

THE MORNING OF THE DAY

Pearl Harbor Recalled

When I was growing up, my parents, their friends, (and really anyone just a few years older than I was), always referred to World War II as simply “the war.” Other wars might need specific names: “World War I”, “The Korean War”,--- the wars I went to, “ The Vietnam War”, “The first Gulf War”, the “conflict in Bosnia” , and now the wars my nephew has gone to and come back from: the “war in Iraq” and “the war in Afghanistan.”; But World War II was so all encompassing. It so pervaded every aspect of daily living that among those who went through it, that there was no need to call it anything but “The War”. Only once did I ever hear another conflict referred to by that name; a friend of my grandmother, an octogenarian southern lady whose family had lived in the path of Sherman’s march, mentioned that her grandparents had lost everything in what she pronounced as if it had two syllables-“The Wo-ah”

Not only did the phrase “the war” label the historic event, it also denoted a temporal milestone against which, people who lived through it, measured other major life events. My mother would say that my father graduated from college *before the war*, and that she and my father were married *before the war*. One uncle who was class of ’44 didn’t actually graduate until *after the war*.

I have some memories of that time. I remember Eisenhower coming up Fifth Avenue in New York City in the victory parade. Someone held me up and put me on their shoulders. It wasn’t my father but I don’t remember who it was; and, now there isn’t anyone left who could tell me. I remember the ticker tape and confetti and the mass of people. There was Eisenhower sitting in the back of a convertible, sometimes not on the seat but on the ledge behind the back seat-his feet on the back seat, and occasionally raising his arms in a V for victory.

I remember the end of the war, V J day, victory over Japan, the day Japan surrendered. We had temporarily left New York City where we were living and gone to a lake in New England where my grandparents had a summer place. It was a primitive cottage. There was a pipe that ran into the lake, and through it we pumped water by hand into the kitchen sink. Other than that there was no indoor plumbing. We did have electricity, but no phone. There were other similar cottages scattered around the lake, concealed in the trees.

Someone across the lake must have heard the news on their radio and (lacking any other way to communicate the news and express their emotional release) they went out behind their cabin and honked their car horn. (This was before the people in Washington decided we didn’t really know what we wanted in way of product design and began to design products for us. One could honk a car horn without turning on the ignition or doing anything but pushing on the steering wheel.) Soon someone else who must have heard the news honked back; radios were turned on and after a while there was a blaring cacophony of noise that went around the lake. I was puzzled.

Living in New York City, I knew what a traffic jam was. A car would block an intersection as the light changed. Someone coming the other way (perhaps a taxi driver in one of those large yellow checker cabs) would lean on their horn as if the noise could create space and impart motion to the trapped car. Other cars would join in. But, here was a traffic jam in the middle of a

lake with no cars. After a while, my mother explained that it was the end of the war. I was even more puzzled. I was too young to know the word finite, but suddenly I was struggling with the concept. The war had ended? How could that be? The war just was; it was a part of everyday life. It was how we lived. How could it have an end? Had it had a beginning?

Some of my memories of that time are really reflections of memories. At Christmas in 1947, a bachelor uncle came to spend the holiday with us, and I watched while my mother made a pie crust. She mixed an oblong stick of yellow butter into the dough, and I asked her why the butter now came from the store already yellow. I have no actual memory of watching my mother or grandmother mix yellow food coloring into the gray white greasy paste that passed for margarine; but at some level, I knew we had done that.

In 1948, the next door neighbors came over one evening, and I was allowed to sit unobtrusively in our living room where they and my parents all listened to the radio. The radio was combined with a record player which we called a Victrola and the whole assembly formed a large ice box sized piece of mahogany furniture that was the focal point of the room. The commentator was talking about the Berlin airlift and he said that it was a victory, for us, in the cold war with Russia. I attempted to process the information I had just heard; we were in a war with Russia. I lightly dismissed the word "cold." I had some recollection that war with Russia could be cold and that cold had been a problem for the Germans. But the main point was that we were in a war with Russia. There came an appropriate break in the conversation so that I could say something without interrupting, (Interrupting grown-ups was a serious offense) and I amused the adults by offering the opinion that we would need to get new blackout curtains because I didn't think my grandmother had saved the old ones when she took them down. I have no specific memory of the blackout curtains, but I knew we'd had them.

