

World War II - War comes to 616 Elks

The Dec 7, 1941, attack caused chaos in Honolulu. 616 knew Elks had been in battles at Pearl Harbor, Schofield, Wheeler, and Hickam Fields, but nothing more. News of casualties and damage might inform the enemy and ceased Dec 12 with news and mail censorship¹. Lodge and government records can't tell us the name of every Elk fighting on Dec 7th. The names we have must represent all who served.

Elks under attack: When the Lodge finally met again, January 11, 1942, Dec 7th survivors Eugene R Blalock² (Wheeler Field), A L Blevins (*California* B44), William M Sorrells (*Dobbin* AD3), Norman L Stenger (Naval Air Station Pearl Harbor), Harold R Waldrop (*Vireo* AM52), and William E Willis (*Barton* DD599) were initiated and Raymond G Wonders, Navy Quartermaster, was reinstated. Not all would survive the war.



Lodge officers (white suits, center front) and new members January 11, 1942, on lawn of 616. Names of the military members are not known. Please contact us if you recognize someone.

US Navy 616 Elks surviving the attack were Carpenter A Benoit [initiated Jan 1941]; Broadus S Compere [1941] *YO 44* Fuel Barge; Stephen R Frith [Jul 1936] *Widgeon* ASR1; Ordnanceman Van B Thompson [affiliated Feb 1941]. *USS Phelps* DD360 Engineer Richard M Shumate [initiated Sept 1942] and harbor tug crew Floyd H Bullock Jr represent the many survivors who joined 616 later.

US Army 616 Elks surviving the attack were mostly career soldiers and airmen. World War I veteran Joseph L Cooper [July 1941] was at Hickam Field. Raymond Wieckowicz [Jan 1941], a radio operator at Hickam, stayed in the military during the Korean and Vietnam wars. Ending Air Force careers after Korea were Fort Shafter's Donald F Crocker, [Feb 1941], and John M Martin [Sept 1940]. Other Elk soldiers were Harold M Dart [Aug 1941] and Schofield Barracks' Richard Julian [Jan 1940]. John P Sullivan [Sept 1936] survived the war, stayed in the Air Force and 616, but died in a plane crash in England in 1952. All the others survived World War II and Korea if they served.

We know of two more Elks serving on Dec 7th. Both **Ensign Eugene Thomas Sanders** [Dec 8, 1939] and **Chief Water Tender Norman Bragg Woolf** [Aug 1941] were among the casualties on the **USS Arizona**. They are remembered at the *USS Arizona* Memorial and Courts of the Missing at National

Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl). Both were awarded a Purple Heart and are entitled to the American Defense, Asiatic Pacific with Bronze Star, World War II Victory, and Pearl Harbor Commemorative medals. Both remain on the *Arizona*. Unaware of their deaths, 616 dropped both men for non-payment of dues in the years after 1941.

Ensign Sanders had been on the *Arizona* since May 7, 1940. He served in the US Army 1917-19 in World War I. Eager to join, it appears he added a phantom 2 years to his age to appear old enough to enlist. He first enlisted in the Navy Sept 1919 and was in and out of service before coming to Hawaii Apr 1938. Born March 15, 1901, in Hubbard, OR, the first son of William Eugene and Jessie Hinkle Sanders, Brother Sanders left a widow, Sarah, in New York.

Chief Woolf, "B" Division, Engineering, was probably below decks Dec 7th. He enlisted in Jul 1939 in Tacoma, WA. Born July 18, 1912, in Myrtlewood, AL, the only child of Thomas Bragg and Mary Lois Poellnitz Woolf, he was survived by his widowed mother.

Sanders and Woolf were the first Elks to die in World War II. A few, later deaths would be known to 616 when family informed the Lodge. As with Sanders and Woolf, most casualties appeared to have stopped paying dues. Records still are partial and / or conflicting, or names are not unique. Membership data or ships' names are incomplete. Despite the gaps some Elks dropped in the 1940s can now be determined as MIA/KIA while others are known to have been POWs. Their stories are told in other articles in this series.

At war's start, Elks and their families, managers in the sugar and rubber industries, were caught in the Philippines. Interned in Manila's Santo Tomas camp³ were Eric J Byde⁴ [Sept 1940], his wife and two children, Paul C Hartnal [1926], Mr & Mrs Norman A Oss⁵ [Mar 1919] and their 6 yr old daughter. Son Norman Jr. [Feb 1950], was interned at Los Banos, and James A Greer [Jun 1919] was at Camp Holmes, Bagio. Member James E Kennedy [Feb 1911] was in Bagio at war's start, but not reported as a POW. Civilians, interned Apr 1942, were not reported until Dec 1943. Kennedy, 65, may have died before the reporting. All others survived to return to Hawaii.

Byde had a varied career: his own used autos and parts shop, later working at Bowes Auto, Territorial Motors, and American Factors. When visiting LA, his AmFac connections led to his 15 min. of fame - a ride in the Goodyear Blimp. After Santo Tomas was liberated Feb 3, 1945, Byde rejoined 616, then migrated to CA where he lived until his death, Mar 1965.

Hartnal worked in Honolulu and Manila from 1928. US Rubber, Fisk Tire Co, and vonHamm-Young were his employers. After the war he returned to Hawaii, and his 616 membership, work in San Francisco and Nevada. A 1962 life member and World War I vet, he died in 1964 and is buried at Punchbowl.

Oss, Sr, a machinist, was working at the Hawaiian-Philippine Co, a sugar / pineapple firm, in 1941. Returning to Honolulu post war, he remained a 616 Elk until his death in Dec 1958. Norman Jr was a 616 member after the war and for several years after his move to PA in 1959.

Greer, a pharmacist, had lived in CA working at Owl drug stores since 1906. He came to Hawaii from Nevada in 1918 to work at Fort St's Honolulu Drug Co. He apparently was a civilian employee of the Navy when, at 61, he became the oldest POW recorded from 616 ranks. After liberation, Greer returned to CA, ending his life Oct 1949 in the care of Lodge 168, San Diego.

As the war advanced, more Elks became POWs. Not all would return.

Anita Manning, 616 Lodge Historian

References:

616 Membership records and Minutes
Honolulu city directories & phone books
www.abmc.gov/search/wwii.php

Advertiser/Star-Bull news morgue, University of Hawaii, Hamilton Library
National Archives World War II Archival Databases
www.familysearch.org

¹ Censors were not delicate in their cutting and often left or even meant to create confusion in the reader.

² Blalock won the day's war bond drawing

³ A child internee survivor was featured in PBS film *The War*. www.pbs.org/thewar/detail_5192.htm

For Santo Tomas recollections go to www.warsailors.com/POWs/santotomas2.html

⁴ www.cnac.org/emilscott/byde01.htm

⁵ www.cnac.org/emilscott/oss01.htm