

Pearl Harbor Survivor Jim Bounds

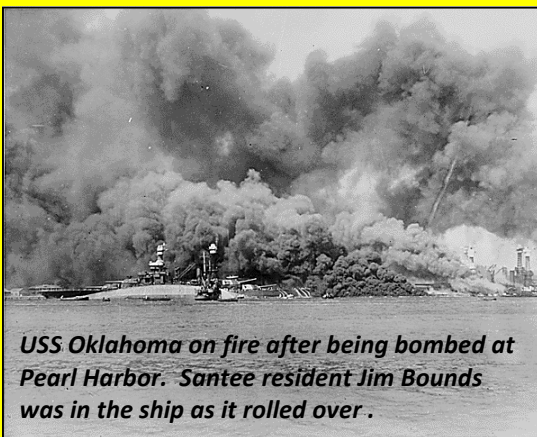
429 brave Americans died aboard the USS Oklahoma during the Attack at Pearl Harbor. James C. Bounds, 87, a seaman first class, remained trapped below the third deck for 32 hours.

It has been 68 years since 429 brave Americans died aboard the USS Oklahoma at Pearl Harbor.

Yet, to this day, those who survived the attack can still smell the oil burning on the water, hear the explosions and the cries of their shipmates, and then the quiet tapping sounds as crewmates tried to cut through the ship to save those who were trapped inside.

A few were saved, but others drowned before they could be rescued. One of those rescued, James C. Bounds, 87, was a seaman first class who remained trapped below the third deck for nearly 36 hours.

In the aftermath of the attack on Dec. 7, 1941, Shipyard workers rescued 32 Sailors trapped within the hull of the sunken battleship.



USS Oklahoma on fire after being bombed at Pearl Harbor. Santee resident Jim Bounds was in the ship as it rolled over.

“Shop 11 was a lifesaver,” said *Oklahoma* “cut-out” survivor James Bounds, referring to the numerical designator of the Shipyard shop the rescuers belonged to. “I can’t say enough about them.” Among *Oklahoma* survivors, the term cut-out applies to those among the select group of 32 who were cut out of the hull of the ship.

Bounds, was one of eight Sailors freed by Shipyarders after being trapped 32 hours in *Oklahoma*’s steering room compartment. Bounds recalled how, on the morning of the attack, he was just starting to clean up his below-deck living quarters when an officer ran through his compartment yelling, “Japs attacked Ford Island!”

Bounds, a 19-year-old seaman first class at the time, felt the ship shake three times in rapid succession. Sailors on the level above him closed a hatch, preventing Bounds and seven others with him from climbing out of their compartment. The lights went out and soon after, *Oklahoma* began rolling over. Water started coming into Bounds’ space so he and his shipmates retreated aft to the steering room. They found two wrenches and started pounding on the bulkhead to signal their presence.

“I couldn’t see nothing, but I knew what was going on,” said Bounds of the attack. “I could hear bullets hitting the hull and explosions. Water kept pouring in so the Sailors used everything they could find, including their clothes, to plug the vents.”

“I came down to my last item [of clothing,]” said Bounds. “I decided to hold onto that.” The oily water was up to the Sailors’ waists and the air had gotten stale when Yard workers cut a hole above the Sailors, enabling them to escape around 4 p.m. on December 8th. Jim continued to serve 27 years in the Navy. Jim and his wife Ruby will receive a home makeover from volunteers throughout the county.