My memories are intermittent, and generally of small domestic events. I did not understand the actual reality of fighting, or the places it occurred; but I did perceive the awfulness of it. During the latter part of the war we lived with my maternal grandparents in an apartment in New York City, at 1170 5th Avenue. It was at the corner of 5th Avenue and 96th St., across from the east side of Central Park and just a few blocks below Mt Sinai Hospital. We would go on walks sometimes. There were apartments along the way with Silver Star flags in the window, signifying that a father, son or husband who lived there was away in the war. And if, in a window along our walk, a silver star had been replaced with a gold one, the adults would comment in short clipped words, or spell to each other; their exchange constituted a code I was not supposed to understand, and didn't. But, though I couldn't understand the spoken message, I could sense the emotions. Small children can sense emotions, and I could feel the mixture of concern, sadness, and especially fear, behind what the adults were saying.

It was an experience that sharply separates me from my younger siblings, and their generation. Young children know that they cannot cope for themselves and so, for their own well being and peace of mind, develop the faith that the adults around them can protect them and handle any problem. My siblings and their generation grew up supremely confident that life would present no problems or that if it did the older generation would hand them the solution. Did the boomers

crowd the schools? New schools would be built. Colleges would expand. The economy would always grow. There was no reason not to buy the BMW on time or mortgage oneself to the hilt to move to a larger house. Until just a few years ago, there seemed to be no downside risks. The subject is worth a paper all by itself.

But I grew up knowing otherwise. Somewhere, into Central Park, past the lake with the toy boats, out the other side, down some street I'd never seen, there was something called the war; and the adults were frightened of it.

At breakfast there was a ritual. My grandfather would open the paper, and comment that there was heavy fighting somewhere. Perhaps in the Philippines, Bastogne, the Rhine, or Okinawa; I have no memory of the name of any actual battle. I had no understanding of what fighting was; but, I could sense the thick angst and intensity of emotion when, after a pause, my Grandmother would say "Oh! ... So and son's boy is out there, I'll call her this morning."

Only one memory relates to any specific war event. My grandfather and I were sitting in my grandparents' living room. The radio was on in the background and the announcer reported the sinking of the cruiser Indianapolis by a Japanese submarine. His words were indistinct; the volume was turned down and the AM signal had drifted a bit.

My grandfather came explosively out of his chair. He was sick; he was dying. I never saw him move so fast either before or afterwards; but he reached the radio, turned up the volume, adjusted the tuning knob, and listened intently; I listened too. I didn't understand battles and geography; but, I knew that being sunk was bad, and, from my grandfather's reaction, very bad. And I knew the name of my father's ship. It was the Minneapolis.

Of all this, my sister Pam, less than two years younger than myself, remembers nothing.

One weekend in 1947 or 48 we went for a drive in my parent's first car. We were looking for a house from which someone had placed a classified ad for a piece of antique furniture that my mother thought she might want to buy. We never found the place. Perhaps we had the wrong address. Perhaps the directions were bad, but up after driving around for quite some time, we ended up back at the house my parents were renting. As he turned off the car, my father looked at my mother and kidded her gently. "Well Barbara" he said "was this trip really necessary?" I recognized the war time conservation slogan. It meant nothing to Pam.

Decades later, after both of our parents were gone, she and I and another of my sisters were in a house in Maine. It had once belonged to my grandmother and had now descended to our generation. We were going through things. It is a 200 year-old rambling New England farmhouse with an even more rambling attached barn, the sort of space that seduces one to take something for which no one has any use and store it rather than throw it out, since throwing it out entails a psychological loss because of the memories that surround the object.

I opened a drawer in a long disused bureau; and, there was a collection of items that had been saved from the time of the war. On the top of the items was a booklet (perhaps 5" x 7"), stapled

at one of the five inch ends, covers of low grade recycled newspaper, overprinted with a U.S. insignia. I picked it up, looked at it, and I flashed back to a memory that I hadn't touched in over half a century. Suddenly I was a small boy again, standing next to my mother as she completed a purchase in a butcher's shop.

