



OBON SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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Pearl Harbor Stories

J.C. England: Part One

The attack on Pearl Harbor lasted for barely 90 minutes, however eye-witness accounts of the aftermath describes chaos that lasted for days. The fires, capsized ships, missing men and lack of communication created disarray and confusion.



Some men acted heroically whereas others collapsed from fear. Some ran away afraid the ordnances might suddenly explode from the heat while others manned anti-aircraft guns, expecting a second attack from the Japanese. Other inexperienced sailors mistook the smoke for poison gas and foolishly sealed themselves inside gun turrets. The stories go on and on.



Pearl Harbor Anti-aircraft batteries prepared for another attack

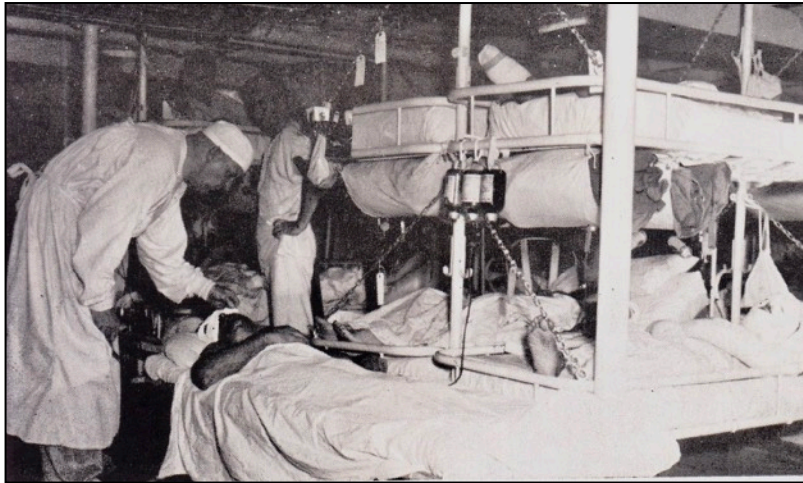
Thousands of men were missing. Whether they were trapped inside the capsized ships, injured, wandering around disoriented or dead was not immediately known. Roll calls were repeatedly carried out but each time a different count was recorded.

In order to identify the survivors the Navy sent personnel to every hospital. Each individual capable of speaking was interviewed. They were asked where they were and who was around them. Every detail was documented.

From these stories emerged amazing accounts of heroics. Injured men described being pinned beneath shifting racks, hurt and abandoned. Suddenly, out of nowhere, someone appeared, lifted them free and carried them above deck for rescue.

As these interviews continued one curious story caught the attention of senior Navy officers.

One hospitalized crewman from the Oklahoma described having his legs crushed by a heavy fire-door that swung shut from the capsizing ship. The emergency lighting went out; he was alone and knew he was going to die. Suddenly some "*radioman*" appeared, freed him from his deadly predicament and carried him above deck to be rescued.



Navy doctor attending injured Pearl Harbor survivors.

From another hospital bed came a similar story. Another injured survivor of the USS Oklahoma also described being pinned down and unable to escape. But miraculously someone known only as the "*radio operator*" suddenly appeared and carried him to where he could be rescued.

And then there was another lucky survival thanks to some "*radioman*" aboard the USS Oklahoma.

It became clear to senior Navy officers that the radio operator aboard the Oklahoma had performed exceptional acts of bravery and heroics. They ordered him to appear but upon further questioning they discovered they had the wrong guy. This radioman abandoned ship after the first torpedo hit.

The next radioman they interviewed said he took the day off. Apparently an officer named *J.C. England* had requested to work anyone's shift so he could accumulate more free time to spend with his baby.



JC England 1941

Finally the Navy confirmed the hero they were looking for was an officer named J.C. England. The only problem was that they could not find him.

Where was JC England now? He did not respond to any role calls. Was he AWOL? Was he injured?

How could a man who saved the lives of three individuals suddenly disappear?

The Navy searched everywhere for J.C. England, but as the days wore on it became apparent that he was nowhere to be found.

Next: J.C. England, Part Two