

Scrimmage for War: A Story of Pearl Harbor, Football, and World War II

This 387-page military history, which includes an index, is a virtually unknown true story - about two 1941 collegiate football teams temporarily stranded on Oahu, The Territory of Hawaii, by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941. The two teams, Willamette University of Salem, OR, and San Jose State College, of San Jose, CA, had sailed from San Francisco on the Matson Lines' SS *Lurline* on November 27, to play two games against the University of Hawaii, then play one more game against each other, all three games for charitable purposes.

The hardback book's release date was September 19, 2019, by Stackpole Books, a ninety-year-old Pennsylvania publishing company well known for their military history titles on the Civil War, World War II and the Vietnam War. The following paragraphs summarize the book's contents:

For the Saturday, December 6, 1941 Shrine Bowl football game, readers are provided a play-by-play description, including still, color photographs, and one black and white photograph, which can be viewed on our personal website, at <https://www.west-point.org/users/usma1955/20315/> of the Shrine Bowl Game, in which Willamette's Bearcats were defeated by Hawaii's Rainbows 20-6. San Jose State College of San Jose, CA, was to play the following Saturday, but both remaining games were cancelled as was their five-day voyage home on the *Lurline*, scheduled for December 19, which would have allowed the two teams to be home for Christmas.

Instead, in mid-afternoon on December 7, both teams were literally mobilized under force of martial law, and pressed into wartime duties they'd never previously performed, to help defend an island they had simply come with a few fans to enjoy. Their duties the evening of December 7, included stringing barbed wire, digging and manning firing positions with active duty military on Waikiki Beach, and around their Hotel Moana, adjacent to Waikiki Beach. The following Tuesday

Willamette University players began twenty-four-hour sentry duties around the large Punahou (High) School campus, which had been appropriated by the Army engineers in the early hours of December 8; while San Jose State's players had begun working with the Honolulu Police Department and Federal authorities in rounding up Japanese, Italian and German aliens and enforcing wartime blackout orders to the Hawaiian populace.

Then, with two hours' notice on December 19, both teams were ordered to board the former luxury liner, *SS President Coolidge*, in a two-ship convoy, escorted by the cruiser, *USS Detroit*, and the destroyer *Cummings*. The *Coolidge*, which had arrived from Manila, P.I., on December 16, with the US Army Transport *General Hugh L. Scott* (formerly the liner *SS President Pierce*), took on approximately 400 additional passengers above the ship's normal load, nearly all military and contractor dependents, women and children, including some Pearl Harbor widows with children, plus medical staff; and 125 severely wounded Pearl Harbor survivors, including 30 terribly burned survivors from ships in Pearl Harbor.

Billeted in steerage, the two teams were once again assigned wartime duties, requiring them to help the medical staff and ship's crew care for the wounded, and if necessary to assist wounded, women, and children to their assigned lifeboat stations if a Japanese submarine were successful in attacking the *Coolidge*. Additionally, each day the team members, during lifeboat drills, assisted in moving their designated passengers, who could be assisted, to their lifeboat stations.

The slow-moving convoy sailed seven days to San Francisco beginning December 19 - through waters patrolled by Japanese submarines which began attacking allied vessels in various areas around the islands during and immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor, along shipping lanes to Australia, then began attacks up and down the United States' Continental West Coast on December 17.

The book is in two parts, and Part II follows 12 team members, ten from Willamette and two from San Jose State, plus the Willamette head coach, Roy S. "Spec" Keene, and his long-time friend and former mayor

of Salem, OR, State Senator Douglas McKay, through their lives and World Wars I and II experiences. Additionally, in Part II readers fly on Fifteenth Air Force, World War II B-17 raids from Lucera, Italy, into the Balkans - including the Ploesti oil refineries in Rumania - and equally heavily defended targets in Austria, Germany, Poland; and over Berlin from the famed 91st Bomb Group (Heavy), from an Eighth Air Force base in the United Kingdom; numerous Fifteenth Air Force B-25 raids against heavily defended targets up and down Italy, over Corsica, in the Mediterranean Sea, and in Southern France.

From Italy and the United Kingdom, readers go with the men from Willamette into the Pacific campaigns: on Guadalcanal, the disastrous torpedo bomber raid against Japanese ships in Rabaul's Simpson Harbor on the Island of New Georgia; the recapture of Guam; Marine aviators' dangerous, highly classified, high-altitude reconnaissance missions over Truk Atoll preceding Operation Hailstone, an operation aimed at destruction of Japanese Navy capabilities based in the Atoll; the battles for Saipan and Tinian, the invasion of, and battle for Iwo Jima - including Kamikaze attacks on the iconic aircraft carrier USS *Saratoga* - off Iwo Jima; the invasion of Okinawa, planning and preparations for the invasion of the Japanese home islands, and the pre-invasion build-up in the far western Pacific's Ulithi Atoll; President Truman's decision to invade the Japanese home islands, followed by his decision to use the atomic bomb to attempt to end the war prior to the planned invasion; and P-38L raids from the Philippine Islands against the Island of Borneo, in the final two months of World War II.

Respectfully,

Bill McWilliams, Author