

. “Before Dec. 7th 1941, we knew that things were tense with the Japanese. Did we know the war was imminent or that it would arrive at our doorstep? No. Mostly we were preoccupied with our time at the beach and chasing girls. There were many, thanks to the 1934 Plymouth we jointly owned that we called ‘Bertha’. We had fun. When we were off the ship, we stayed at ‘Mom’s’ in Manoa. We swam and picnicked at the beaches and waterfalls of Oahu. Yes, those were the days. We didn’t focus on world events, except what was already happening in Europe and over the skies of Britain. The Northampton was a heavy cruiser assigned to the battle group with the carrier USS Enterprise. It was one of only a few carriers in the Pacific at that time. There had been some big questions about the value of aircraft carriers before the war. Some of the brass didn’t think they were worth the trouble. In late November of 1941, the Enterprise was sent to Wake Island to deliver some planes to that small outpost. We accompanied them. Our task force was supposed to return to Pearl Harbor on the 6th of Dec. We looked forward to this as the start of another great weekend... at the beach. Well, things started going to hell on the return trip. Jeeze, the weather was rough. We got tossed around real good. It turned out to be the same storm that had hidden the huge Jap fleet. Then to further slow us down, some sea garbage had fowled the props of the Northampton. I think our battle group was 150 miles west when the Japanese assault began on December 7th. Some of our spotter planes located their fleet after the attack. They were already pulling away. In the poker game of carrier deployment, we represented a too high a risk. They had no idea how little we could have done.”