We didn't shop in supermarkets then. Supermarkets didn't really come into being until after the war. We shopped at specialty stores- the butcher's shop, the bakery, the green grocer's. I continued to look at the booklet. "Ration stamps" I said "red ones, we could buy meat." One of my sisters turned the compound noun into a question. "Ration stamps?"

I tried to explain. "You couldn't just buy things during the war, even if you had the money and the shops had the goods. Things were rationed so that the war effort and the troops got priority. We were given stamps, based on the size of the family. Each stamp indicated how much of something we were allowed to buy, and we had to give the storekeeper the stamps when we made a purchase. If we didn't buy as much as the stamp entitled us to, we got change for the stamp, little hard paper coin like disks, the same color as the stamp. These red ones were for meat. There were blue ones for canned goods. There was something different for sugar. Grandpa had an "A" sticker on his Packard, which meant we couldn't buy much gasoline but we didn't really need to drive a lot in New York City.

My sisters looked at me as though through frozen masks, that controlled look that listeners sometimes adopt to avoid insulting a speaker by suggesting by their facial expression that he or she is uttering sheer gibberish.

One of them took some other paper out of the drawer and unfolded it. "It's a railroad timetable" she said, "Pennsylvania Railroad. I thought it was the Penn Central."

"It became that" I said "when it merged with the New York Central, many years after the war."

"I wonder why they saved this." she said. "There is a ticket stub attached."

I looked at it. "I think this is when Dad came home. He stayed with his ship while it came back across the Pacific, then through the Panama Canal and up the east coast. It put in at the Philadelphia Navy Yard where it was to be decommissioned. Then he took the train and came home to New York. Mother took us to the door to meet him. She was carrying you and holding my hand as I walked alongside her. You don't remember?"

"No" she said.

I remembered. I remembered feeling excited as we walked to the door. I didn't know what I was excited about; but my mother was excited and, as small children do, I took my emotional cue from her. I remember looking straight ahead through the opened door and seeing two brass buttons against a field of navy blue--- the bottom two buttons on a naval officer's bridge coat. I had to extend my neck and tilt my head way back in order to look up and see a strange face and feel my excitement change to bewilderment with a touch of anxiety and even fear! I had no idea who he was.

One of my sisters rescued me from that memory. “That doesn’t make sense” she said. “The ticket is dated early February 1946. Didn’t Dad come home right after the war ended?” “No I said, he couldn’t” “Why not?” she asked, reflexively. Now it was my turn to carefully control my expression; because, it seemed to me that she was asking a foolish question whose answer was obvious. “Well” I said “He didn’t have enough points.”

The two of them looked at each other. And, I sensed an unspoken agreement not to ask what points were. So, I didn’t need to explain the priority system by which millions of men and women, scattered all over the world, were demobilized and brought home.

Because the war was such an integral part of my life as the mental lights came on and memory began, I listened when people talked about it. By the time I was in grade school, if one of the women who lived on our street in Terrace Park stopped by in the afternoon to see my mother (perhaps to borrow some clothes pins with which to hang out an extra large wash or perhaps just to talk over coffee) I knew. I knew whether she was the one who’d gone into the Red Cross, or the one who had worked for the rationing agency, the Office of Price Administration, or the one who just helped out at USO canteens where she had met her husband.

In high school, when my parents had guests, I could stand at the opening to the living room in the house in Indian Hill, look in, and know that Mr. Brown had been in submarines and been captured; Mr. Headley had taken over a battalion on Iwo Jima when his commanding officer was wounded; Lou Prince had been a forward observer with the field artillery, from North Africa through France and into Germany. John Zinke and Chuck Yeiser had flown anti submarine patrols over the North Atlantic. Wick Jones, his father terminally ill, had been asked to forgo his Marine Corps commission and come back to Cincinnati to run a family business that made vitally important war equipment. Six men, who would end up living a few miles from each other, scattered, at different times, over two different oceans, three different continents, and the pacific islands. It was a global war.

