

# Just 18, Twin Brothers from New Bedford in the Thick of War

*Don Green in 2009 and in 1940. (NationalArchives)*

by Andrew O'Leary

Just 18 years old, George and Donald Green, twin brothers from the south end of New Bedford, were woken at 8AM as loud explosions rocked the harbor of Oahu. It was Sunday, December 7th, 1941; a day that “lives in infamy.” An all out Japanese assault on Pearl Harbor had begun. The brothers had been in the Navy less than a year. Their vessel, the USS Pyro, was an older ammunition ship, hastily recommissioned as storm-clouds of war had gathered in 1939. Not being a naval attack vessel, Pyro had limited options to fight back against the hundreds of Japanese fighter bombers swarming over Pearl Harbor.

Fast and maneuverable, Japan's Mitsubishi Zeros were flying so low that Chief Petty Officer Green could see the pilots' scarves flutter as they strafed their targets. He describes the effort to get the 3"/50 caliber anti aircraft guns firing, finding the gun's shells were not readily available. Even when machine and anti aircraft guns were loaded, since most of the crew were ashore, a handful of Pyro crewmen struggled to return fire.

Nonetheless, the Pyro crew were one of the few to successfully down a Japanese attack plane that morning.

Three days later, the Pyro left a devastated Pearl Harbor for the mainland to begin its mission supplying naval bases from Alaska to Midway Island to Australia. They were soon harassed

by Japanese submarines. The Pacific war had begun.

Watch a talk with Donald Green above. To quote from his 2013 obituary, “ Don was a truly remarkable man, and his like will not be seen again.”

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