

## CAPT Archie Kelly USN (ret) Celebrates his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday A Pearl Harbor Survivor & Hero

CAPT Kelly, a member of the Arizona MOAA Chapter, celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday at a Gala held in his honor. The Gala was attended by Governor Ducey, Congressman Schweikert, and a throng of attendees from many veteran organizations, family and friends.



CAPT Archie Kelley, USN (Ret), had been commissioned an Ensign in the Navy for less than a year in December 1941 and was assigned “very desirable duty” on the Battleship West Virginia at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. On the evening of December 6, he played poker with friends and returned to the ship around midnight to be ready for his assignment as Officer of the Deck the next morning. He was putting his uniform on to relieve his shipmate when the fire and rescue party called at 0750 to report a bomb blast on Ford Island. The Japanese attack had begun. In his white uniform but with no shoes or hat, Archie ran to his post. He gave the command to man battle stations and set condition “Zed,” which was an order to close the ship’s watertight doors and hatches. The order was carried out before seven torpedoes hit the West Virginia, and that action prevented the ship from rolling over, possibly saving 400 lives, he said. Archie noted that the condition Zed order was not given on the Oklahoma, which did roll over from flooding caused by battle damage. As the battle progressed, Archie went to the bottom station, which was flooding because its doors had not been closed. He and about 40 other sailors became trapped inside as the ship sank and rested on the bottom at a depth of 60 feet. “I knew I was going to die, but I was very busy,” he said. The trapped men found a hatch that led to topside, and they were able to escape. There they found that the captain had died in the attack and much of the crew, including the Executive Officer, had jumped over the side and swam to Ford Island.

That left Archie’s boss in command, and he reversed the order to abandon ship. Archie stayed onboard to fight fires. The attack ended after two hours. “We thought they’d come back,” Archie said. “If they did it would have been horrendous. We weren’t prepared for anything like that.” But the Japanese didn’t return. Archie, still assigned to the



West Virginia, was promoted from Assistant Navigator to Navigator, or as he noted, he was promoted to Navigator of a sunken ship. He went on to serve on a Destroyer as a Gunnery Officer in six other combat actions, providing close-in fire support for U.S. Marines as they engaged in amphibious landings.



His post-war duty was in the Navy's nuclear program, working on development of the Nautilus and the Seawolf, the Navy's first two nuclear submarines. During this time, one of the men who reported to Archie was a young Navy officer named Jimmy Carter, who later became the 39th president of the United States.