

Pearl Harbor...from Page 1A

Added Johnson, "Freedom is not free. War is hell, I guarantee it. I spent 54 months in World War II in combat zones.

"Tradition to me is important. History is important. The heroes are those people who never made it back, never had an opportunity to raise a family and enjoy life like we do. They're the heroes."

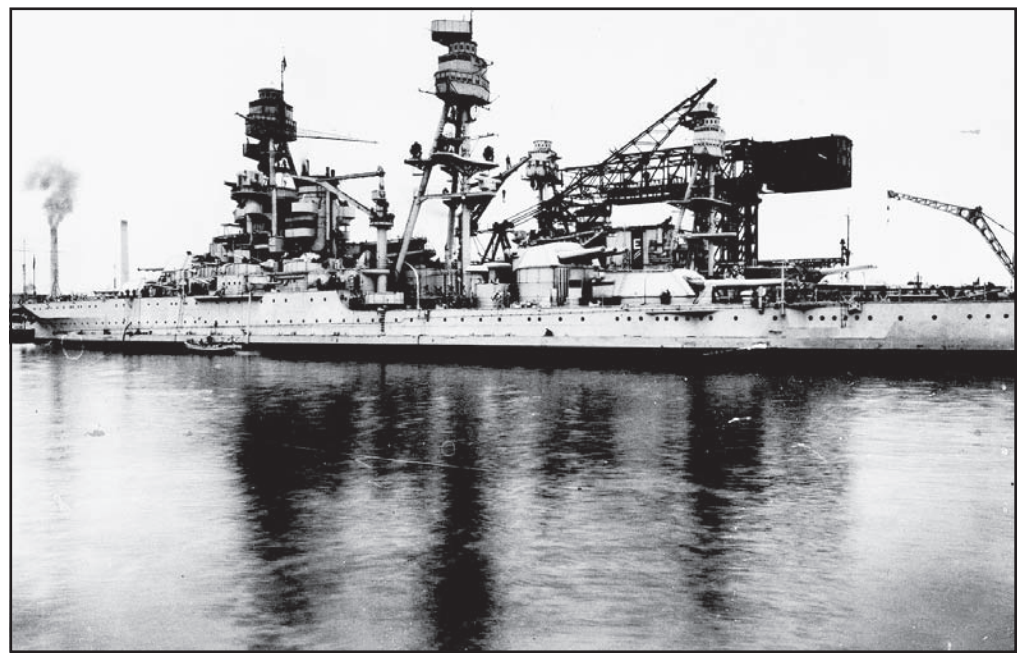
Retired U.S. Navy Lt. Ray Williams, 95, of Blairsville, was equally adamant that Pearl Harbor not be forgotten. Williams joined the Navy in May of 1942, just six months after the attack at Pearl Harbor.

"World War II was a tremendous conflict between the dictatorships of Germany, Italy, and then the Imperial forces of Japan versus the Allies, so it was a very comprehensive and worldwide struggle," Williams said.

The surprise, preemptive Japanese strike at Pearl Harbor was what triggered American involvement in the war, and shortly after the Pearl Harbor attack, Germany's Hitler declared war on the United States as well.

"So, the remembrance of Pearl Harbor is a significant historical event that we in the United States should be remembering," Williams said. "It really needs to be communicated to the young people in school so that they recognize the importance of that date.

"Dec. 7 started it all for the United States, and we should remember that date because over 2,000 of our military men were killed on that date, and it was a completely unexpected attack, so it's important for us to remember that.



This image of the USS Arizona was photographed on Jan. 18, 1941, while the Arizona was being upgraded at Puget Sound navy yard. To date, this is the last close-up view of the ship prior to its loss at Pearl Harbor. Photo/Pearl Harbor National Memorial

Remembering Pearl Harbor Day really is remembrance of the starting of World War II and what the consequences were if we were not successful in defending ourselves. It's not only Pearl Harbor Day, but (remembering) the beginning of the entire World War II struggle."

Williams and his wife Ellie – both World War II Navy Veterans – were married on Aug. 15, 1945, the day after it was announced that Japan had surrendered.

In 2015, the Williamses were selected to reenact the famous picture of the sailor kissing a nurse on V-J Day on Aug. 14, 1945, in New York City's Times Square in celebration of the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II.

After passing away earlier this year on Sept. 10, Pearl Harbor Veteran Lauren Bruner –

the second to last sailor to make it off the USS Arizona alive 78 years ago – was interred within the sunken battleship during the official 78th anniversary commemorative event in Hawaii.

"Having joined the Navy in 1938, Bruner was serving as a fire controlman on the ship when Japanese aircraft flew so close to the Arizona's deck as they dropped their bombs that Bruner recalled seeing one pilot's face so clearly that he could see his grin," according to his Legacy.com obituary. "Bruner was shot during the attack, and, trapped on a control tower, he nearly missed his chance to escape.

"He was one of the last few crewmen who escaped before the Arizona sank. With his death, only three crewmembers who were on the Arizona that day still remain. Bruner wrote a book about his

experiences, "Second to Last to Leave the USS Arizona."

According to the National Park Service, "Crewmembers who were assigned to the USS Arizona on Dec. 7, 1941, have the right to have their cremated remains interred inside the barrette of gun turret four by National Park Service divers."

Continued the Park Service, "On April 12, 1982, the ashes of retired Navy Chief Petty Officer Stanley M. Teslow were interred, making him the first USS Arizona survivor to return to his ship."

And while there are three USS Arizona crewmembers still living who meet the interment criteria, it is being widely reported that Bruner will be the last interred, as the others have made known their intentions to be buried alongside their families.

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since Aug. 1.

Legally, the board is limited in what information it can make publicly available regarding internal personnel deliberations and matters, so board members did not disclose the medical reason for Stone's three-month absence.

Board members did, however, express that the library system would be moving in a different direction than the trajectory Stone had set in motion when he came aboard to helm the libraries of Union, Towns and Fannin counties in March 2015.

"The trustees, the library staff and our communities have expressed the desire for MRLS to emphasize traditional library services that are responsive to each community's needs," the board said in a statement to the North Georgia News and Towns County Herald in October.

Continued the statement, "It was the consensus of the trustees that Mr. Stone is not the best person to lead the system in this direction. We appreciate his service and enthusiasm and wish him all the best in his future endeavors."

When reached for further clarification following publication of the original article detailing Stone's termination, the board said recently that, in his absence, "concerns came to light that made the board feel as though going in a new direction was the best thing for the libraries."

As to the nature of those concerns, the board said they were "concerns we will not comment on."

To Stone, the board's initial comments from October that he was not the best person to lead the libraries into the future were hurtful and unreflective of his time leading the libraries.

UC Historical Society's Brick Walk

To show our appreciation for the overwhelming community support for the Union County Historical Society's Brick Walk, we are extending the current price of \$50 per brick. Please call the Historical Society at 706-745-5493 or come by the old courthouse to purchase one in memory or in honor of a loved one. N(Dec11Z)CA



Union County
Elementary School
Winter Showcase
December 11th - 19th

The event will take place 30 minutes prior to your child's Christmas party. Teachers will send home more information with a specific day and time.

he's gotten to know as library director over the years.

"I want to thank all the people of the Mountain Regional Library System – employees, patrons,

Friends of the Library and board members – for our time together during the past five years," Stone said. "I was always proud to be your director. Now, I move on with my life's journey. Thanks for all your cards, prayers and best wishes."

As of press time, the director position had yet to be filled following Stone's departure.

For more information, including new hours announced in October for the Mountain Regional Library in Young Harris, visit mountainregionallibrary.org.