Buccaneer Cheerleaders, Island Illusions Baton Twirlers, belly dancers from Paradise Demo, and the youth cheerleading clinic participants. The Tampa Bay Buccaneer Cheerleaders will also be available for an autograph session.

For those who want to try something new or add a new dimension to their workout, come dressed in your exercise clothes to jump into one of the 15-20 minute introductory exercise sessions offered throughout the event. TV personality and fitness expert Gilad, from the popular show "Bodies in

Motion," will conduct a cardio and fat burning workout. Engage in Pilates, yoga or a kickboxing session, taught by one of Pearl Harbor's professional trainers.

Activities for all ages will be provided. Attendees can go through free cardio fitness and blood sugar testing, get cholesterol and blood pressure screenings, and a body fat analysis. Children will be able to tour the Fit Kids Center, go through a youth orientation, and challenge themselves at the youth obstacle course. A rock wall will be there for people to climb and the final finale of "The Biggest Loser," a competition for weight loss, will be held. See who wins the title at the final weigh-in. Contest drawings and prize giveaways will also be happening throughout this fitness event.

Vendors from fitness clubs, wellness centers, sporting groups and companies offering the latest trends and products will be on hand to offer demonstrations, samples and information. Attendees can also visit special awareness sections that offer anti-smoking, anti-drugs and anti-alcohol education.

"There will be an abundance of vendors, activities and things to experience at the event. We are there to help people and it's a great starting point for anyone who wants to get motivated," said Lara Katine, MWR special events program director. All active duty personnel, their family members, military-affiliated and Department of Defense personnel, and sponsored guests are invited. For more information, call 473-0793.

## Celebrate patriotism at Concert in the Park



Photo courtesy of Navy Region Hawai'i Fleet and Family Readiness, Marketing

A mother and her baby enjoy a previous Concert in the Park event at Naval Station Pearl Harbor. Join the Pacific Fleet Wind Ensemble at 6:30 p.m. May 25 for the next Concert in the Park as they present a patriotic Memorial Day celebration. The free concert will be held on the lawn behind The Banyans at Naval Station Pearl Harbor. Attire is casual aloha wear. A pre-ordered boxed dinner can be ordered for \$5.50 from A Catered Experience at The Banyans by calling 473-1706. Please place your order by May 22. For more information, call 473-0606.

# Skylark Central

## Aquatic Birds

### Word Search

- |              |               |
|--------------|---------------|
| ALBATROSS    | KINGFISHER    |
| ANHINGA      | KITTIWAKE     |
| AUK          | LIMPKN SNIPE  |
| AVOCET       | LOON          |
| BITTERN      | MARSH WREN    |
| BOOBY        | MOORHEN       |
| BRANT        | MURRE         |
| BUFFLEHEAD   | OYSTERCATCHER |
| COOT         | OSPREY        |
| CORMORANT    | PELICAN       |
| CRANE        | PENGUIN       |
| DABCHICK     | PETREL        |
| DIPPER       | PLOVER        |
| DUCK         | PUFFIN        |
| EGRET        | RAIL          |
| FLAMINGO     | SANDPIPER     |
| FRIGATE BIRD | SEA GULL      |
| GANNET       | SHOEBILL      |
| GOOSE        | SKIMMER       |
| GREAT SKUA   | SPOONBILL     |
| GREBE        | STILT         |
| GREYLAG      | STORK         |
| HERON        | SWAN          |
| IBIS         | TERN          |
| JAEGER       | WATER THRUSH  |

U I L T B E O T N K C I H C B A D I E  
 A I A Y N R E T W O L A S A K E N T F  
 S S H O E B I L L E R P U F F I N R E  
 K U A G E R L I R O O E R E M M I K S  
 S N E N K C P T W O A N H I N G A S E  
 B A P E D P E S N I P E T L A W N M E  
 J U M E R P L B O A T L R T I B I S A  
 N K F L A M I N G O L E E T E D U C K  
 S S E F I L C P U A H B T W N N G T M  
 F T R A L T A V E C I I A I E E N N A  
 G A D R L E N O T R K T W T U H E A E  
 G E E T U N H A D E B T L R R R P R G  
 D R G N G E C E R Y B E S I W O K B R  
 I G N O A R O O A O R R G H C O S R E  
 P L O V E R E R O D M N S R N M H S Y  
 P S F T S U C B A T N R T O E R A W L  
 E C S O S M Y O E C A V O C E T L A A  
 R Y E M I N I K P M I L R C K A O N G  
 O S N R E H S I F G N I K S T E B N R



