

Aftermath

December 8 and Onward

BY BUDD DAVISSON PHOTOS COURTESY OF STAN PIET

The images of the attack on Pearl Harbor will be forever etched in the mind's eye of Americans everywhere. As with the images of the airliners hitting the World Trade Center towers, the fire and smoke of December 7, 1941, can't be erased from our memories. We seldom see, however, photos that portray the aftermath of that horrible day.

The Japanese attack was terrifically effective and left behind tasks that would appear to be impossible to accomplish. How, for instance, do

you right the battleship USS *Oklahoma* that has turned completely over? How do you prepare to fight a war and change the largest naval base outside of mainland USA into an impenetrable fort while, at the same time, repairing the damage and cleaning up the carnage left behind?

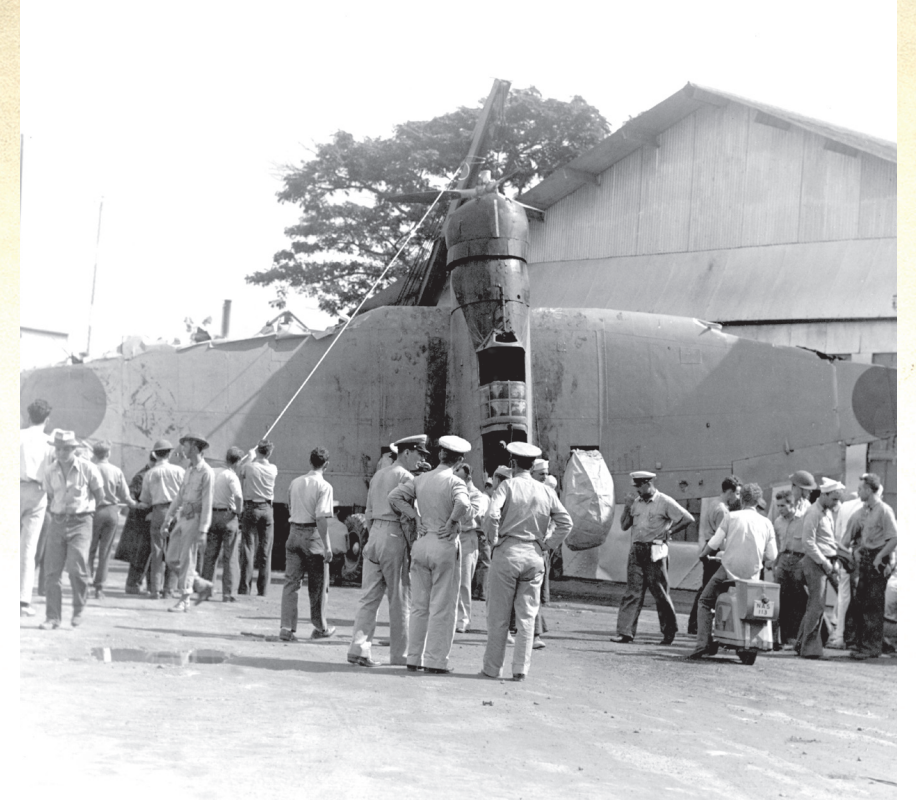
The days and weeks after the attack have to be seen in context for the tasks to be appreciated: By year's end (1941), Japan had attacked and occupied virtually every Allied installation between Hawaii and Tokyo. The country dominated almost every square mile of the western Pacific. For that reason, with Pearl Harbor and the many Army facilities on Oahu being the launch points for all U.S. efforts in the Pacific, the fears of another Hawaiian attack were completely logical. So while the island was grieving and sweeping up, the governments—local, federal, and military—had to explosively expand their defenses and build the capacity to mount a viable offense against what appeared to be an invincible enemy. Images from that time are not a part of America's collective memory because they are seldom seen.

When ace *Flight Journal* archivist Stan Piet was asked to "send in some Pearl Harbor images" and we began sifting through them, we were amazed at how few of them were familiar. We found the story that the images told to be incredibly interesting and sometimes poignant. It was a story that we knew existed, but we'd never given enough thought about pictures to illustrate it. So rather than making this issue's Gallery a portrait of airplanes, we decided to make it a portrait of Americans coming back from a national disaster.

