

The Daily Papers Report on Pearl Harbor

In addition to the radio, Americans received their news from newspapers. Most Sunday editions had already been printed and distributed by the time information on the events in Oahu reached the mainland. People overwhelmingly, therefore, read accounts of the Japanese attack in their newspapers the next day. Aside from major papers such as *The New York Times* that had overseas reporters, most newspapers took international news accounts from the wire services. The initial reports on December 7th were



understandably sketchy in respect to American casualties. A Monday morning article in *The New York Herald Tribune's* December 8, 1941 edition simply stated, “there were casualties of unstated number.” What everyone knew for sure was that many Americans in uniform--Army, Navy, and Marine--had been killed and wounded. One headline announced what people already knew--“Japan Declares War on U.S., Bombs Hawaii...” *The New York Herald Tribune* and *The New York Times* cited a War Department announcement for Hickam Field of one hundred and four killed and more than three hundred wounded “in the Army forces alone.” An evening newspaper, *The New York Sun*, ran a headline on its front page that read, “Hawaii Reports 1500 Killed in Japanese Raid on Islands.” The *Sun* included

on page one a column it continued throughout the war. Under the heading “U.S. Casualties,” it listed the names of Americans killed in action. For the December 8, 1941 edition, those names were for thirteen service personnel stationed on Oahu. The *Sun* identified them as follows:

- Christiansen, First Lieutenant Hans; 21 years old; Woodland, CA; Marine aviator at Pearl Harbor
- Leslie, Private George G.; 20; Arnold, PA; Army Air Corps at Hawaii
- Niedzwiecki, Robert; 22; Grand Rapids, MI; at Hawaii
- Whiteman, Second Lieutenant Forge A; Sedalia, MO; Air Corps; at Pearl Harbor
- Mitchell, Gordon; Hoisington, KS; Air Corps; Hawaii
- Derthick, Lieutenant James; 22; Ravenna, Ohio; Army Air Corps; Honolulu
- Plant, Private Donald; 22; Wausau, WI; Air Corps; Wheeler Field, Hawaii
- Fletcher, John; 32; Janesville, WI; Air Corps; Wheeler Field, Hawaii
- Cebert, Private Dean W.; Galesburg, IL; Honolulu
- Guthrie, Sergeant James; Republican Grove, VA; Air Corps Engineer; in Hawaii
- Byrd, Private First Class Theo F.; 20; Tampa, FL; Air Corps; Wheeler Field, Hawaii
- Schmersahl, Sergeant George R.; 22; Bloomfield, NJ; Air Corps, Hawaii
- Shattuck, Private Robert; 21; Blue River, WI; at Hickam Field, Hawaii

On Monday the 8th, Americans listened to a live broadcast of President Roosevelt's address to Congress. In it, FDR asked for a declaration of war against Japan. He spoke beginning at 12:30 p.m. (EST). His five hundred and eighteen words took twenty-six minutes to deliver. The first words still resonate today. "Yesterday, December 7th, 1941-- a date which will live in infamy--the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan." A few minutes later, the president's admission of heavy casualties would have been especially difficult for families of those military personnel stationed on Oahu to hear--"I regret to tell you that very many American lives have been lost." An estimated sixty-two million people listened to the president out of a population of about one hundred and thirty-two million. As of that date, it was the biggest daytime radio audience in history.¹



¹ December 8, 1941 front pages *The New York Herald Tribune* and *The New York Sun* owned by author; *The New York Times* front page for that date is in Richard Overy (editor), *The New York Times Complete World War II, 1939-1945* (New York, 2013), p. 219; the front page of *The Newark Evening News* for December 8, 1941 is at <http://melrosemirror.media.mit.edu/servlet/pluto?state...> (accessed August 16, 2015). James M. Scott, *Target Tokyo, Jimmy Doolittle and the Raid That Avenged Pearl Harbor* (New York, 2015) p. 23 gives the time, length, and radio audience of Roosevelt's address.