

Live Big. Live Bold.

Your Life, Your Rules

# Return to Pearl Harbor

A WWII Veteran Revisits Hawaii 75 Years Later



by Paul Golde

Son of Treeo South Ogden resident  
and WWII veteran Harold William Golde

All photos © Leisure Care



All photos © Leisure Care

Hal Golde, WWII veteran and resident of Treeo South Ogden, on his bucket list trip back to Pearl Harbor.

Hal is almost 95 years old and nearly blind from macular degeneration, but that doesn't stop him from living independently at Treeo.

**O**n December 7, 1941, my father was a handsome, lanky 18-year-old enjoying the new film *Babes on Broadway*, starring Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland. He was a typical New York City kid who loved to sing, so an afternoon off from working at the family bakery to enjoy a musical with friends was nothing short of heavenly ... until someone ran down into the front of the theater to shout out the hellish news of the Pearl Harbor attack.

Like many youngsters of that time, Harold William Golde ("Hal" to his friends) knew what was happening in Europe and how England was starting to buckle under the incessant attacks by Nazi Germany. He knew about the hundreds of German warplanes bombing London for 57 straight nights in attacks that

continued until May 1941. But the United States had remained neutral up to this point, not wanting to get involved in another war, with the trauma from WWI still painful.

One day later, when the United States declared war on Japan, Hal went to the recruiting office to sign up as a pilot in the Army Air Corps. After initial testing showed he was color blind, he was instead assigned to the 40<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, Mechanized Calvary, where he shipped off to basic training and then on to Hawaii and Schofield Barracks, near Pearl Harbor, where he would endure jungle training before joining his outfit in the Pacific Theatre.

Hal would eventually be assigned to General MacArthur's forces as a radio man and later as the chaplain's assistant, a role in which he found true purpose during the liberation

of the Philippines in October 1944. Hal's father Fred was a huge supporter of "Mack" and so very proud that his eldest son was serving with the famous five-star general. Sadly, Fred would pass away while Hal was still serving in the South Pacific and would not get to see his son in the background of the famous "I Have Returned" photo.

Still in the Army but finally heading home, Hal returned to New York and married his high school sweetheart, Mary Patricia Zarth, who he had promised to wed if he survived the war. Two daughters and a set of twin sons later, Hal moved his family to California and continued his life as husband and father. Years later, Hal and Mary retired to the mountains near Lake Tahoe and later, settled in Ogden, Utah, near my brother Ricky.



Clint Fowler, Director of Resident Services at Leisure Care (left) and Dan Madsen, chairman and CEO of Leisure Care (right), pose with Hal Goode (center) and his son Paul (top center) during their Hawaiian excursion.

Hal enjoys an ice cream soda and takes in the sights.

Mary passed away in 2013, and shortly after, Hal learned about the new Treco retirement community being built in South Ogden. He was one of the first residents to move in. It was at Treco that Hal found out about the Executive Salute to Veterans Cruise organized by Travel by Leisure Care and taking place on November 4–11, 2017.

Hal had been invited by Honor Flight Network a few years earlier to see the WWII Memorial in Washington, D.C., and his eldest (by 20 minutes) son Ricky won the coin toss to be his companion during that trip, where Hal was presented with a special cap prominently emblazoned with “World War II Veteran.” He often wears it proudly, and the cap figured prominently in his return to

Hawaii after 75 years. No coin toss needed this time; I was the one to accompany our dad on his own “I shall return” to Hawaii, a long-standing bucket-list item.

Hal is almost 95 years old and nearly blind from macular degeneration, but that doesn’t stop him from living independently at Treco. He can still stand and walk just fine, albeit with a cane for assurance and for short distances (after all, he did smoke cigarettes for 60 years, starting with the Chesterfields he found in his K rations).

During the trip to Hawaii, every night we would “set sail” and in the morning wake up with a new island to explore. Maui, Kauai, Oahu, and the Big Island of Hawaii were ours to see with shore excursions to

beaches, volcanoes, waterfalls, and, one of my favorites, a traditional luau and Polynesian history show.

Traveling with my father is always interesting in that the reactions from people range from absolute indifference to weeping pleas to hug him. Pushing Dad in the wheelchair gave me an interesting perspective; because I’m behind him looking up, I can see people’s reactions to this very old man in a wheelchair.

When Baby Boomers saw Dad with one of his hats on, they would almost reverently approach and quietly say, “Thank you for your service,” then take their leave. Teens and Millennials rarely acknowledged Dad, their faces mostly buried in their phones. But one group of school children treated Dad like a

real celebrity at the WWII Memorial. They obviously had a really great teacher who prepared them to properly visit this important place with reverence and respect. They crowded around Dad to pose for photos, and, yes, they thanked him for his service.

Dad and I enjoyed our time on the *Pride of America*, and we were honored by the ship’s officers with an invitation to join them for dinner. Another highlight of the cruise was an invitation by John and Cynthia Zerb, two of our Travel by Leisure Care group, to a final night cocktail party at their beautiful suite, with amazing sunset views along the Na Pali coast.

The weather cooperated beautifully on the cruise, right up until

we left the ship on Veterans Day to visit Pearl Harbor, the part of our adventure that Dad was most looking forward to. We left the rental wheelchair behind, expecting wheelchairs to be available at Pearl Harbor, as the ship’s excursion desk had repeatedly assured us. But when we arrived, we learned they were only available for emergencies. The walk to the bus stop to take us to the USS *Missouri* was about a quarter mile, and there was another similar distance to board the shuttles to get to the USS *Arizona*. The combination was too much for Dad.

A light tropical rain fell as we made our way back to the empty tour bus. We channeled our anger and frustration during the two-hour wait for the return of our party by

writing to Norwegian Line. The good news is someone took notice, and as this story was being prepared, I learned from Mr. Jason Blount, chief of interpretation and education, WWII Valor at Pearl Harbor, that it is changing its policy and will now have wheelchairs available for use at the Pearl Harbor Visitor Center! It’s heartening to know that we played a part in making these visits more accessible for many more veterans in the future.

It is my hope that the Executive Salute to Veterans Cruise continues and that more veterans can attend. I hope to return with Dad — wheelchair at the ready — so he can finally check the USS *Arizona* off his bucket list.

Aloha and bon voyage! ♦