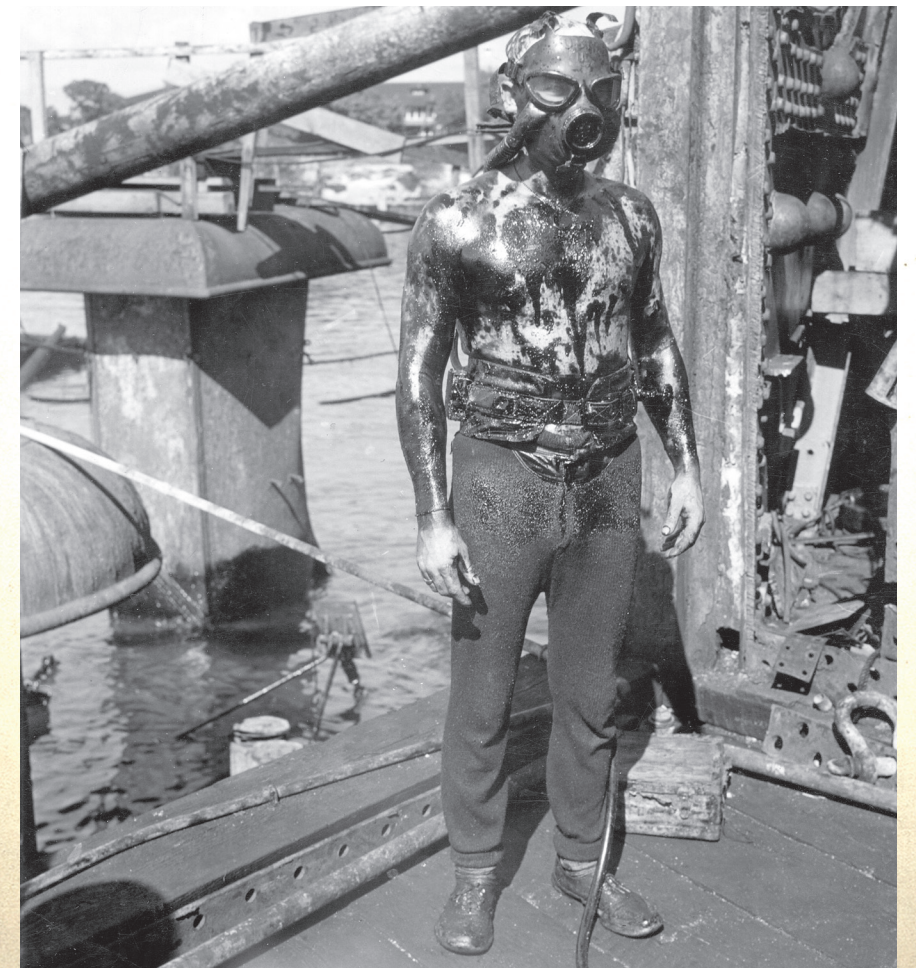
When viewing these photos, keep in mind that only a few hours, or days, earlier, hundreds of aircraft had been overhead bent on destroying everything that stood in the way of Imperial Japan's goal of making the western Pacific a Nippon pond. It must have been months, possibly years, before people who called Oahu home stopped looking skyward with questioning eyes. We are lucky that these images have survived the three-quarters of a century to tell their tale.



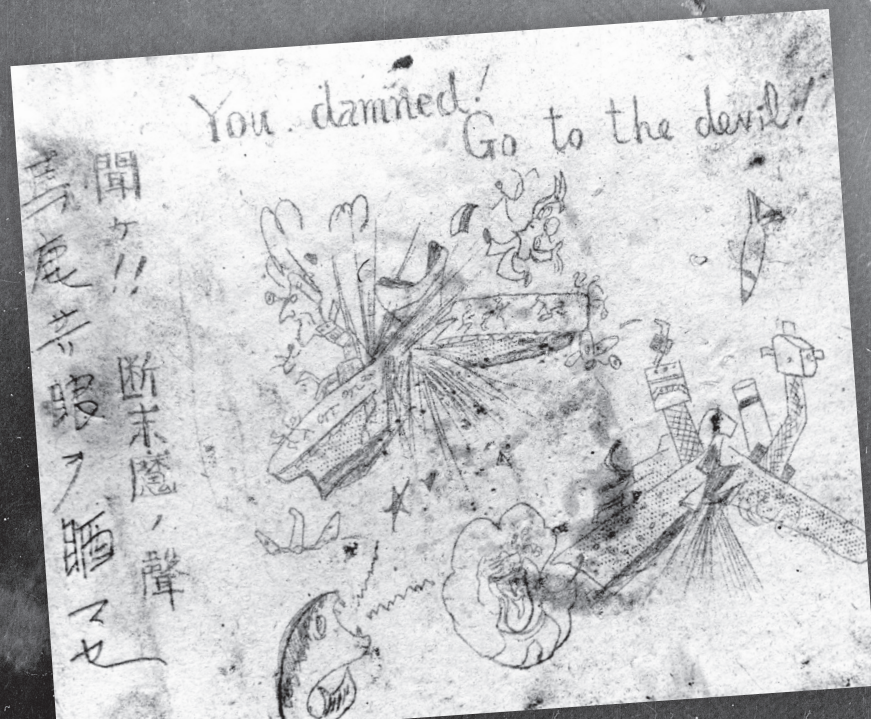
The carnage left behind the attack on Pearl Harbor covered the ramps of virtually every military airfield on Oahu, of which there were six major fields and several support airports. Each was left covered with aeronautical junk, which was of scrap value only. As seen here at Kaneohe Bay, the remains were bulldozed into heaps to clear the ramps. If the pile is studied closely, there appears to be an OS2U Kingfisher up front lying on its back, the wings of deceased P-40s and seaplanes reach skyward behind it. The remains of P-40 engines/cowlings can be seen peeking out at the world from under the debris for the last time.



The attackers didn't get away unscathed. A total of 29 enemy aircraft didn't return to their carriers, including this Val, which came down relatively intact. All such aircraft were studied by military experts, seeking their secrets.



Divers and salvor crews worked at salvaging the wrecks and recovering the dead of Battleship Row throughout much of World War II. While no deep diving was required, they were constantly immersed in oil leaking from the ships.



The sentiments of the crews attacking Oahu are revealed in a drawing found among the personal effects onboard one of the aircraft that crashed. The remains of the crew of those that crashed in remote areas were buried at the crash site, with most later recovered. The locations of some burials are still unknown.

Battleship Row was the focus of the attack. USS *Oklahoma* (left) is difficult to recognize, having rolled over completely. USS *Arizona* (far right) had her hull almost completely shattered; she eventually settled to the bottom, where she rests to this day. The runway of NAS Pearl Harbor (top) is barely visible.