

# County Sailor Finally Laid To Rest

Guy Leonard  
Staff Writer

After nearly three-quarters of a century the remains of Chief Petty Officer Albert Eugene Hayden, killed during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii in 1941 were laid to rest in St. Joseph Catholic Church Cemetery in Morganza with full military honors.

Hayden was one of 429 men killed aboard the USS Oklahoma, a battleship docked at the naval base, when it was torpedoed by Japanese dive bombers and sunk.

These were the opening shots that brought the United States into World War II.

Hayden's remains went unidentified until late last year when the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced a confirmation of his identity.

Ronnie Kissinger, of Port Republic, a distant relative of Hayden's, said the government was able to positively identify Hayden's remains by matching genetic material from his closest next of kin, his nephew Edward D. Hayden, Sr. 76, who lives on the Eastern Shore.

Kissinger said that Edward Hayden relayed the wishes of Albert Hayden's mother Emma Hayden that her son someday be brought back to his home in St. Mary's County.

"Edward said this was Emma's wish," Kissinger said. "She said: 'Bring my son back home to be with his family.'"

Hayden served as a chief electrician's mate on board the USS Oklahoma when it was attacked.

He and many other sailors were still aboard the ship when it sunk until their remains were retrieved between 1942 and 1943 when the navy brought the ship up from the depths in the harbor.

Hayden and others' remains were buried at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii but they were recently disinterred; Hayden's remains were subsequently identified.

According to the website of the USS Oklahoma it took nine torpedoes to bring the ship down before it sunk in the mud.

She sustained eight torpedo hits in the first 10 minutes of the battle, according to the website.

There were 32 men who were able to be taken out of the hull of the ship but there were still many trapped below the waterline, according to the USS Oklahoma's website.

"Banging could be heard for over three days and then there was silence," according to the website.

Hayden was born in 1897 and attended Leonard Hall school when it was an agricultural school and later went on to Char-

lotte Hall Military School before joining the navy in 1917 where he served in World War I.

Kissinger said that the family was finally able to attain a sense of closure with Hayden's return to be buried in St. Mary's.

"It's amazing that we can be part of this," Kissinger said. "It's exactly what we wanted."

"It's a great feeling."



Photos by Frank Marquart

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