

## **I REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR MY ABRUPT INTRODUCTION TO WWII**

I remember that Sunday Morning vividly, December 7, 1941—I was an 18 year old Seaman first class in the Regular Navy having enlisted under a Minority Enlistment (17) in June 1941 a graduate of West End High School in Birmingham, Alabama.. At the time I was in a U.S. Navy Communications School, at the Naval Training Station, in San Diego, California studying Radio operating. I was partially dressed sitting on my bunk, reading the newspaper, waiting to go to Mass when the PA system blurted out we are being attacked by the Japanese they are bombing Pearl Harbor –EVACUATE immediately.. I hurriedly finished dressing put on my shoes and left the barracks. My best friend at the time Bill Brown and I went flying out one of the gates and headed for the hills above the base—we didn't stop running until we were about a half mile away. A very nice lady, a widow, who had a large Spanish Style house welcomed us as guests and fed us lunch. At dusk, sound trucks were circulating through the area ordering us back to base –(for a meal of baloney and cheese which was our fare for several meals). That night we were issued English Enfield rifles that had been packed in cosmoline (Grease) since WWI.. We were also given 2 bandoliers of ammunition, bayonets and Gas masks. We spent most of the night cleaning the weapons on the wash racks and at dawn left the base again—we returned to our benefactor (she had great food and deserts). At dusk we returned to base and as ordered that second night we teamed up with a squad of U.S. Marines—Bill Brown and I had a Walkie-Talkie Radio (Large Pack—with a whip antenna) —We patrolled with the Marines the nearby beaches for several days thereafter... I went on to serve in the Pacific Theater much of it in the Aleutian Islands primarily Dutch Harbor for the rest of the war attaining the rank of Chief Radioman USN.

**Al Gentle Sr.**