

The following is a firsthand account of December 7, 1941 by Jud McDannold, a sailor onboard the *USS Detroit* that day. These are Jud's words as he wrote them; this includes how he entitled his recollections.

**Jud S. McDannold,  
Pearl Harbor Survivor**

December 6, 1941. Today is my B/D [birthday]. I had the duty in the radio shack, copying code, on the *USS Detroit*. I was going to go ashore and celebrate my B/D, but I will have to wait until tomorrow to do so.

The next morning, Dec. 7<sup>th</sup>, I had already shaved & done my morning chores, so I was in the crews quarters in the aft section of the ship. I had just gotten into my skivvies when I heard a really loud explosion, then General Quarters sounded. I picked up my shore going uniform, [and] raced forward toward the radio shack. I climbed the ladder to the next deck up, stuck my head up the main hatch, when a Jap plane pulled up in front of me. It was so close I looked in his eyes and he in mine. His pullout was so slow I could have thrown a rock at him and hit him. He had just released his torpedo directly at the midpoint of the ship. His torpedo was running too deep & went under the ship & into the mud bank on the other side. Had the torpedo exploded, it was in a direct line from where I was stepping out onto the main deck!!

I immediately ran to the conning tower & up to the radio shack. I could see the large pillars of smoke bellowing up from Battleship Row, just across Ford Island & all of the explosions and smoke from the burning planes on the island.

I tried to get into the radio shack. The hatch was open, but it was full of officers, chiefs, and rated men. I was only a lowly radioman striker, & they pushed me outside. I heard them sending the message to Washington, D.C. I believe this was the first message that got out to D.C. ---"URGENT. We are being attacked by Jap planes. This is no drill."

I was forced to stand outside, partway up the conning tower. I could see everything that was happening. The *USS Utah* was tipping over to its port side. There were a couple of dozen large heavy timbers rolling down the deck to where the crew was trying to get off. They must have all been crushed to death. The ship behind us, the *USS Raleigh*, had started tipping from a torpedo hit, so they tied some large hangers to the mooring piers on the opposite side of the ship. That stopped it from going over.

Somewhere from the *USS Curtiss* there was one of our Curtis biplanes slowly trying reach flight speed to take off. I thought to myself, "There goes a really brave man." We were shooting at everything that was flying. I saw him a few minutes later coming in to land with a dead stick landing & smoke trailing from behind him.

Heavy smoke continued to belch from most of the battleships. I wasn't close enough to see the actual struggle, but it was evident that there were violent explosions still emanating from some of them. Several of our officers were climbing the mooring lines, trying to come aboard. As it was, we had the ammunition locker open but there was only the 6-inch practice ammo at the top of the pile and we were firing that. Not very explosive or effective. Several of the ships that were able tried to get under way & out the mouth of the harbor but were ordered not to try. If they were sunk in the channel, then no one could get out. But after the second wave of Jap planes had pulled out, we were given permission to exit the harbor.

There were two cruisers & several destroyers that finally formed up. Our cruiser had the Admiral "Commander Destroyers Battle Force" aboard. He was the ranking officer in this small flotilla. We cruised all night to where the Jap carrier force was calculated to be, but come daylight, there was nothing there. We turned around & back into Pearl Harbor, while the coxswain with their small boats fished out the hundreds of dead sailors just floating face down inside the bay. Aside from all the shrapnel & ricocheting bullets, the closest I came to buying it was when we were under way to meet the Japs. We had a whole big locker full of paint & supplies which were very explosive. The locker was located amidships. We couldn't just pull them out & throw them overboard because they could strike the screws & put a dent in them, so we had to walk them back to the fantail & throw them over at the very end of the ship. I tried to time the waves, but at flank speed, they were coming heavy & fast. Just as I dumped two cans, I was swamped & floated over the very stern, but at the last moment I was able to reach up & grab the bottom lifeline & pull myself up. Had I been swept overboard, no one would have noticed or would they have maneuvered the ship to pick up one lone sailor.

I've been lucky all my life. Lots of action, a great American family life, three boys & a great wife.



Please note all my duty aboard ship was in the service of an admiral, so-called "flag" service.

U.S.S. Detroit\*

U.S.S. Dobbin\*

U.S.S. Dixie\*

U.S.S. Markab\*

U.S.S. Whitney\*

\*"Commander Destroyer Battle Force"

various admirals

OR

U.S.S. Nicholas\*\*

U.S.S. Taylor\*\*

\*\*Commander destroyer Squadron 21 a  
Commodore

I was never "ships company" on any of them. All of my duty aboard ship was in the service of an admiral. Called "flag" service until I was transferred to a "Commodore."

Jud McDannold  
USN Electronic Tech  
First Class