

History v. Hollywood: The Attack on Pearl Harbor

Basic Information: The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor is one of the most famous moments in United States history -- and one of the deadliest. More than 2,000 American soldiers and civilians were killed, and more than 1,000 were wounded. The United States declared war against Japan just one day after the attack, and Germany and Italy then declared war on the United States three days later. The United States was now a participant in World War II, the largest war in the history of the world.

The 2001 Hollywood film *Pearl Harbor* attempts to retell the story of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Although parts of the film are fictional, it is based on the actual attack on Pearl Harbor, and there is a lengthy depiction of the attack in the film. We will focus on this part of the movie.

Part A. Homework -- 8 documents related to the attack on Pearl Harbor have been provided below. You will examine these documents for homework BEFORE you watch the movie. After examining each document, use the chart to write down one detail you will look for as you watch the movie.

Doc #	Detail About Pearl Harbor Attack You Will Look For In Film Clip
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	

Part B. In Class -- Now we will watch the Pearl Harbor attack scene in the movie. Based on the documents you have examined, how accurate does the scene seem? (Circle One):

VERY ACCURATE

PARTIALLY ACCURATE

NOT ACCURATE

List 2 reasons for your response.

- 1.
- 2.

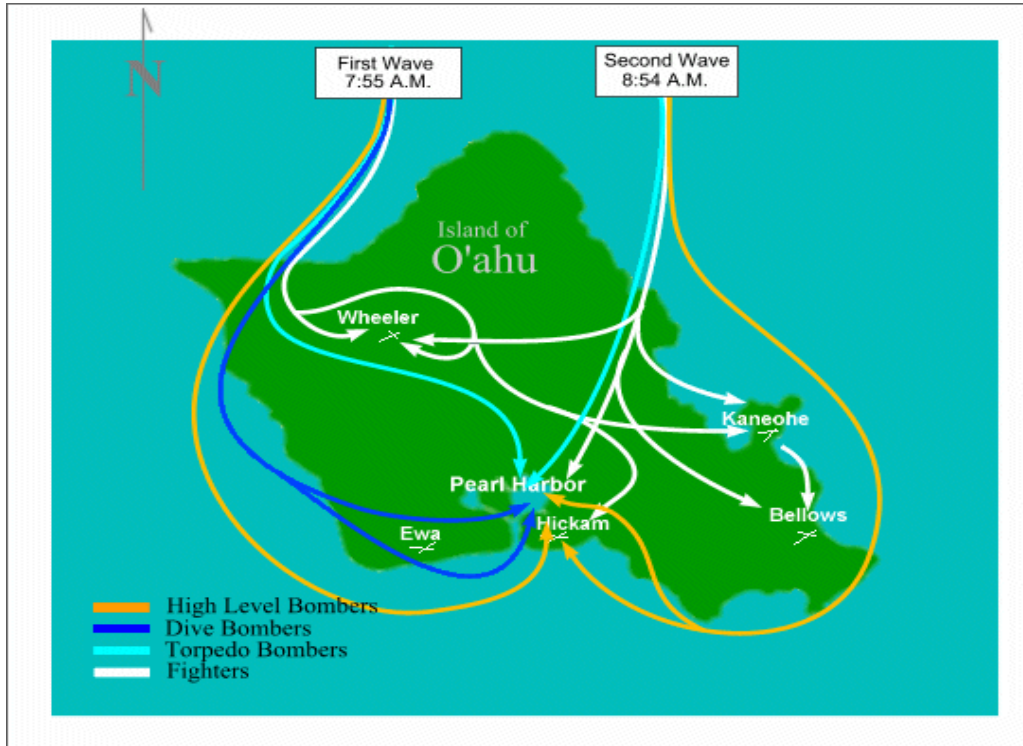
The Documents

Doc. 1:

The first attack wave included 183 aircraft launched from six Imperial Japanese Navy carriers 230 miles North of O'ahu at 6:00 A.M. They were ordered to attack at 0750 A.M. At approximately 7:15 A.M. the second wave of aircraft was launched and 170 more aircraft were on their way to Pearl Harbor. They were ordered to attack shortly before 9AM.