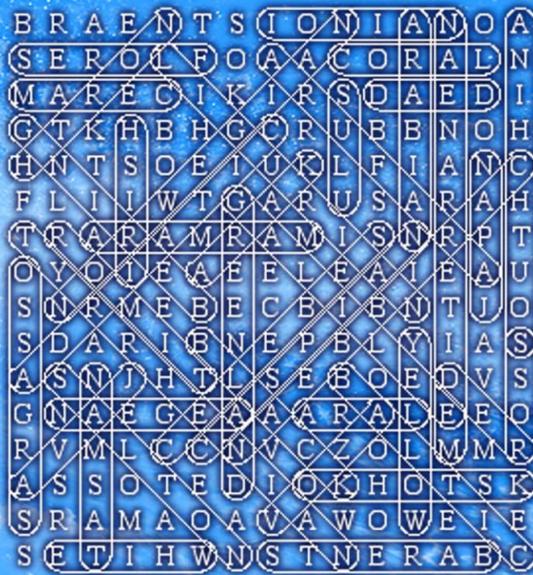
WHO SAID IT?  
**“AMERICANS  
 NEVER QUIT.”**



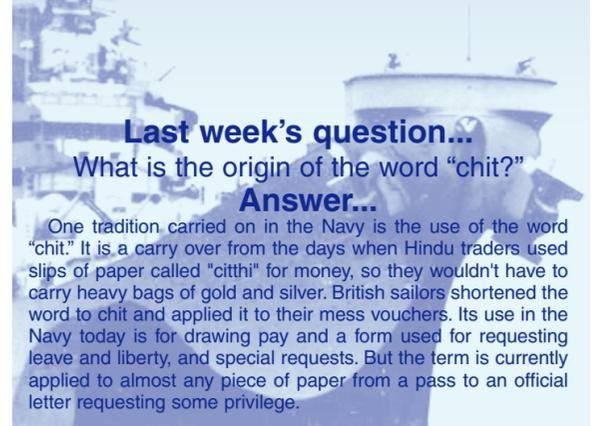
There is a homely old adage which runs: "Speak softly and carry a big stick; you will go far." If the American nation will speak softly, and yet build and keep at

## The Seven Seas And Then Some

- |             |               |
|-------------|---------------|
| ADRIATIC    | BARENTS       |
| CORAL       | JAPAN         |
| NORWEGIAN   | SULU          |
| AEGEAN      | BERING        |
| DEAD        | JAVA          |
| OKHOTSK     | TASMAN        |
| ARABIAN     | BLACK         |
| FLORES      | KARA          |
| RED         | TIMOR         |
| ARAFURA     | CARIBBEAN     |
| GALILEE     | LIGURIAN      |
| ROSS        | TYRRHENIAN    |
| ARAL        | CASPIAN       |
| GREENLAND   | MARMARA       |
| SALTON      | WHITE         |
| AZOV        | CELEBES       |
| IONIAN      | MEDITERRANEAN |
| SARGASSO    | YELLOW        |
| BALTIC      | CERAM         |
| IRISH       | NORTH         |
| SOUTH CHINA |               |



**Q.** The official designation of vessels of war, and other vessels of the Navy of the United States, shall be the name of such vessel, preceded by the words, United States Ship, or the letters U.S.S., and by no other words or letters. Who authorized this?



### Last week's question...

What is the origin of the word "chit"?

### Answer...

One tradition carried on in the Navy is the use of the word "chit." It is a carry over from the days when Hindu traders used slips of paper called "citthi" for money, so they wouldn't have to carry heavy bags of gold and silver. British sailors shortened the word to chit and applied it to their mess vouchers. Its use in the Navy today is for drawing pay and a form used for requesting leave and liberty, and special requests. But the term is currently applied to almost any piece of paper from a pass to an official letter requesting some privilege.

# Navy Region Hawai'i Manawa Nanea

LEISURE

Morale Welfare & Recreation



**H BOWLING SPECIAL ON ARMED FORCES DAY**  
On Saturday, Armed Forces Day, all active duty personnel can bowl up to three games for free from 1 to 3 p.m. at Naval Station Bowling Center. FMI: 473-2574.

**H YOUTH CHEERLEADING CLINIC**  
A youth cheerleading clinic hosted by the Tampa Bay Buccaneer Cheerleaders will be held from 5-7 p.m. May 22 at Quick Field at Naval Station Pearl Harbor. Youth of all ages can learn cheerleading moves from the Tampa Bay Buccaneer Cheerleaders. On May 23 from 5 p.m., participants will use what they learned and perform at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Wellness and Fitness Fair. The free clinic is open to family members of all active duty, military-affiliated and Department of Defense (DoD) personnel family members. FMI: 474-3501.

**H RAINBOW BAY MARINA FAMILY FUN DAY**  
Experience fun-filled boating activities under the sun at Rainbow Bay Marina Family Fun Day from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. May 26 at Rainbow Bay Marina. A free hands-on introduction on sailing, kayaking, outrigger canoe paddling and powerboats will be offered. Mini boating clubs, groups and organizations will be on-site. Free snacks will be served. The event is open to all active duty, military-affiliated and DoD families. FMI: 473-0279.

