

In Memoriam
LCDR R. C. Richards
Command Chaplain

This past Monday was Memorial Day. I remember a Veteran whom I had known all of my life. His name was Glen. He joined the Navy in 1928 in California. He wanted to be an aviator. Since the Navy had enlisted airplane pilots, he joined that branch. He entered Boot Camp at San Diego and then went to basic instruction at Great Lakes in Illinois. He later entered flight school in Pensacola, Florida.

After he received his wings, he entered the fleet as a Naval Aviator. He was stationed in various places throughout the world, including the Territory of Hawaii in the early 1930s. He returned to Pensacola as an instructor, then went back to Hawaii in 1939. He was stationed on the USS Indianapolis as the pilot for Rear Admiral Brown, who served as Commander, Naval Scouting Forces, Pacific, Hawaii Detachment. He happened to be ashore getting ready for church on December 7, 1941.

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, Glen and his family were living just outside of Hickam Air Base in Hawaii. He described the attack in very vivid terms, adding details to the account that were burned into his memory by the trauma of that day. Later on that Sunday, he was able to make his way to Ford Island to try to prepare his aircraft. He flew a Curtis SOC Seagull, which was primarily a seaplane, but had been refitted with wheels for use on a runway. He spent the day removing the wheels and fitting it again with floats, anticipating his return to the cruiser.

In 1942, he was received a commission to serve as an officer in the Navy. He hesitated about accepting the commission, but was encouraged to do so by his Commanding Officer. He served throughout the South Pacific during the war, flying various types of aircraft, including the PBY Catalina and the PV-1 Neptune. While flying the PV-1, he reported shooting down one enemy aircraft, a Japanese "Emily," a flying boat. During the war, he was also stationed in Jacksonville, Florida.

After the war was over, he flew the Berlin Airlift and also did test pilot work while stationed at Patuxent River Naval Air Station in Maryland. He retired from the Navy in 1952, having achieved the rank of Lieutenant Commander. After he retired from the Navy, he entered the ministry and served churches in Florida. He later retired to Pensacola, Florida, but spent his last years in my hometown, Graceville, Florida. He and my father were probably the two people who have influenced me most in my life. Both of them were veterans of the Navy and both were Southern Baptist ministers. Glen was my mother's father. He died on a Memorial Day.

Chances are, you have been influenced by a veteran of a previous time. You have also influenced others. It is important for us to continue to make a difference in our communities and in the lives of others. Pass along your heritage of service to country to another. And tell a veteran that you appreciate what they have done for you. It will make them feel good that someone remembers what they have done and it will make you feel good, too.

Semper Fi in the Lord and I hope to see you in church on Sunday.