



Pearl Harbor

Surprise attack on America changed the course of history

For my generation, Sept. 11, 2001, was a day that changed the course of history. The terrorist attacks on America rallied the nation and motivated thousands of men and women to go to war in faraway lands. The wars have ended after 20 years, but many of the changes caused by the attacks persist, particularly when it comes to travel and national security.

For my parents' generation, the Dec. 7, 1941, surprise attack on Pearl Harbor by Japan was a day that changed the course of history, too. That attack also rallied the nation and inspired thousands to go to war in faraway lands. World War II brought all the usual death and destruction that comes with battle, as well as the horrors of genocide and nuclear weapons. If



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America had not entered the war; there's a good chance the Nazis and their fellow Axis Powers would have won, and the world would be a very different place.

World War II changed the map of the world. It would have changed even more dramatically if America and her allies had lost. It's fitting that when looking for a good website about Pearl Harbor I found one by a map company. Esri, which sells GIS mapping technology, has a section on its site with what it calls story

maps (storymaps.esri.com/stories/2016/pearl-harbor/index.html). The Pearl Harbor story map combines archival video and photographs from the attack with maps and text in an engaging, interactive presentation.

It starts with a grainy, looping video of squadrons of Japanese fighter and bomber planes flying in tight formations. An arrow centered at the bottom of the page prompts you to scroll down to enter the story. As you scroll, text is used to tell the backstory of the tensions that brought the two nations to war, followed by a map that shows the movement of the Japanese navy's fleet across the Pacific Ocean. Photos of the fleet and its commander float by as the map zooms in on Hawaii.

The story continues in this fashion. Events are depicted with bite-sized chunks in chronological order as you move down through the page. There's a nice mix of images, videos, diagrams and maps to tell the story, and the text is well written and interspersed with actual quotes from American and Japanese servicemen. Precise locations of specific ships that were sunk or survived, and statistics on the number of casualties and destroyed equipment, are added to help make a compelling tale. Footage of the USS Arizona's ammunition magazine exploding in a huge fireball after being struck by a bomb vividly illustrates the destruction wrought that day.

The story continues with America's response to the

attack. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt gave his famous "a date which will live in infamy" speech to Congress, which quickly declared war on Japan. The nation surrendered unconditionally four years later after the U.S. dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, virtually destroying both cities and killing more than 100,000 people. A memorial was erected over the sunken USS Arizona in Pearl harbor that draws nearly 2 million visitors a year. The story wraps up with poignant videos of WWII veterans telling their stories. This site provides a moving tribute to a historic day.

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