For more information on Navy Region Hawai'i MWR events, visit [www.greatlifeohawaii.com](http://www.greatlifeohawaii.com)

Community Calendar

## N May

**19** – The Tampa Bay Buccaneers Cheerleaders will make a special appearance at the Navy Exchange (NEX) Mall at Pearl Harbor from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. FMI: 423-3330.



**N 26** – Newt Gingrich, former speaker of the house, professor and author, will be available for a book signing for his latest published work, "Pearl Harbor: A Novel of December 8th," from 3-5 p.m. at the NEX Mall at Pearl Harbor to introduce the first installment of his Pacific War series.

## N June

**N 1** – Navy Information Operation Command (NIOC) Hawai'i's CPOA Relay for Life team will host a bowl-a-thon fundraiser from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. at the Naval Computer and Telecommunications Area Master Station Bowling Center. Shoes, games and lunch are free. Prizes will be awarded to bowlers who raise the most money. FMI: CTCR Dodd at 655-5738 or 782-4160 or email at [cbdodd01@yahoo.com](mailto:cbdodd01@yahoo.com).

## N At a glance

**N** The Navy Exchange Autoport offers free brake inspections from 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

Sharkey Showtimes



## Premonition (PG 13)

Linda Hanson has a beautiful house, a loving husband and two adorable daughters. Her life is perfect, until the day she receives the devastating news that her husband Jim has died in a car accident. When she wakes up the next morning to find him alive and well, she assumes it was all a dream, but is shaken by how vivid it felt. She soon realizes it wasn't a dream and her world is turned upside down.

**TODAY**  
7:00 PM I Think I Love My Wife (R)

**SUNDAY**  
2:30 PM Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (PG)  
4:45 PM I Think I Love My Wife (R)  
7:00 PM Premonition (PG 13)

**SATURDAY**  
2:30 PM Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (PG)  
4:45 PM Dead Silence (R)  
7:00 PM Shooter (R)

**SHARKEY THEATER** Pearl Harbor Naval Station (473-0726)  
**MEMORIAL THEATER** Hickam Air Force Base (449-2239)  
**SGT. SMITH THEATER** Schofield Barracks (624-2585)



## Introduction to Nichiren's Buddhism

### Pearl Harbor Memorial Chapel

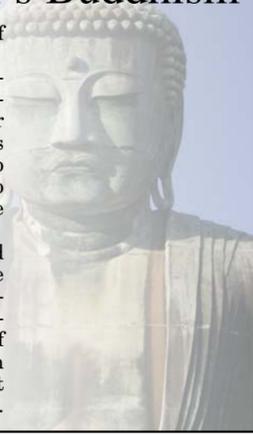
The Naval Station Religious Ministries Program includes a monthly worship and education meeting for Buddhist personnel.

This meeting, which is also open to Department of Defense personnel and their family members, is held in the fellowship hall of the Pearl Harbor Memorial Chapel at 12:30 p.m. on

the second Saturday of each month.

This is an opportunity for Buddhist personnel to deepen their faith and religious expression. It is also open to people who want to learn more about Buddhism.

All literature and materials that may be needed will be supplied. For more information, contact Chief Engineman Stephen Kearney, the Buddhist lay leader, at 368-0182.



# STORY IDEAS?

Contact the HNN editor for guidelines and story/photo submission requirements:

**Phone: (808) 473-2888**

Email: [hnn@honoluluadvertiser.com](mailto:hnn@honoluluadvertiser.com)

# Hawaii Navy News

## Navy Region Hawai'i Chapel Services

### Pearl Harbor Memorial Chapel

Sunday: 9 a.m. – Roman Catholic Mass  
 9:45 a.m. – Protestant Bible Study/Protestant Sunday School  
 11 a.m. – Protestant Worship Service  
 Daily: 11:35 a.m. - Roman Catholic Mass  
 Wednesday: 7 p.m. – Chillin' at the Chapel  
 Saturday: 12:30 p.m. – Buddhist Service  
 (second Saturday of each month)  
 4 p.m. – Sacrament of Reconciliation  
 5 p.m. – Roman Catholic Mass  
 (anticipated Mass of Sunday)

### Aloha Jewish Chapel

Monday: 6:30 p.m. – Jewish Bible study  
 Friday: 7:30 p.m. – Kabbalat Shabbat  
 Saturday: 8:15 a.m. – Shabbat morning service

### Submarine Memorial Chapel

Sunday: 8:30 a.m. – Protestant communion service

### NCTAMS PAC Chapel

Sunday: 8:30 a.m. – Roman Catholic Mass  
 10:30 a.m. – Protestant worship service

Navy Region Hawai'i chapels are accessible to active duty (all branches) personnel, their family members, Department of Defense civilians, retirees and their guests.

For more information, call 473-3971.

