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Pearl Harbor remembered

When Dec. 7 comes around, my memories flash back to that day in 1941 when Pearl Harbor was bombed.

I was a Navy bride of a few weeks, and my husband had just left Pearl Harbor on the light cruiser, the USS Boise. I was visiting a friend and her husband, Harry, a recent West Point graduate who was stationed at Schofield Barracks in central Oahu, Hawaii – a few miles from Pearl Harbor.

That morning, we were awakened by airplanes roaring and bombs falling. As I joined them in the dining room, Harry yelled, "This is it!"

That night, all the service wives, mothers, and children were evacuated and herded onto a bus. I sat next to a young Japanese woman who'd worked as a maid in an officer's quarters. As she trembled, I thought how sad it was that our two countries were now at war.

We were not allowed to use headlights, so the bus, guided by only a flashlight, inched its way down the main road to Honolulu. As we passed Pearl Harbor, we saw the fires roaring and heard tremendous explosions as our burning ships sank, along with the roar of the planes fighting overhead.

I turned my frantic thoughts to God. The dear Father spoke to me in the words of a poem I knew as a hymn: "Aye, darkling sense, arise, go hence! Our God is good." These words were written by Mary Baker Eddy, who founded Christian Science ("Poems," p. 79).

The message was so clear that I knew God was right there, actually speaking to me of His goodness, even in the face of devastation and loss. The opening verse of that hymn also means a lot to me:

It matters not what be thy lot,

So Love doth guide;

For storm or shine, pure peace is thine,

Whate'er betide.

The message helped me feel God's comforting love, guiding and caring for me. Feeling God's presence strengthened me so I could make good decisions and be a support instead of a burden to those trying to keep us safe.

We were driven to a school and spent the rest of the night there, provided with blankets from the Red Cross. No one slept. The next day, we were told that if we knew anyone we could stay with, we could get a ride there. Again, God provided for my needs. My sister's in-laws lived in the city, and they cordially took in my friend, her mother-in-law, and me.

Some days later, my friend and I joined the Women's Air Raid Defense (WARD) at Fort Shafter in order to remain on the island. After nurses, WARDees were the first women inducted into military service. Working four-hour shifts around the clock, we plotted the positions of planes and ships arriving at and leaving Pearl Harbor. I hoped that our efforts would keep our service people alert and able to avoid another attack. In addition, I prayed regularly for my husband's safety as well as my own.

My husband didn't get word of my whereabouts until March, and I learned of his whereabouts in May. I received a call from him that his ship had been damaged and was now on Mare Island, Calif., for repairs. God met my need in this instance, too. I was able to get passage on a convoy back to the US, where my husband and I had the opportunity for a belated honeymoon before he had to go back out to sea. Later, he showed me a personal journal he'd kept. Each day he wrote that he'd prayed for my safety. His prayers were answered.

A passage from "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," also written by Mary Baker Eddy, states, "To those leaning on the sustaining infinite, to-day is big with blessings" (p. vii). During that time the promise of those words was fulfilled. Difficult as things were, I did have days big with blessings.

Now, these many years later, I look back and remember how many times my Father has been with me and my family, always blessing and providing for our needs.