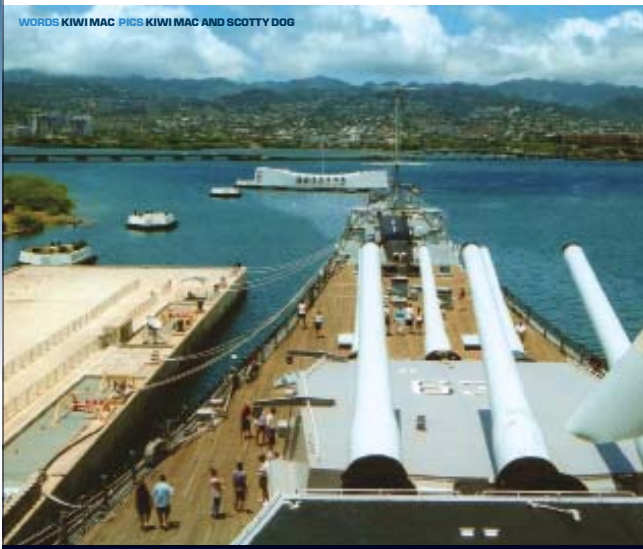




Puffing to the summit of a dormant 300,000-year-old volcano, Kiwi Mac discovers the Hawaiian Island of O'ahu has far more to offer military history buffs than just the standard package deals that include visiting the Arizona Memorial and USS Missouri – but these too are well worth a visit.

# Attacking the Pearl

WORDS KIWI MAC PICS KIWI MAC AND SCOTTY DOG



While determined to include the must-see highlights of Pearl Harbour, I was looking for just a bit more and I found it at a small diner on a quiet back street.

My host is retired US Army First Sergeant Charles Aresta and the diner is the venue for a monthly get-together of the Korean Veterans Association Aloha branch.

Though their hearing is fading a bit, their spirit is still alive and kicking and, after a few "he looks too young to have served in Vietnam that Australian..." have gone down range and been rebutted with "No, I'm a Kiwi and served in Afghanistan," we settled down to breakfast.

One thing that became readily apparent listening to these men (and one woman) was the high regard they still held for our grandfathers, having served alongside Kiwis and Aussies in the Pacific and Japan and, afterwards, in Korea. I lost count of the number of handshakes from those who reflected on Guadalcanal battles or the marvellous ANZACs of the 28<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Brigade – comradeships forged 50 years ago that are still maintained today.

Charles was determined that I see a bit more of the military history of the islands than what was in the brochures.

"If you really want to get an appreciation, head out to Diamond Head and then Fort De Russey," he said.

So, early one Saturday, I head out with trusty photog 'Scotty Dog' and our somewhat reluctant wives to Diamond Head.

With its panoramic views, Diamond Head was assessed in 1904 as an ideal site for O'ahu's coastal defence.

Purchased in 1908, construction of gun emplacements began soon after. An entry tunnel from nearby Fort Ruger through the north crater wall of the volcano, and emplacements for five batteries followed.

The guns are long gone but the catacomb of tunnels remain.

The views from the top were fantastic – the uppermost level of the station at 232m, with the bunkers backdropped on one side by the Pacific Ocean and on the other by the skyline of Waikiki.

It was from this observation station, fire control orders would have been directed to other batteries including Battery Harlow at Fort Ruger and Batteries Randolph and Dudley at Fort De Russey nearby, and it was there, once we'd got our breath back, we were headed next.

Fort De Russey is the home of the US Army Museum of Hawaii with its building being one of the main historical artifacts. The museum is located in Battery Randolph – a massive concrete emplacement with walls 12 feet thick.

Built in 1911, the battery housed two 14-inch disappearing guns that had a range of 14 miles.

Visitors are greeted by a collection of artillery pieces and military vehicles, including a WWII Japanese anti-tank gun and light tank. Inside, displays cover topics from King Kamehameha's consolidation of power in the 1700s through to the US Army's ongoing role in the Hawaiian Islands and greater Pacific.

With the rest of the crew all militaria-ed out for the day and near mutiny if we didn't head to the beach, planning began for the next assault on Hawaiian military history – the invasion of Pearl Harbour.

There are four main attractions at Pearl Harbour, those being the USS Arizona Memorial, the USS Missouri, the Bowfin Submarine Museum and the Pacific Aviation Museum.

Remember, Pearl Harbour is an active-duty military base and, as such, you can't drive on to Ford Island, but free shuttles run every 10 minutes from the entrance.

The USS Arizona Memorial is Hawaii's busiest, hosting 5000+ per day. Run by the National Park Service it commemorates not only the men killed on the Arizona but the 2390 men women and children killed in the attack on Hawaii by the Japanese on 7 December 1941.



Identifiable by their white trousers, survivors of the attack are on hand alongside other staff to explain their experiences and guide visitors through the exhibits.