Even among my own family and their friends at the time, experiences were quite different.

My mother and my aunt Dorothy (my father’s sister), both with small children and both with husbands away in the Navy, set up housekeeping in an apartment in New York, in the middle part of the war. They made formula from powdered milk and sugar and sterilized it on the stove in a pressure cooker specially designed for glass baby bottles. They washed cloth diapers by hand and hung them out to dry in the air shaft in the middle of the building. At one point they had three children in the apartment under the age of four. Years later, my mother confided to me that that was when she and Dorothy had learned to drink. And, she suggested that I owed my survival to the fact that (at five o’clock) they regularly had two martinis. It was a custom my mother continued almost to the end of her days, two martinis at five o’clock. Only two, I never saw her have a third. And, if there was going to be wine on the table for thanksgiving or a birthday, she would forgo the second martini.

In college when I began to experiment with alcohol stronger than beer, I learned to appreciate the wisdom of her limit. I find that martinis are like women's breasts. One is not enough, but three is too many.

My father was exempt from the draft because of me, and because of war work for P&G. But after a time, he volunteered and went into the Navy. He went through an officer candidate's school on a decommissioned ship tied up in the East River in New York. He got the highest grade in the class on the engineering exam, so the Navy kept him there for a while to teach engineering to the succeeding classes. Eventually he was sent out to the Pacific to join his ship in time for the invasion of the Philippines and Okinawa.

My father's brother-in-law, uncle Norman (my Aunt Dorothy's husband) was commissioned about the same time as my father, but Norman was a few years older than my father, and had been with Pan American Airways before the war; he had worked in international flight operations and scheduling. To take advantage of this experience, Norman was posted to the US Navy liaison office at His Majesty's Station Bermuda, where he coordinated the arrangements for the admirals and generals flying back from North Africa, England, and eventually the continent. They would meet, to plan strategy with their counterparts flying out from Canada and the states. Norman was a superb, professional caliber golfer. When this became known, he was frequently asked to fill out a foursome for golf, particularly if his flag officer partner could entice a couple of visiting and unsuspecting service academy class mates into betting some money on the game. My grandfather Lowry once commented to friends that he had two boys in the war and that he wasn't too concerned about my father (because after all a cruiser was a large well protected ship) but he did worry a great deal about his son-in-law being hit in the head by a golf ball.

My father had a college friend named Philip Gazecki. He was a classmate of my father. Phil got into uniform a little ahead of most of the civilian graduates of 1941 because he was a naval cadet as an undergraduate. It was a program that was similar to (but not identical with) today's navy ROTC. After graduation, Phil had to go to Newport Rhode Island for training, for three or four months, during the summer and fall, before he went out to the Pacific to join his ship. He was near the top his group during the training at Newport so he was given what was considered a plum assignment, a battleship. He is still on board. He is below decks on Arizona.

If the war treated individuals differently and capriciously, there was one event which essentially everyone shared. Everyone of an age to whom I have ever listened could tell me exactly where they were and what they were doing when they heard the news about Pearl Harbor.

In their later years, my parents bought into a full service retirement community in Naples Florida, where there was a large retired Cincinnati contingent. After my father died, the five of us, in my generation, took turns, (at somewhat irregular intervals), going to Florida and visiting our mother; and, I happened to be there, one year, on December 7th.

We finished lunch in the dining facility. Wanting to introduce me to some of her friends, my mother took me into a side room, which she would have called a parlor. There was a group of women in the room, talking, as we came in. "I hope we're not interrupting" my mother said. 'Oh no Barbara' came the answer. "We were just talking about where we were, when we heard the news about Pearl Harbor, where were you?" My mother's expression changed. "Don and I were in our first apartment, in St. Louis. I was cleaning up some things after lunch and a neighbor knocked on the door and said "Turn on the radio."

The woman nodded and the group went on talking.

It occurred to me that I fit into a very narrow niche. I was old enough to remember some things about the war and had listened to people talk about it, so I had some appreciation for the impact that news must have had. But, I had no memories of Pearl Harbor. I could listen to what was said and extract some common threads or themes without biasing them with my own experience.

