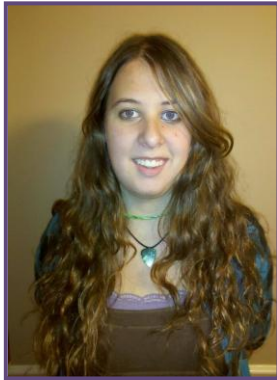


SINKING OF THE *Arizona*

This past Monday, honor and gratitude to our nation's veterans, those men and women who died while serving in the United States Armed Forces, were extended in ceremonies all across the land. It was Memorial Day, a time to reflect on their sacrifices.

Kelly Reilly, who works in Life Care's Travel Services Department, shared a fascinating



Kaitlin Robinson

book with me entitled *America's Soldiers: Teens' Tales of Tribute*. She is rightly proud because one of the essays in the book is written by her daughter, Kaitlin Robinson, about her grandfather (Kelly's father), Richard Holladay. He witnessed first-hand the sinking of the *USS Arizona*, a battleship bombed in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. The wreck still lies at the bottom of Pearl Harbor.

In the afterglow of our patriotic celebrations this week, here is a vivid reminder of the sacrifices and heroism of our men and women in uniform. Kaitlin wrote that Holladay quit school after the fifth grade to help his widowed mother work on the farm.

"Seeking ways to help support his family, he joined the military at the age of 17. This provided the means for him to not only support his family, but also to leave the confines of his small town (Huntingdon, Tenn.) and travel the world."

Holladay enlisted in the Navy in 1937, and was stationed in Pearl Harbor on a destroyer commissioned the *USS Conyngham*. "On Dec. 7, 1941, he had just finished night watch at 7:55 that morning and was climbing the ladder to his bunk when he heard a huge crash and the alarms went off ... signaling all hands on deck, and everyone ran up to the main deck," Kaitlin wrote.

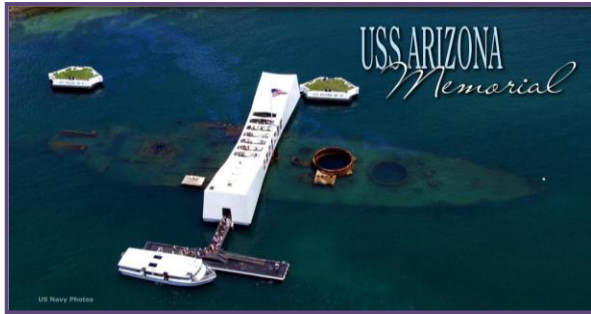
"When Richard arrived on deck, he beheld a horrible sight! Bombs were falling everywhere. He watched in horror as one hit the *USS Arizona*, which immediately went up in flames. Young men leapt off the ship to avoid the fire and falling debris. The water was littered with the bodies of men either alive, dying or dead, surrounded by burning debris as bombs continued to fall around them. The ships were trapped where they were anchored. They managed to save some of the men in the water, but many of them drowned still trapped in the belly of the sinking ships.



The USS Arizona goes down in a blaze after being bombed in 1941.

(more)

“As the *Arizona* sank, no matter how much we wanted to help, all we could do was stand on the deck of our own ship and salute as the *Arizona* went down.”



Although Holladay was not highly decorated, Kaitlin said, “he never talked about any of his medals or honors because he thought that it took away from those who gave the ultimate sacrifice: their lives. Richard Holladay witnessed many deaths during his childhood and early adult life. He felt lucky to survive and always thought he owed a debt of service and was quick to offer help to anyone.”

It is important that Kaitlin Robinson chose to write about her grandfather and what he experienced in duty to his country. And it is also laudatory that Lynn Matison Geddie and Reid Geddie would collect stories of these patriots – as told by teenagers who loved them – and assemble them in the book. They chronicle our legacy.

– Beecher Hunter