

VFW post recognizes 75th anniversary of Pearl Harbor attack

By Kayleigh Rahn
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Howard Huffman was 19 years old when the radio sang with the sound of a concert pianist.

The audio creaked and popped as the relaxing tune played on during a quiet Sunday morning—until a life changing moment cut into the program.

“We interrupt this program to bring you a special news bulletin. The Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor by air, President Roosevelt has just announced.”

At a time long before live Tweeting and even on-the-scene TV journalists, the world learned of the worst attack on American soil via the radio. President Roosevelt’s voice

entered the living rooms, restaurants, and public gathering spots across the country to share news of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The extent of the devastation was unknown, but the change in the tide was evident.

The United States was heading to war.

Recent high school graduates—teenage boys—would all too soon become men on the battlefields and skies.

The TK Martin 10009 Veterans of Foreign Post presented this historic moment during a remembrance program on Wednesday, Dec. 7—the 75th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Post member Paul Wisovaty led the program with the playing of the Star Spangled Banner

followed by the radio snippet.

The audience then heard the familiar speech by President Roosevelt proclaiming the day of infamy.

Huffman, now 94, says he doesn’t remember much from the day of Pearl Harbor, but he recognizes there was a shift following the attack.

“I’m an old farm boy by over by Lovington, a long time ago,” he said. “My wife and I graduated from high school in 1940.”

During World War II Tech. Sgt. Huffman flew 25 combat missions in Europe in a B-17 Flying Fortress from 1943-1945.

“A B-17 is 78 feet long, we had nine men, it had a 105-foot wingspan,” he recalled from memory. “All of my overseas time was spent in Europe. Mis-

sions were about 10 hours and 30 minutes, that was about the maximum. Before we’d take off on a bombing mission we had to have a full tank of gasoline, so they’d top off the tanks. We had a commanding officer who believed we should always be on the ball so every 27 seconds an airplane started to roll. It didn’t matter if you were halfway down the runway, every 27 seconds.”

Huffman shared stories of a couple mishaps during take off and one emergency landing in Sweden following a bout with enemy fire.

He said many times his crew caught grief with the men on the ground for their food during meal time. They were given a specific diet due to the pressure

change during extended periods at high elevation, as the B-17 did not have a pressurized cabin like planes do today.

Huffman shared details of the advances in technology used during the war, which may surprise some to learn including drone airplanes and TV cameras.

“If you had the choice would you do it again?” Huffman was asked by a member of the audience.

“O certainly, I’m proud to have worn the uniform of the United States of America. I think anyone should be,” he said. “I have no use for anyone who walks on the flag, who burns the flag. They’ve never stayed in a place for six months where you couldn’t see that flag or experienced what that flag costs.”

Post 1336, Coal City Library District commemorates World War I anniversary

At 3 AM on April 6 1917, the United States declared a state of war with Imperial Germany and her allies the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Turkey.

World War I had been going on since August of 1914, but the U.S., following George Washington’s admonition to “avoid foreign entanglements”, had remained neutral.

Germany’s resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare resulting in the sinking of two U.S. flagged merchant vessels City of Memphis and Illinois and the “Zimmerman note”, where the German Foreign Minister attempted to lure Mexico into attacking the United States with offers of financial assistance and the understanding the Mexico would regain lost territory comprising Texas, Arizona and New Mexico swept away most of the resistance in the congress to declaring war.

The Coal City community contributed 241 men and 5 women to “The War to End All Wars” of which 9 men made the ultimate sacrifice, their service is honored on the community Veteran’s Memorial. The Veterans Memorial is located on the Coal City Intermediate School grounds at 305 E. Division.

St. Juvin Post 1336, named

after a small French village near the Belgian border, the site of a ten day battle 8-18 October, 1917 during the Muse-Argonne Offensive, was founded March 21, 1925 by 26 local World War I and 1 Spanish-American War veterans.

In cooperation with the Coal City Public Library District, St. Juvin Post is commemorating this watershed event in American history with a display in the entrance to the library.

The display features a Pattern of 1917 winter service coat and overseas cap worn by Corporal Charles O. Brown. Brown, who lived in Coal City from 1957 to 1963, enlisted in the Army in December 1917 at Jefferson Barracks, St. Louis MO, arrived in St. Nazaire, France in May of 1918 and was discharged at Camp Grant, Rockford IL in June of 1919.

Brown was a member of the 307th Butchery Company, Quartermaster Corps U.S. Army attached to the 3rd Infantry Division, which acquired its nickname ‘Rock of the Marne’ during World War I.

In 1918 mechanical refrigeration to freeze meat and keep it frozen for long distance shipment was relatively unknown, so in order to supply troops with meat,

cattle, hogs and sheep were transported live and then processed near where they were needed.

Butchery Companies were responsible for receiving the live animals, supervising their processing and delivering the meat products to other units for preparation to feed the troops. Most of the actual meat processing was done by French civilians, under Quartermaster Corps supervision, who were employed by the Army.

Corporal Brown was the father of St. Juvin Post 1336 Commander Charles R. Brown and also a member of the VFW.

Also featured in the display are reproductions of period recruiting posters by artists James Montgomery Flagg, famous for his “I Want You for the U.S. Army” poster featuring Uncle Sam, and Howard Chandler Christy best known for his illustrations of young women in an idealistic style that became collectively known as “Christy Girls”.

The members of St. Juvin Post and the library staff invite you to stop by and view a part of our community’s history from 100 years ago and join with the community at the Memorial Day observance at 11 a.m. Monday May 29th at the Intermediate School.



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District 18 holds Bingo at Manteno Veterans Home

Veterans from District 18, along with the Bolingbrook JAFROTC cadets, visited with residents and held Bingo at the Manteno Veterans Home recently.