Born in 1920, Al Rodrigues recalled he was ashore when he heard about the destroyer USS Ward depth charging an unknown submarine outside Pearl Harbour shortly before the attack.

"I was just about to have breakfast when general quarters sounded," Al explains.

"I remember Japanese planes flying overhead, strafing everything and shooting at a flight of B17s trying to land at nearby Hickam Field."

Arriving at the memorial structure and walking through its arches was a solemn experience. 1177 crew are entombed within the Arizona, which lies in clear view just below the surface. The ship sunk in nine minutes and burned for two days.

Refuelled just days before the attack, the Arizona was carrying 1.4 million gallons of fuel when she was sunk. 60 years on, about two quarts of oil droplets leak from the ship every day. Al Rodrigues says survivors call the droplets 'black tears'.

If the USS Arizona Memorial commemorates the losses suffered at the outbreak of America's WWII involvement, then a sister ship tied alongside Ford Island proudly commemorates America's ability to rise above the adversity.

Not only did the USS Missouri help defeat the Japanese, but General Douglas MacArthur ultimately accepted their surrender aboard this magnificent ship in Tokyo Bay in 1945.

The 887-foot battleship then served two tours off the coast of Korea where her ability to fire shells the weight of a Volkswagen Beetle 23 miles put her in hot demand. Decommissioned in 1955, she spent 30 years in the 'mothball' fleet before being modernised and recommissioned in May 1986.

Serving in Operation Desert Storm, the Missouri was the first to fire Tomahawk cruise missiles on 17 January 1991 in that Middle East conflict.

Decommissioned for a second time in March 1992 the 'Mighty Mo' now stands silent watch over the fallen at Pearl Harbour.

Our guide for the two-hour tour was Reggie, a very large former US Marine gunnery sergeant and 'Mighty Mo' crew member.

Reggie explained that Missouri has nine 16-inch rifles, built in 1937, that were last fired during Desert Storm.

"They're staggered when fired – left, right, then centre – at a rate of two rounds a minute.

"If they were fired at the same time the shells would collide in flight.

"We could target an area 1000 yards wide out to a range of 23 miles.

"The shells could penetrate 33 feet of reinforced concrete, and we held 1220 rounds in the magazines.

"While technology has its benefits, not everything new is better. The over-the-horizon fire of the Missouri was still controlled by a 1920s mechanical analogue computer accurate to 20 feet..."

One woman on the tour asked, "surely if modern computers can be as accurate as down to a metre they would be better to use?"

Reggie replied, "Ma'am, perhaps you didn't hear me earlier. These shells weigh the same as a VW Beetle. It don't matter all that much if you're out by 20 feet..."

Taking us up stairs and through hatches, Reggie's tour seemed to take five minutes,



**SERVING IN OPERATION DESERT STORM THE MISSOURI WAS THE FIRST TO FIRE TOMAHAWK CRUISE MISSILES ON 17 JANUARY 1991 IN THAT MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT**

not two hours – Scotty Dog agreed with me that a half day would really be needed to fully appreciate the sheer size of the ship.

The Pacific Aviation Museum (PAM) is just a short distance from the 'Mighty Mo' and impossible to miss, being situated in an original WWII hangar next to the red-and-white striped control tower of the era.

PAM is a relatively new addition to the Pearl Harbour circuit and offers a comprehensive selection to appease the aviation enthusiast and military novice alike.

Based out of Hangar 37, an old seaplane hangar that survived the Pearl Harbour attack, the museum's exhibits include several WWII aircraft.

Once again tours begin with an informative movie before the audience is unleashed on a variety of both American and Japanese planes, uniforms and equipment. If there's one thing the yanks do well it's military museums, and this is no exception.

But for me, as an ex Kiwi airman, from a country that no longer has an air-strike capability, the must-see was the museum's F-14 (the last flown by the US Navy) and F-15 (ex Hawaii Air National Guard) fighters. C'mon – those of you who grew up with Top Gun have gotta agree with me?

By this stage, the girls were up in arms and had gone AWOL in search of shopping malls while the blokes trudged back towards the Bowfin Submarine Museum thinking 'if I hear one more thing about December 7, I'll bomb them myself!'

But both the 'Dog' and Mac were in for a pleasant surprise. USS Bowfin Submarine Museum was like a breath of fresh air – well as fresh as it gets below decks on a diesel-electric submarine.

Launched exactly a year after the attacks, the Bowfin was soon dubbed the 'Pearl Harbour Avenger'. Completing nine war patrols she sunk 39 Japanese merchantmen and four naval vessels as well as one French vessel (well who wouldn't?) under command of the Vichy authorities.

In summary, all of the historic sites visited around O'ahu were of a high standard and well worth a second visit, but be mindful of the crowds, get there early, be mindful of post 9/11 security restrictions and allow yourself plenty of time – 'cause there's plenty to see.