

War Era Story Project 2012

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Age: 92

Machinist Mate 2nd class, Rolla E. "Ed" Malan, was born on the 4th of July in 1920. He enlisted in 1939 and served on the *U.S.S. Preble* until it was decommissioned in 1945. He received his discharge at the same time.

On Dec. 7, 1941, Ed and his crewmates were quartered in barracks, while their ship was docked in Pearl Harbor for an overhaul. The *U.S.S. Preble*, DM-20 was completely stripped for the refit. Ed was sound asleep when the attack happened. He and a couple of friends wondered why the Army was having maneuvers at this time of day. They climbed to the roof and saw the attack on the harbor. Zeros flew over their heads, so close that they could see the pilots inside.

Ed took cover, then he ran to his ship. There was only one 30-caliber machine gun left on board, but there was no ammunition to fire it. He and some of his shipmates ran to the ship docked next to them for ammo. Luckily, their ship was not hit. Most of the crew fought fires and cared for the wounded aboard the *U.S.S. Pennsylvania*, BB-38. As soon as the refit was completed, they joined the fleet to continue laying mines and escort duty in Alaska and throughout the Pacific Theater.

Ed was on board during two typhoons. He watched, as a ship rolled over and their aft deck plates buckled in one storm. Then, while towing a ship in another typhoon, the cable snapped and all hands in the towed ship were lost. He described a very dark night off the coast of Mindenao in the Phillipines. While they were laying mines, a searchlight spotted them, and immediately the fleet ahead of them, shelled the shore. He said that it looked like the 4th of July. Red, green, and yellow explosions filled the night sky.

In May of 1943, they laid mines near the Soloman Islands, which resulted in the sinking of a Japanese destroyer and damage to two others. During the same month, they rescued 85 survivors from the *S.S. Stanvae*. Ed felt like he was all over the Pacific and couldn't believe how lucky He and the crew were to survive.

On Dec. 7, 1945, they returned to the States, and the *Preble* was decommissioned exactly four years after the Pearl Harbor attack. Ed returned home, married, and joined the Postal Service.