

Pearl Harbor: *The After Story*

Today marks the 74th anniversary of the Imperial Japanese Navy attack on Pearl Harbor – Dec. 7, 1941 – that led to the United States' entry into World War II. The base in Hawaii was attacked by 353 Japanese fighter planes, bombers and torpedo planes in two waves.

All eight U.S. battleships were damaged, with four sunk. All but the *Arizona* were later raised, and six were returned to service, going on to fight in the war. The casualties: 2,403 Americans were killed and 1,178 others were wounded.



These were some of the statistics. What you may not know is how God turned the evil of this tragedy into something good for His kingdom.

It started with Sgt. Jacob Daniel DeShazer, a crew member in the legendary Doolittle Raiders. This was a team of 80 brave military servicemen who volunteered and were organized to retaliate for the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor by bombing Tokyo. DeShazer was among those captured by the Japanese Army after bailing out of his plane over Japanese-occupied China. He spent 40 months in captivity – 34 months of it in solitary confinement – and was the victim of cruel torture and starvation.

His hatred for the enemy, he said, “drove me crazy.” He heard how Christianity changed hatred between human beings into real brotherly love, and he begged his captors for a Bible. A guard finally brought him one, but said he could only have it for three weeks. On June 8, 1944, DeShazer confessed his sins and received forgiveness and salvation promised him in God’s word. He was freed from his hatred.

Physical freedom came for DeShazer and other prisoners of war on Aug. 20, 1945. Returning home, he entered seminary, married and returned to Japan as a missionary. Thousands of Japanese responded to this former POW’s invitation to receive Christ as Lord and Savior, but probably the most notable one was Mitsuo Fuchida, the commander who led the Japanese air fleet that bombed Pearl Harbor, the man who had called “Tora! Tora! Tora!”



(more)

In a train station, he was handed a tract written by DeShazer entitled *I Was a Prisoner of Japan*. After reading the tract, Fuchida was moved by Jesus' cry from the cross, "Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing." In September of 1949, Fuchida accepted Christ as Savior, was baptized in 1951, and went on to become a missionary in Asia.



Over the next years, Fuchida and DeShazer spoke to many crowds together and individually, sharing their testimony of the power of Jesus Christ to transform lives. Fuchida's desire was for people to remember him for the message of his changed heart more than the memory of the Pearl Harbor attack. In 1970, Fuchida

wrote in his testimony *From Pearl Harbor to Calvary*: "He (Christ) is the only One who was powerful enough to change my life and inspire it with His thoughts. He was the only answer to Jake DeShazer's tormented life. He is the only answer for young people today."

Does this story speak to you? Are you in a prison of hatred or bitterness? Do you hope for relief? The answers are in the person of Jesus Christ and written in the words of Scripture and on the hearts of true followers of Christ.

It is level ground at the foot of the cross ... and we are all sinners. We all need forgiveness of sin, all of us. Take the time to repent and to turn your life over to Him.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16 NKJV).



– Beecher Hunter