One common thread that struck me (as it has some other historians) was the timing involved.

The Japanese naval officers who planned the attack wanted to catch the American Fleet at its lowest ebb of readiness. So they planned the attack for early Sunday morning. I had grown up with that in my history books. One of the major works on the subject is titled "At Dawn We Slept" But my Mother had been cleaning up after lunch.

In 1941, relatively few Americans lived in the Hawaiian Islands. Around eighty percent of the US population lived either along the Eastern seaboard or in the cities between the Atlantic and the Mississippi valley, cities like Detroit, Pittsburg, Atlanta, Cleveland, Chicago, St Louis, and Cincinnati. And in 1941, there was a five and a half hour time difference between Honolulu and Washington DC. So for most Americans, the news of the attack broke the day in two. Realizing that, when the conversation died down in that room in Florida, (my old training about interrupting older adults still held fast) I asked the women (as I have asked other men and women since) "What was it like that morning, that last morning of peace?" And... I listened

The morning of the day was cold on the East Coast of the United States. In Washington DC the temperature was in the low thirties. But, I was told that in Cincinnati, it was shirt sleeve weather, an unusually warm day, more like early fall or spring than a day less than three weeks before Christmas.

Families slept in. There wasn't the pressure of the weekday with work or school or even Saturday's desire to start on the weekend's projects, get people up. One of the sounds that often alerted people to weekday mornings was missing. There was no clanking of bottles on the porch. The milkman didn't make deliveries on Sunday.

But after a while it was 7:30 or quarter of 8 and in family households people got up

At a prep school in New England the boys were almost finished breakfast. The school administration felt that an early breakfast on Sunday, followed by compulsory chapel, built character, something the administration was determined to do whether the boys appreciated it or not.

In college dorms and fraternity houses in Cincinnati and Providence Rhode Island, most of the college students were still sleeping, perhaps helped by some Weidman's or Narragansett beer consumed the night before.

In family homes, someone made coffee; most adult Americans smoked in those days and with their first cup of coffee, they had their first cigarette, maybe a Chesterfield or an Old Gold. If they smoked Lucky Strikes, they took the cigarette out of a pack whose background color was dark green, not the white it is today.

Then it was 8 or 8:30 and in family houses, everyone sat down to breakfast.

In family homes, breakfast was cooked on a stove, not micro waved. It was eaten at a breakfast table, not unwrapped in a car on the way to someplace. Families sat together around the breakfast table and conversed. They communicated in words, not by texting from a cell phone.

In spite of being at the threshold of my seventies, I have a teenage son. Perhaps in medical school I slept through the class on what causes it. But I can assure you that if transported back to that time, my teenage son would think himself on another planet.

None of the breakfast table conversations, from that morning, that were recounted to me, were about the war. Everyone was aware of it. The country was re-arming. U.S. troops had been sent to Iceland. Congress was debating amending the neutrality act. But the war was distant, like the Somali Pirates of today. Occasionally it could touch America; in October, the destroyer Kearney was torpedoed by a German U-boat with damage and eleven sailors killed. The destroyer Reuben James had been sunk just a few weeks before. But, for the most part the war was far away.

Of the breakfast conversations related to me from that morning, the only one pertaining to things military, was at a breakfast table here in Cincinnati where two brothers were home on leave from the Army. They were members of the 107th Ohio Cavalry, a National Guard regiment with Troops B and C drawn from in Cincinnati. The regiment had been inducted into federal service in March 1941 for a scheduled one-year training period. The two brothers filled the breakfast time with stories about maneuvers on horseback and garrison life in a cavalry regiment.

At another breakfast table in Cincinnati, the father talked with some animation about what the New Year would bring. He was a civil engineer, employed by a firm that did a lot of construction work for the city of Cincinnati, and he was excited about the prospects for 1942. Cincinnati had a terrible traffic problem; there were more cars registered in Cincinnati than in Boston. But, with the November elections a few weeks before, the political sun and moon and the financial stars and planets had aligned and it appeared that 1942 would be a year for major construction on the Cincinnati subway.

