

# Day of Infamy Remembered

By Jeremy Long for the Daily News  
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Franklin D. Roosevelt impersonator Delmas Wood Jr. pleads his case to Congress to enter World War II during a Pearl Harbor remembrance ceremony yesterday at the Lebanon VA Medical Center. In the foreground is a makeshift memorial to James Rudisill, who organized the first such service at the VA more than a decade ago. (LEBANON DAILY NEWS JEREMY LONG) There are events so life-changing that anyone who experiences them - no matter how indirectly - can never forget. On Dec. 7, 1941, one such event occurred - the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

And as the anniversary of that strike on American soil nears, some of those who recall that day - and some who don't, except through others' stories - gathered in the chapel of the Lebanon VA Medical Center yesterday to remember that day of infamy.

Among those in attendance Sunday afternoon were three survivors of the attack: Ned Shanahan of Richland; Henry "Hank" Heim of New Cumberland; and Charles Boyer of Harrisburg.

Boyer, as the guest of honor, was asked to address the audience about his experiences that fateful day.

Humbled by the standing ovation he received as he made his way to the podium, the 91-year old vet joked with the audience, "I've never been asked to talk about what happened over there on that morning, so I prepared nothing. I'll just give you a few little incidents as I remember."



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Boyer enlisted in the Army in 1939 "to see the world," and as a sergeant he was assigned to Wheeler Field, Hawaii, a part of the 72nd Pursuit Squadron.

"On Sunday morning, December 7, at 0755 I had just come from the mess hall and walked to the rear of my tent, and I heard a lot of aircraft, but I didn't recognize them," Boyer recalled.

"Then the bombs started to fall and the strafing began," he said. "All I remember from that are a number of my buddies were killed.

"When they (the bombers) came over, they really took the toll," he added. "We lost practically everything that was flyable, that would be able to get up into the air and offer (the Japanese) any trouble."

But Boyer didn't sit idly by as his post was attacked.

“I personally worked on two of the planes of lieutenants that did get up into the air that day,” Boyer recalled. “They made their number known that day.

“It was a terrible morning for young fellas like myself - and the older ones, too,” Boyer continued. “I did serve for 20 years. I figured they deserve it, and I wish everybody in uniform today looked at the country as I do. I admire it, and I’m all for it.”

As Boyer’s daughter helped him back to his seat, he looked at Heim and said, “I’m sorry. I didn’t want to tell everything,” Boyer said. “It was gruesome what we saw that day.”

Those in attendance were transported to Dec. 7, 1941, as a radio recording of the news bulletin announcing the attack on Pearl Harbor blared through the chapel’s sound system.

“We interrupt this program to bring you a special news bulletin,” the announcer said. “The Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor by air.”

When the radio broadcast came to an end, President Franklin D. Roosevelt - portrayed by Delmas Wood Jr. - made his way to the podium as “Hail to the Chief” played.

“Yesterday, December 7, 1941 - a date which will live in infamy - the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan,” Wood said.

When Wood finished Roosevelt’s speech, he addressed the audience personally.

“Today, as we look at these veterans of World War II, they deserve such gratitude, such applause, such thank you for providing the

freedom that I have to stand here and speak today,” he said.

Beverly Barbe of Mountville and her mother, Dolli Proudfoot of Harrisburg, organized this year’s event.

“This is our eighth year organizing it,” Barbe said. “But my mother and I got involved 13 or 14 years ago when (Lebanon VA hospital resident) James Rudisill was running it.”

Rudisill died in 2005, but Barbe and Proudfoot felt a responsibility to carry on the event.

“These guys are living history and literally did nothing less than save the world, and we are losing them,” Barbe said, fighting back tears. “We need to honor them while they are here and show them that their sacrifice was not in vain. They are a national treasure. It’s an honor to do this for them.”

Refreshments were held after the service at the VA, and at 4:30 p.m. at the Lebanon Expo Center there was a 1940s-era USO show featuring the Lebanon Big Swing Band.

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