



E. Harold Frey, originally assigned to the USS *Oklahoma*, is pictured here on the A-E-16. (Courtesy of E. Harold Frey)

time the lights went out. After the lights went out I heard the command "All Hands Abandon Ship." Probably a delay in reaction, because I was scared to death and kept repeating to myself, "I Am Going to Die, I Am Going To Die." (To this day I wonder if the men who left IC Plot got to topside. I doubt it as the ship went dark almost immediately after they left the compartment. That was five decks below the main deck.)

I was all alone and really couldn't tell where I was. Water was already coming into the compartment. I think I saw a very dim light coming from the conning tower tube. I found the tube and went down it into Secondary Conn which was now flooded. I got into an air pocket. I could see light streaming in from the open hatch. Had the hatch been dogged down I know I would still be in the *Oklahoma*. For two reasons: for one, I probably never would have found the tube into Conn, and two, surely couldn't have held my breath and undogged the hatch. After seeing the light I dove down and out. When I came up I hit the deck behind turret two. I got so frightened. I turned around and saw a faint outline of the lifelines. I swam through them and up to the surface. The water was covered with fuel oil. The ships were burning listing or sunk. I couldn't believe my eyes. I thought I had died and came up in hell. There were small boats picking up the men in the water. A motor whale boat came alongside me. I think the coxswain was a shipfitter by the name of Duralis. As I started to climb aboard a plane dived and strafed the boat. There were men in the boat who were injured. I don't know if all the men in the boat were killed. I dropped off and swam over to Ford Island. When I got ashore I ran to this large building - it was a dispensary. The building was built around an atrium. There were a lot of men lying around the periphery of the atrium. Some of them injured. About that time a high altitude bomber dropped a bomb that landed and exploded in the middle of the open area. When the smoke cleared, I was lying on the ridge of the crater. I jumped up and ran out the door. I was running down a cement sidewalk. Planes were strafing everyone. Cement chips were flying all around me. I was struck by several pieces of the cement chips. I ran into a large barracks building. There were lots of men lying around, most of them hit. There were doctors there taking care of the wounded. A doctor came up to me and examined me. He said I was paralyzed from the waist down.

I knew this wasn't true, as I had just gotten out of the *Oklahoma*, swam ashore, and ran the hundred yard dash in five seconds. I was injured and covered with fuel oil. After the attack was over they loaded us aboard a train made up of supply carts, took us down to the water's edge, and took us over to the landing at Hickam Field. From there we were taken to Aiea Mobile Hospital No. 2 at this make shift hospital men were being taken care of. Most of us were covered with fuel oil. Some of the men died from suffocation from the fuel oil. There were young boys and girls cleaning the fuel oil out of the hair and from the bodies of the men. I was released after a day. I was walking down from Aiea and I was picked up by a man in a jeep. He asked me where I was going. I told him I heard they were handing clothes out at the sub base. I was in my underwear. The man took me to the sub base and had me issued some clothes. I had told him I was a yeoman. He said I need you. He turned out to be Admiral Theobaud, the fleet pooling officer. He put me to work assigning men and officers to ships. I kept after him to send me to sea. I was afraid the war would be over before I could get some revenge. An Ensign Kreuter from the USS *Saratoga* came in looking for men. The Admiral told him to take me. After my below decks experience I asked to have my rate changed to gunners mate. The Admiral told Ensign Kreuter to see that I was given the test for gunners mate third class if I passed rate me if not make me a seaman, and a gunners mate striker. I passed the test. Seven days later the *Saratoga* was torpedoed off Wake Island. There is more to be told, but that about covers December the Seventh. "The Day Of Infamy." God bless those that didn't make it off the dear old *Okie*.

## COULDN'T BELIEVE MY EYES

by Emanuel Harold Frey

In December 7, 1941 commonly known as "Pearl Harbor Day," or as President Roosevelt called it "A Day Of Infamy." I was stationed aboard the USS *Oklahoma* (BB-37). At 0700 I was on the second deck cleaning out and restoring my locker. The next day we were having our annual material inspection. All the blisters and voids were open for their purpose. At about 0755 the word was passed, General Quarters. All Hands Man Your Battle Stations. We thought for Christ's sake the Army is playing games again. In a matter of seconds after that the word came over the loud speaker system, "to shit their dropping bombs." I was already on my way to my battle station, which was in Central Conn. I was the first lieutenant talker on the sound powered phones. I started running to get to my battle station in Damage Control Central. The *Oklahoma* had already been hit by torpedoes and was beginning to list. I could smell the acrid odor of dust and explosives. I got to my station and put my sound powered phones. No one else was there yet. I started to get the messages from the damage control stations manned and ready. The stations were partially manned and I got a request counter flood. I said, "The First Lieutenant isn't here yet, but go ahead." Efforts to counter flood were useless because of the open condition of all of the blister and voids. About this time five or six men came through the companion way hatch from IC Plot. They said, "We are leaving." I told them I didn't leave, the First Lieutenant wasn't there and I had the phones. The ship now had a 25% list on it. There was a large steel table in Central Conn that the First Lieutenant and his assistants used. It started to slide and pinned me against a bulkhead. As the ship continued to roll, the table slid against the bulkhead freeing me. At about this