At a breakfast in Boston, a father quizzed his daughter about her date of the night before. She had gone dancing with a beau, and her father wanted to know-when they got into the club- had she remembered to look and see where all the fire exits were. There had been that awful fire at the "Coconut Grove", just a few weeks before.

Back in Cincinnati, one family was talking about an upcoming trip. They were going to spend the holidays with relatives in Kansas City. They would go by train of course. They would go down to Union terminal where there would be as many trains on platforms as there were airline gates at Delta's terminal C a. The trip would be over night, and for a while two of the children argued about which of them would be the one to sleep in the upper bunk in the Pullman compartment, the one the porter came in and let down from the wall, using a "T" shaped key when it was time for bed.. The father silenced the argument by telling them to settle it after breakfast and that if they couldn't agree, he would flip a coin. The boy then asked if he could put his shoes in the small box that opened to the passageway outside so the porter could shine them overnight. The father responded that he could do that but then he would have to tip the porter. Simultaneously, (their questions super imposed on each other), the boy asked how **much** he would have to tip, and the girl, using the phraseology of the time, asked why all Pullman porters were Negroes. The father responded to his daughter that "that was just the way things were". The rest of the breakfast table discussion was about tipping.

And then it was 9:00 or 9:15 EST. Children helped clear the dishes away and the father got first look at the Sunday paper.

The war was there. The headline in the Enquirer read "Roosevelt Protests to Mikado" The front page noted that the Whermacht was 100 miles from Moscow but the Red Army was starting a counter offensive. Inside there were detailed analyses of the fighting in North Africa, and the Crimea.

But the paper was mostly concerned with local news, and the holiday season. There were ads for Christmas shoppers. Girls and boys corduroy overalls were \$.69. in the Mabley & Carew basement Shoppers could buy two men's ties for \$1.

The senior class at Walnut Hills high school was doing the play "As you like it". "Life with Father" was playing at the Taft. On the society page, the Junior League players were presenting "Little Red Riding Hood." The coming debutant season was outlined. Mr. and Mrs. William Rowe would be giving a dinner in honor of Miss Mary Nichols. Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Carothers were planning an eggnog party at the Cincinnati Country Club in honor of Miss Ruth Smith. Mr. Joseph Dinsmore would be giving a dinner in honor of Miss Jean Sawyer, and Mr. and Mrs. William Chatfield would be giving a dinner at the Queen City Club in honor of their daughter Helen.

When breakfast chores were finished, the children got to the paper, usually to the comics: Moon Mullins, Joe Palooka, Gasoline Alley, the Katzenjammer kids, Smiling Jack, or Little Orphan

Annie. Depending on the city in which they lived and what comic strips were syndicated to the local paper, the children might read about the Adventures of Buck Rogers in the 23rd Century. Across pages splashed with brightly colored ink, super heroes (now long gone to some comic book Valhalla) contested with super villains. Terry Lee of “Terry and the Pirates” might be caught up in some plot of the Dragon Lady’s. Flash Gordon battled Ming the Merciless.

And then it was 9:15 and one of the adults announced it was time to get out of pajamas and get dressed for church. Families went to church as families, and young men wore coats and ties, young women wore dresses. Again, my teen age son would be utterly lost.

Families drove to church in the family car (There was rarely more than one). Almost no one I listened to remembered any mention of the war in church that morning. Christmas was less than three weeks away. In the protestant churches, the sermons were about Advent. The mass was in Latin.

In Avondale, one young man wasn’t going to church; he’d been to Shabbat services Friday night, and was starting on his homework. He was 16 and he was focused on what a lot of sixteen year old boys are focused on, a fifteen year old girl. After lunch he was planning on seeing her. He was going to walk to her house along Reading road in Avondale. The walk would take over forty minutes, but young love is a powerful motivator. He wanted to have his homework finished or almost finished so his parents would make no objection.

