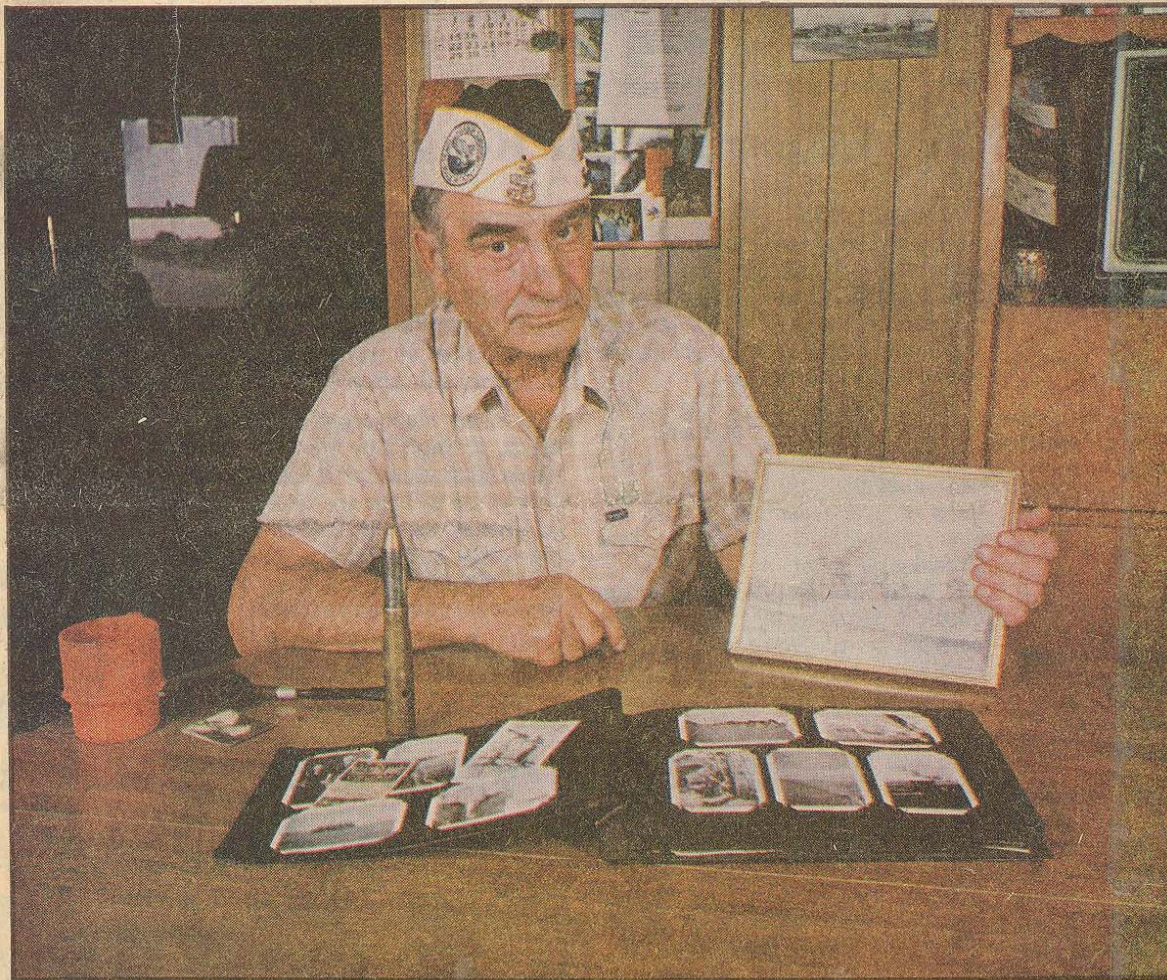


# Faulkton man remembers



American News Photo by Mike Roemer

Marvin Melius displays memorabilia from the time he served at Pearl Harbor.

## He won't forget Pearl Harbor

By CRAIG J. HANSON  
American News Writer

FAULKTON — Dec. 7, 1941, is a day that probably never will leave Marvin Melius' memory.

About 7:55 a.m. on that otherwise normal Sunday, the Japanese devastated Pearl Harbor, the U.S. Naval Base on the Hawaiian island of Oahu, in a surprise air raid.

Melius, 67, remembers the attack well because he lived through it, while stationed on the destroyer USS Ralph Talbot.

Now, 45 years later, he says most people just remember the attack as the start of the United States' role in World War II, a turning point in the history of this country.

As he talked, Melius was look-

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ing through some pictures and memorabilia of his days in the Navy and at Pearl Harbor. He picked up an old black-and-white photograph of the USS Ralph Talbot and pointed to various locations on the boat. "This is where I was (during the attack)," he said, pointing to a wide open space where machine guns were located at the rear of the ship.

"Sunday was the day when everyone slept in, and didn't real-

ly have that much to do. It was like a vacation day," Melius said.

"I remember that Sunday morning, dark and ominous. It was a dark morning out by the water," he said.

"I wasn't scared at that time (of the raid). You were so busy, you didn't have time to be scared."

Melius said there were so many planes flying during the attack that no one waited for an order to fire. "It was a situation when we just knew we should fire," he said.

"We were watching for targets — planes — and when something did come, everyone shot at it.

"About 15 minutes after the attack I looked over and saw the (USS) Utah, upside down," he said.  
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recalled. "And then there was the Arizona. I didn't see her blow up, but I saw the smoke."

There were lulls during the siege when the planes weren't attacking, although the suspense and tension were there, he said. "Those were the times when we got scared.

"We could hear explosions in the distance. The rumors were that the ships trying to get out of the harbor were getting picked off in the channel," he said.

Although Melius was involved in the invasion, the destroyer he was on was not attacked directly. "When they (the Japanese) went in, they went to get the big ships. And they did," he said.

"There was a plane coming down. It wasn't aiming at us, but at a ship beside us. It came real close to our ship and we were shooting at it. And then I saw the plane drop the torpedo into the water and we all watched it, heading right for this ship. It must not have hit, because we didn't see anything. But I was scared then.

"After the attack, we spent about three days out of the harbor. Everyone was looking for the Japanese, but we didn't know where they were. Nobody did."

Melius said the harbor was a mess. "They (the ships which sank) had already started to rust."

By the time the attack was over, the Japanese bombing raids had destroyed or damaged 18 warships, destroyed 170 planes and killed 2,403 people.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared war on Japan and reconstruction of the base began almost immediately.

Melius shares his memories about Pearl Harbor Day with 29 other South Dakotans twice a year when the South Dakota Pearl Harbor Survivors Association meets. The organization, formed in 1975, was the last state group to be chartered in the National Pearl Harbor Survivors Association Inc.

Melius said the survivors' organizations were started because of their motto, "Keep America Alert."

"That's really what started the organization," he said. "That and the idea (of having an organization like this) in itself."

The national organization, which was formed in 1958, meets every year. Every five years, the meeting is held in Honolulu, when survivors return to the scene of the attack.

"Pearl Harbor Day is the day our country changed; when we became a world power. Pearl Harbor Day will not be forgotten," Melius said.