Doc. 2 Maps of Pearl Harbor

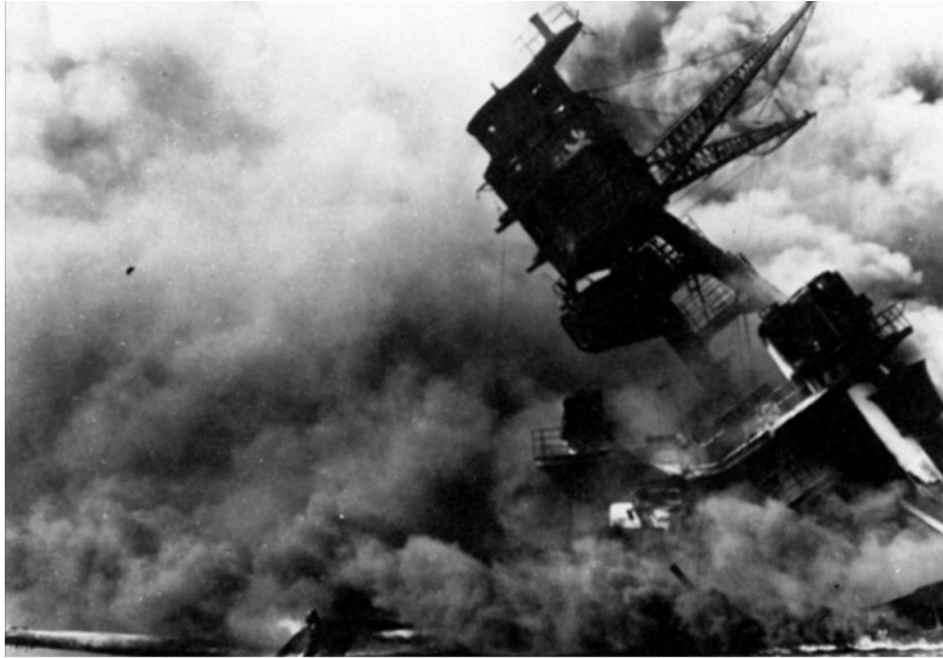




Doc 3: Timeline of Events at Pearl Harbor

- **6:10** -- 220 miles north of Oahu Admiral Nagumo orders launching of 1st wave of 183 aircraft off three carriers...2 are lost during takeoff.
- **7:02** -- Two navy privates pick up what appears to be a flight of unidentified aircraft bearing in 132 miles north of Oahu on radar...discussion follows.
- **7:06** -- Navy private phones boss telling of a large formation of aircraft approaching the Island. Boss responds "Well, don't worry about it."
- **7:15** -- Japanese launch 2nd wave of 168 assault aircraft.
- **7:40** -- 1st Japanese wave sights North Shore of Oahu.
- **7:49** -- Commander Fuchida orders attack...all pilots to begin assault on military bases on Oahu...
- **7:53** -- Fuchida radios code to entire Japanese Navy "TORA TORA TORA" indicating success and maximum strategic surprise.
- **7:55** -- **ATTACK ERUPTS AT PEARL HARBOR****
- Along Battleship Row, battlewagons feel the sting of the torpedoes specifically designed for the shallow waters of Pearl Harbor. Violent explosions rock U.S. warships, some of which begin to capsize. Command Center sends out message "AIR RAID PEARL HARBOR THIS IS NO DRILL". All patrol planes ordered to seek out enemy. At the same time, some of the American warships and their personnel fire upon the attacking Japanese.

Doc 4: Sinking of the U.S.S. Arizona



Doc 5: Destruction of Air Force Planes at Hickam Field



Doc 6 – Eyewitness account of Ginger, a 17 year old high school senior living with her family at Hickam Field on Dec. 7, 1941

I was awakened at eight o'clock on the morning of December 7th by an explosion from Pearl Harbor. I got up thinking something exciting was probably going on over there. Little did I know! When I reached the kitchen the whole family, excluding Pop, was looking over at the Navy Yard. It was being consumed by black smoke and more terrific explosions. We didn't know what was going on, but I didn't like it. I became extremely worried, as did we all. Mom and I went out on the front porch to get a better look and three planes went zooming over our heads so close we could have touched them. They had red circles on their wings. Then we caught on!

About that time bombs started dropping all over Hickam. We stayed at the windows, not knowing what else to do, and watched the fire works. We saw a bunch of soldiers come running full tilt towards us from the barracks and just then a whole line of bombs fell behind them knocking them all to the ground. A bunch of soldiers had come into our garage to hide. They were entirely taken by surprise and most of them didn't even have a gun or anything. One of them asked for a drink of water saying he was sick. He had just been so close to where a bomb fell that he had been showered with debris. He said he was scared, and I was to, so I couldn't say that I blamed him.

The Japs were flying around in a circle bombing us, Pearl Harbor, and machine gunning Fort Kam. A second terrific bunch of explosions followed the first by a few minutes only. I found out later these had landed in the baseball diamond just a second after Dad had walked across it. He ran back to see if the men in a radio truck there had been hit. All but one had and they were carted off in an ambulance. I went dashing into my room to look and saw that the barracks was on fire, also the big depot hanger. I hated to go into my room because the planes kept machine-gunning the street just outside my window and I kept expecting to see a string of bullets come through my roof any minute. We had all gotten dressed in the meantime and had packed a suitcase and were ready to leave any time. Finally, after two and a half hours, the planes went away and we left. I gave the soldiers in the garage two and a half packages of my chewing gum before I left and they nearly died of joy at sight of it. Poor guys!!