At dormitory in Princeton New Jersey, a college sophomore was also starting his homework, and he was thinking about the war. He had a paper due on Tuesday for a government class and it concerned what to do about “War Debts.” There were debts that the US was owed by European Nations from the Great War of 1914-1918 and his topic was U.S. foreign policy in regard to those debts.

Then it was around 11:00 EST and families came home from church. Sometimes they brought cousins or aunts and uncles with them. If there was extended family close by, Sunday was a good day to get together for dinner. On Staten Island in New York City, one young man was home for dinner, from Columbia. He usually came home for Sunday dinner but this weekend he had brought his roommate.

And as families sat down to Sunday dinner, they talked about what they were going to do that afternoon. In college dorms, and fraternity houses, young men were generally planning an afternoon of study. Exams and the end of the fall term were just a few days away. In the common room at one Fraternity house the radio was on. At the Prep school in New England the boys were also planning an afternoon of study, but without the radio. Unstructured listening to the radio was not thought to build character.

In Cincinnati, the two brothers home on leave were going down to the Shubert to hear the Andrews Sisters.

The family going to Kansas City was going to make various Christmas preparations. The father and children were going to his workshop in the basement to put finishing touches on homemade Christmas gifts while the mother wrapped presents on the kitchen table.

The college Student on Staten Island and his roommate were going to a professional football game. The two New York football teams, named (as were the baseball teams) the Giants and the Dodgers were going to be playing at the Polo Grounds. College student's sister was going with them. She wasn't that interested in professional football, but, she thought the roommate was cute.

In Detroit, one young woman was going to attend an America First Rally. She wasn't particularly interested in isolationist politics but the keynote speaker at the rally would be Charles Lindberg, the hero of the 30's and she wanted to see him in person.

The Boy in Avondale had already announced his plans to visit his girlfriend.

And then the meal was over and dishes were cleared. The college student and his roommate and sister left for the Staten Island Ferry. The young woman in Detroit went upstairs to pick out a dress to wear to the America First Rally. The father took his two children to his workshop. The two brothers home on leave got the family car out of the garage. The boy in Avondale started to walk down Reading road.

And after a short trip, the college student, roommate and sister got off at the South Ferry terminal and the Lexington Ave IRT. As the train jolted north toward the Polo Grounds, the two young men started talking about baseball. They were on their way to a football game, and spring training was 4 months away, but baseball was their real sports passion. The two young men got into a good natured dispute. The Staten Island student rooted for all the New York teams, although in the National League he preferred the Dodgers, but the roommate was from Boston. He followed, not the Boston Braves, but the Boston Redsox. That previous summer, it looked for a while as if the Redsox might finally win an American League pennant and break the "curse of the Bambino", their cosmic punishment for having traded away Babe Ruth. But some things in life are more constant than others, and as the season drew to a close, the Redsox were in second place, behind the New York Yankees, who went on to take a subways series from the Dodgers in five games. But, the roommate was optimistic about the next season. The Redsox stalwarts would all be back. Dom DiMaggio, Joe's brother, who played center field for the Redsox, had had a good year at the plate and should do well. And, there was a young upcoming player who would be in Redsox uniform in left field, and who, the roommate thought, showed real promise as a hitter. Maybe 1942 would be the year. The roommate lived on the South Shore, beyond the reach of the MTA. However, he would have access to a car that summer and planned on driving to Fenway Park to see some of the games.

But now it was 1:23 EST and there would be no major league baseball that summer; there would be no major league baseball for four years. Ted Williams would be in a Marine Corps Uniform in the Solomon Islands. The roommate wouldn't drive to Fenway Park. A lot of people wouldn't drive a lot of places. Cincinnati's traffic problem would be solved by gasoline rationing and impossibly scarce tires. Because, 4964 miles west of the polo grounds, at 3000 feet over Barber's

point in Honolulu, Japanese Navy Captain Mitsuo Fuchida was pulling his aircraft out of tight 3 –G turn, leveling off, and opening his canopy to fire two flares, a signal that, of the waves of attacking aircraft, the type to go in first should be the one the Allies would code name the Kate, the B5N Nakajima torpedo bombers, making their runs against the ships tied passively at mooring, the church pennant, the only thing ever flown above the US flag, fluttering at the top of the mast and sailors on deck, if they thought about heaven at all thinking about as a religious allusion that might be mentioned in the church services to start shortly, not a real place from which death was coming.

