

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, December 3, 2007

**Remember Pearl Harbor:** Next Friday will be December 7, the 220<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Delaware's ratification of the U.S. Constitution, officially making it the First State or the "State that started a Nation." Sixty-six years ago, however, it was a "date that will live in infamy," when the U. S. Pacific Fleet was wiped out by the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. People my age could always remember where they were on that day that changed their lives.

I was included, along with 11 other students and three teachers, in a weekend trip to Washington, Richmond, and Williamsburg, sponsored by the History Department at Mercersburg Academy. Leaving Mercersburg early Saturday morning, December 6, we first stopped in the Nation's Capital, where we visited the Library of Congress and the brand new National Airport across the Potomac. Later in the afternoon, we had tours of Virginia's capitol building designed by Thomas Jefferson and the church where Patrick Henry gave his stirring "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" speech. Finally, we bedded down in one of the houses operated by Colonial Williamsburg, a short distance from Duke of Gloucester Street and the College of William and Mary.

Sunday morning we toured the several important buildings open to the public after their authentic reconstruction only a few years before. These included the House of Burgesses, the Raleigh Tavern, the George Wythe House, and the Governor's Palace, in addition to the Christopher Wren Building (1693) on the William and Mary campus. After a light lunch, the three cars (owned by three teachers, respectively) stopped for gas on the old Richmond Road just east of Williamsburg before heading back to Washington and Mercersburg. It was about 2 P.M., and the radio was on in the filling station. News was coming through that the Japanese had bombed the U. S. Naval Base at Pearl Harbor in the Territory of Hawaii, where most of the Pacific Fleet was anchored. That would have been about 8:30 A.M. Hawaii Time (if I'm correct, Hawaii was 2½ hours behind the West Coast in those days), so the attack was barely over. No one in this area knew the extent of damage at that point.

We reached Washington just after dark, and stopped for dinner at a restaurant that resembled an old stable. In passing the government buildings, it was a strange sight to see them guarded by military men. On our way out of town, we went past the Japanese Embassy, which was also well guarded but dark inside. We reached Mercersburg by 10:30 or so and went to bed in our dormitories. That was the end of December 7, 1941, in the Eastern Time Zone.

On Monday morning, we learned what had really happened and heard an early assessment of the damage. President Roosevelt addressed a joint session of Congress and gave his "Day of Infamy" speech, after which Congress declared war on Japan. Within a day or two, war had also been declared against Hitler's Germany. A cloud hung over the Christmas season in 1941. "Remember Pearl Harbor" became a marching and rallying song for the rest of World War II. Our Pre-Meteorology unit at Brown University sang it almost daily as we marched all over Providence in 1943.