

## War Era Story Project 2012

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Age: Not given

*My wife's Uncle wrote the letter below in about 1995. Tony was born and raised in Marion, Ohio. According to Tony, they had been instructed not to talk about the incident. After 50 years, Tony only felt comfortable talking about it because there was a newspaper article making it public knowledge. He wrote the attached letter explaining his recollection of events. The following was retyped, verbatim, by me.*

### **The Second Pearl Harbor By Anthony J. (Tony) Nicolosi circa 1995**

I guess now I can say it can be told. The enclosed article caught my eye in the Columbus Dispatch of May 18th. I was part of this. My ship was the *LST 43*; we were loaded with high-octane gas up on the bow of the ship and we were to refuel planes during the invasion. On the deck of the ship, on a platform, we had an LCT. This ship would carry the marines and the army we had on board to the invaded islands. Underneath this ship we had stored 5" shells that we would use for the same purpose. This LCT ship would be removed from the main deck by tilting the ship on its side and the LCT would slide off into the ocean.

When the explosion occurred, you can imagine what happened. I remember a young lad whose name I have never forgotten, which was Edward Emillo Pacheco (Portuguese); he had more guts than brains and he went up to the bow of the ship to release the lines so we could move out. As soon as he arrived up there, the high octane gasoline exploded, his body went up in the air in many pieces, the ocean was on fire from the oil and gasoline; some of the sailors, army and marines could not swim through the fire and were consumed. Others jumped off the aft (backend) with the rudders running, the force of the rudders was so great that they got sucked in and shredded. I went to the officer's quarters where the pharmacist's mate was, and there was a fellow that he was attending to that had all his blood vessels burst from the explosion. I don't know what kind of shot he gave him to relieve him from his misery.

It was getting late and I knew I had to abandon ship. I put on my helmet and my Mae West jacket. I jumped off feet first and swam for my life. I could not have made it on my own; a marine whom I never got to meet pulled me in by the hair of my head (I did have some then). I wound up at Base Hospital #8. At that time, all hospitals were given names such as this so as to not reveal their locations. This one was the main Naval Hospital, which was located in Pearl Harbor. I don't remember how many days I was there, but it had to be a few. Before I left, I went to the third floor of the hospital, the amputee floor; what a horrible sight to see these brave men.

While in the hospital, the Naval Department notified my father of my injuries, etc. At that time, he was trying to become a naturalized citizen, but could not read or write. The telegram was published in the

Marion Star, and Judge Paul Smith heard about the episode. On that basis, he granted my father his naturalization papers.

My mother had passed away on Jan. 6, 1944 and I did not come home for the funeral. When I received that telegram, I was just hours away from shipping out of San Diego, which took me to the Marshall Islands invasion. I am glad now that I did not attend the funeral. I still remember her huge smiling face waving at me from the Depot as I headed for uncharted waters. I loved my mother very much, a beautiful lady.

I was released from the hospital and went back to what was left of our crew. Shortly after that, we attended a mass burial. This was one large and big hole, and all were in wooden caskets. Since there were many of all faiths, we had a Jewish rabbi, a Catholic priest and a Protestant minister who gave the service. After that, taps were sounded and a 21-gun salute. When the guns went off you could see all the knees bend – we were all still shell shocked.

I was given a 30-day survivors leave. I then returned to Solamis, Maryland, for reassignment. I was later admitted to the Portsmouth Naval Hospital. After leaving there, I was transferred to the Radar School at Indianapolis; There I met my future bride. I am sure you know the rest of the story.