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News

December 7, 2010

# Remembering Pearl Harbor

*Honoring our Heroes, Past and Present*



On December 7, 1941, around 6 a.m., 183 fighters, bombers and torpedo planes leave six Japanese aircraft carriers that are waiting in the Pacific Ocean. Shortly before 7 a.m., the 14<sup>th</sup> Naval Headquarters at Pearl Harbor Naval Station receives a report that the U.S.S. Ward had “attacked, fired upon, and dropped depth charges upon a submarine operating in defensive sea area.” Within a few minutes, around 50 planes are spotted heading for Hawaii. Less than an hour later, the Japanese attack is in full swing as dive bombers attack planes on the ground to prevent retaliation and torpedoes strike ships throughout the area. At 7:55 a.m., an un-coded message goes out to every ship and base from the Command Center. It says, “Air raid on Pearl Harbor...This is not a drill.” The U.S.S. Arizona is completely destroyed, and the U.S.S. Oklahoma is capsized. The attack sinks three other ships and damages many

additional vessels. More than 180 aircraft are destroyed. By 10:30 a.m., the Japanese attackers return to their carriers and the hospitals are filled with the wounded. The death toll eventually reaches 2,930.

Tuesday marked the 69<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor—the event that forever changed the world. Days of remembrance exist to remind us all of the sacrifices that were made on our behalf and Pearl Harbor Day is a day for us to reflect on the service and sacrifice of our past veterans. And as new heroes return to Missouri from serving overseas, we here at home continue to honor their sacrifice by doing everything we can to show them our appreciation.

One of the ways Missouri is doing that for its returning veterans is through providing resources to access more affordable higher education. Through the Missouri Returning Heroes Act, tuition at state-funded universities is capped at \$50 a credit hour for combat veterans who served after September 11, 2001. The program



allows Missouri's service men and women to have access to a less expensive higher education that could help them meet their life-long goals.

More information about the requirements of the Missouri Returning Heroes Education Act is available online on the Department of Higher Education's website at <http://www.dhe.mo.gov/files/moretheroesact.pdf> The tuition reduction is administered by each individual school so veterans should contact their financial aid office to get information on the exact application process for a particular university.

Another program in our state honors our fallen hometown heroes. The program allows family members of soldiers killed in action in Afghanistan or Iraq after September 11, 2001, to memorialize their loved one through the naming of their home interstate interchange.

Each designated interstate interchange will have two commemorative signs with the name of the hero it is named after.



The inspiration for Heroes Way came from former Missouri National Guard member Ross Gartman's desire to honor his friend and comrade Bradley J. Skelton. After Staff Sgt. Skelton of Gordonville was killed by an explosion in Baghdad on Feb. 6, 2008, community leaders approached me to help find a way

to honor these local fallen heroes. The General Assembly and the Department of Transportation then worked to develop this program to provide communities throughout Missouri an opportunity to remember those that were killed in action. And this past May, the Southeast Missouri fallen soldiers were honored at a ceremony to dedicate these Heroes' interchanges and unveil their Heroes Way signs.

Ross Gartman and many others have continued to work together by starting Heroes Way Inc; a nonprofit to raise money for other qualifying military members in the state who have made the ultimate sacrifice. For more information on Heroes Way Inc. and how to donate, contact Ross at [g.man1212@hotmail.com](mailto:g.man1212@hotmail.com).

Our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines face circumstances that many of us could not even imagine, and they do so to protect the freedoms we often take for granted. As we reflect on Pearl Harbor and the tragedy of that attack, let us also continue to find ways to honor the heroes of today.

### **Contact Me**

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions, and concerns. Please feel free to contact me in Jefferson City at (573) 751-2459. You may write to me at Jason Crowell; Missouri Senate; State Capitol; Jefferson City, MO 65101, or email me at:

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