Doc 7: George Phraner's Brush with Death Aboard the U.S.S. Arizona

As usual, there was a warm breeze that Sunday morning. We had just finished breakfast and drifted out of the compartment to get a little air. This was our normal routine on weekends as we had no work station to report to. It was fortunate for us that we were able to sleep in until 6:30 as many of us had been out the night before. Just as we left the mess area we heard this noise. We went outside to take a look because it's usually very quiet. When we arrived we could hear and see there were airplanes. I looked across the bow of the ship and could see large plumes of smoke. At first, we didn't realize it was a bombing. It didn't mean anything to us until a large group of planes came near the ship and we

could see for the first time the rising sun emblem on the plane wings. The bombing was becoming heavier all around us and we knew this was REALLY IT!

At first there was a rush of fear, the blood started to flow real fast. It was then that general quarters sounded over the speaker and everything became automatic. My battle station was on a forward 5 inch gun and it was standard practice to keep only a limited amount of ammunition at the guns. There we were, the Japanese dropping bombs over us and we had no ammo. All the training and practicing for a year and when the real thing came we had no ammunition where we needed it. As unfortunate as this was, that simple fact was to save my life. Somehow the gun captain pointed at me and said, "you go aft and start bringing up the ammunition out of the magazines". The aft magazines were five decks below.

A few moments later I found myself deep below the water line in a part of the ship I normally would never be in. I remember getting these cases of ammo powder and shells weighing about 90 pounds each. I had begun lifting shells into the hoist when a deafening roar filled the room and the entire ship shuttered. One and half million pounds of gun powder exploded in a massive fireball disintegrating the whole forward part of the ship. Only moments before I stood with my gun crew just a few feet from the center of the explosion. My whole gun crew was killed. Behind me, a marine lay dead on the deck, his body split in two.

I began to realize there were dead men all around me. Some men were burning, wandering aimlessly. The sound of someone shouting "put out the fire" cut through the sound of the battle, but it was obvious the ship was doomed. I made my way to the side of the ship, which by this time was sinking fast and jumped off the fantail. The shoreline of Ford Island was only a short distance. There was burning oil all around the ship, but the aft was clear and I swam ashore.

Doc 8: Private Joseph P. McDonald was one of the first men in history to know about the oncoming attack. His account was made to military investigators after the attack..

McDonald was stationed at the Fort Shafter Information Center in Hawaii. His shift began at 5PM, December 6, 1941. The people at the center had been on alert for a few weeks, but the alert was cancelled just before December 7th. McDonald manned the switchboard at 6:00 PM. Most of the time he was alone.

Shortly after 7:00AM the next morning the switchboard buzzed. He inserted the plug into the phone and answered. An excited voice said "There are a large number of planes coming in from the north 3 points East." McDonald replied, "I am not sure what to do, there is nobody here".

At that point the connection was broken. McDonald found an Air Corps Lieutenant and said, "I just received a call reporting a large number of planes coming in from the North 3 points East." The Lieutenant said that there was nothing to get excited about.

McDonald returned to the switchboard and called the man back, relaying the Lieutenant's apparent lack of concern. The voice on the other end was coming in stronger now. McDonald now recognized the voice as his friend, Private Joseph Lockard. Lockard was excited, stating that a large number of planes were heading fast towards Oahu. "Hey Mac there is a heck of a big flight of planes coming in and the whole scope is covered." McDonald told Lockard to hold on. McDonald, infected by his friend's excitement, again returned to the plotting table and the Lieutenant.

McDonald said, "Sir, this is the first call that I have ever received like this. This sounds serious! Do you think that we ought to do something about it? Shall I call back the plotters?" The Lieutenant said that it was probably a flight from the states. Private Lockard asked to talk directly with the Lieutenant.

The Lieutenant took the phone and McDonald would later remember the Lieutenant saying "Well don't worry about it". After the Lieutenant got off the phone, McDonald asked if he should warn the naval stations and air forces bases. The Lieutenant replied, "Don't worry about it". McDonald was sure that it was serious. He felt the Lieutenant was inexperienced in the information center's operations, as it was only his second day there. McDonald was "pretty sure" that it was serious.

A number of times he grabbed the line to warn them, but thoughts of being court martialed for going outside the chain of command prevented him from making the call. Who would listen to a private anyway?