Like a dull blow to an extremity that takes some time for the brain to appreciate, the news took some time to get back to the East Coast. On Ford Island, in the middle of the harbor, CDR Logan Ramsey saw the first explosions, thought for a moment they were some kind of training accident, and then saw the meatball, the red disk of the rising sun on the wingtips of the aircraft. He crossed the passage way from the command duty office to the radio room and instructed the operators to send out the now famous message. To all commands. "AIR RAID PEARL HARBOR, THIS IS NO DRILL."

The message was picked up at Mare Island Naval Communications Station in San Francisco Bay, and relayed to Department of the Navy headquarters in Washington DC. There it was typed on to an official message form and handed to a yeoman who went through the building to find Frank Knox the Secretary of the Navy: At about 1:40 EST, he was handed a copy of the dispatch.

Knox checked quickly with some aides and then at 1:47 p.m. he called the White House and informed President Roosevelt. There were a few top level phone calls made, then the White house press pool was summoned, and depending how quickly the reporters could reach their network offices, sometime between 2:00 and 2:30 EST, the first large group of Americans heard the news.

There were three national radio corporations, and four networks. The Mutual Network and the Columbia Broadcasting System each had a network, and the National Broadcasting Company had a Blue network and a Red Network.

CBS was broadcasting "The World Today." NBC's Blue Network's series of great plays was presenting the drama "The Inspector General." On NBC's Red Network, people, were listening to the end of Sammy Kaye's Sunday Serenade, and listeners were advised to stay tuned to the University of Chicago Roundtable, a discussion between Canadians & Americans concerning how the war would affect North America.

Some stations were broadcasting local programming. WOR in New York was carrying the New York Giants/Brooklyn Dodgers football game. Ward Cuff kicked off to the Dodgers slicing the ball out of bounds. The Giants were favored but The Dodgers were outplaying them in what looked as if it would be an upset. At about 2:26 p.m., the sportscaster was commenting on how well Pug Manders the fullback was moving the ball. , a WOR announcer broke in. "We interrupt this program to bring you a special news bulletin. The Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor

Hawaii, by air, President Roosevelt just announced. A number of Naval and Military installations on the principle island of Oahu were also bombed”

What!!!

For a fraction of a second several hundred thousand Americans forgot to breath. Then they turned to anyone near them. In a college fraternity house the students in the common room yelled for everyone to come to the radio. The woman wrapping Christmas presents called down to her husband. Someone knocked on my parents door. People told people they didn't know. Along Reading Road a motorist rolled down his window and yelled to the boy walking on the sidewalk “The Japanese have attacked us. They've bombed Pearl Harbor.”

Everywhere, across all lines of age, geography, or social position, there was shock and disbelief. Frank Knox, the Secretary of the Navy looked at the message form in his hand and said “This can't be right.” Harry Hopkins sitting next to the President said the same thing in different words-“This must be wrong.” The boy walking along Reading Road thought “Where the hell is Pearl Harbor?”and “The Japanese have attacked us? The Japanese-no they make those funny little umbrellas”

The stories I've heard describe the impact as if there had been a sudden break in the very continuum of existence. One woman in Florida described it to me, in poetic terms, as the emotional equivalent of missing a step. “I was coming down a set of stairs,” she said ‘a set of stairs called Sunday morning, one I descended hundreds of times. You don't think about going downstairs, you just swing one foot out and bend your knee and then repeat the motion with the other foot. I got to the bottom , had one foot on the floor and brought the other foot out and down, expecting it to touch the floor, only to feel it fall jarringly through 8 or 9 inches of empty air, an impossible extra step that couldn't be there, but it was.”

Eventually, America would return to peace and normalcy in the brave new postwar world of 1946. But that would be 4 long years and almost 420,000 American lives later.

The morning of the day had been calm, familiar, and predictable. It was America as it always had been. The afternoon and evening were World War II.
