

**PEARL HARBOR REMEMBERED**

**Pike County man credits baseball for saving his life, December 6, '41**

By The Associated Press

PIKEVILLE (AP) — Baseball was on Homer Robinson's mind when he woke early one Sunday about the USS Oklahoma and tried to rouse two fellow Pike County sailors who were sleeping in a late night of card-playing, told Robinson to go on ahead of them to a nearby baseball diamond for a planned game. They'd catch up with him. Five minutes later, as the young seaman was on his way inside, a Japanese torpedo ripped through the ship's 14-inch hull and made a direct hit in the gunnery office.

There's no doubt that being early rised saved my life," Robinson said this week as he recalled the Dec. 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. "I guess the good Lord was with me."

His friends, Coolidge Blackburn and Junior Burke, both of Pikeville, both apparently died instantly. Robinson, now 70, said he was a young man fresh from the Kentucky mountains and had just been assigned to the Oklahoma, which was anchored along "battleship row" in the Hawaiian harbor.

The day before, he and other crewmen had scrubbed and polished the big ship, stored its ammunition below decks and opened the water-tight doors for a full inspection.

After the torpedo exploded, Robinson recalled, he could have stayed out of the water by walking over the hull as the ship rolled over. But another

torpedo hit the doomed ship, knocking him into the flaming waters of the harbor. "I swam to shore — mostly under water and came up for air only when I had to because the water was on fire and covered with oil," said Robinson, who estimated the distance to shore at about three-quarters of a mile.

Robinson, now the chief balliff for Pike Circuit Court, told a group of Pikeville High School students he was not frightened until he reached the shore and surveyed the "chaos" across the harbor. "It was a well-planned attack," Robinson said.

When it was over, 2,400 Americans had been killed in Japan's assault on the Pacific Fleet. More than 1,100 of the dead were aboard the Oklahoma's sister ship, the USS Arizona.

Robinson said the two ships were virtually identical. The Arizona sank after a Japanese bomb dropped down one of the ship's smoke stacks and exploded deep inside its engine room. A memorial, lechered to the wreckage, now

floats where the Arizona once did.

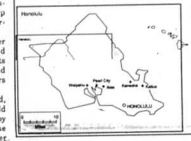
The day after the attack, Robinson said he was given a new assignment: "San Francisco."

"I thought to myself, 'once I get there they won't get me again,'" he said. "They put us on a boat and I thought I was going to Los Angeles."

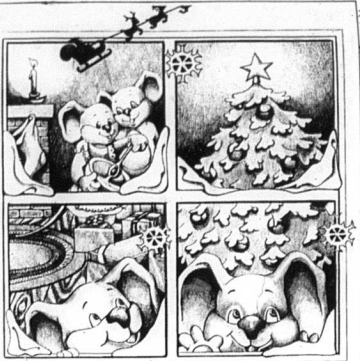
"It was two months before I could get my coverage up to go below deck. My buddies carried my food up for me and I slept on deck."

The San Francisco, a heavy cruiser, was one of the most decorated ships in the Pacific theater of World War II, said Robinson, who personally was awarded two presidential unit citations, five bronze stars, several silver stars and a good conduct medal.

He stayed in the Navy until a 1946 and then operated a service station in Pikeville for 30 years after the war. He has been the county's chief circuit court balliff for the last five years.



**Robinson Survived Attack Dec. 6, '41 Because He Wanted To Play Baseball**



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**SPORTS**

**Jackets scalp Indians, 67-50**

By Tim Jones

The Carlisle Mercury Staff

Grant County Bluejackets won their second straight game of the season, defeating Nicholas 67-50 Tuesday night.

Nicholas County was led in scoring by Daniel Brown with 26 points. Travis Sims added 15. Brian Hillander had 11 and Jamie Simons had six points.

Other Nicholas County scorers were Jarrod Willis with four, Kevin Morris with two and Shad Tibbs had three points.

Nicholas County got off to a quick start in the game and never trailed. Daniel Brown opened the scoring by canning a three pointer 32 seconds into the contest to give the Bluejackets a quick lead.

Grant County guard Bob Kinman answered the Brown three pointer with one of his own to knot the game at three.

Nicholas County then went on a 6-0 spurt. Jarrod Willis nailed a 15 foot jumper and Travis Sims followed with a rebound basket on the next trip.

Sims ended the Nicholas County run by sinking a 12 footer in the lane.

Nicholas County led 11-7 at the end of the first period. The second quarter saw the Bluejackets stretch their lead to 41 points. Daniel Brown scored eight points in the act and stanza and ignited the Bluejackets surge with a couple of sharp passes to inside players.

Travis Sims opened the second quarter scoring for the Bluejackets by making one of two from the free throw line. Brian Simpson of Grant County answered with a leading jumper in the lane to make the score 42-9, Bluejackets.

Brian Hillander hit a field goal on the inside but Grant County came back with two crucial baskets to pull within one at 14-13.

Daniel Brown then nailed a three pointer from 20 feet to put Nicholas ahead by four points.

Grant County scored on the next trip. However, the Nicholas County defense, a 2-3 trap, forced a walking violation on a Braves player.

Brian Hillander started the Bluejacket run by nailing two free throws. The Nicholas County defense, a 2-3 trap, forced a walking violation on a Braves player.

Daniel Brown scored on the inside and followed this with another three pointer to give the Bluejackets a 24-15 lead. Travis Sims added a tip-in on the next possession and the Bluejackets had a 20-15 lead with 2:45 left in the second quarter.

The teams traded baskets over the last two minutes. Nicholas County took a 20-19 lead into the locker room at halftime.

Nicholas County continued to control the game in the second and half. Led by Daniel Brown and Travis Sims, the Bluejackets maintained a constant lead throughout the half.

The Bluejackets were error prone in the early minutes of the third quarter and allowed the home standing Braves to close to 40-34 with two minutes left in the third stanza. Nicholas County coach Ed Oakley called timeout and discussed matters with the Bluejackets.

Oakley's pep talk worked. The Bluejackets ran a designed inbound play on the ensuing possession. Brian Hillander received the ball wide open under the basket and laid it in to put the Bluejackets up 42-34.

Grant County dropped in a shot at the buzzer to make the score 42-36, Nicholas County. The Bluejackets came down and found Driben all alone from three point range. The junior guard buried 10-footing range jumper and put the Bluejackets back up by 11 points.

The Bluejackets came out in the fourth quarter and quickly put the game out of reach. Daniel Brown made two free pointers, Shad Tibbs had an athletic rebound basket and Brian Hillander nailed a jumper in the lane. The result was a 10-2 Nicholas County run that ended any hopes of victory for the home standing Braves.

The Bluejackets trailed from this point and went to the bus with a 67-50 victory. It was the second win in as many games for the Nicholas squad. Both wins have come on the road.

Nicholas County coach Ed Oakley said he was happy with the win but wanted his team to perform better.

"I don't think we were mentally into the game early," Oakley said.

"I think we showed maturity, though," he added.

"We didn't play our best tonight but we still won."

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