

PEARL HARBOR SURVIVOR & WWII VETERAN TURNS 100

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

MADEIRA BEACH, Fla. – May 26, 2018 – Family, friends and military veterans celebrated the 100th birthday of Mel Smith: a survivor of the Pearl Harbor attack and World War II veteran. The birthday party was held at the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 4256 in Madeira Beach, where Smith has been a member for the last thirty years.

Smith was born on May 28, 1918, in Idaho. A widower, Smith has three children, eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Speaking at the festivities was John Tornga: the Vice Mayor of Dunedin, a US Marine Corps veteran and VFW member. Tornga proclaimed that the week of May 27 through June 2, 2018, be recognized as “... Mel Smith Week for City of Dunedin and for, that matter, all of Pinellas County.”

Prior to joining the navy, Smith was a civilian welding contractor at Pearl Harbor building an underground fuel depot inside a mountain on the island. On December 7, 1941, he found himself in the midst of the Japanese attack, which he vividly remembers in detail, saying, “I remember it as if it was yesterday.”

In 1944, Smith joined the navy and served in combat operations on a Tank Landing Ship throughout the Pacific.

Smith left the navy in 1946 and worked for a truck leasing company for 23 years. In 1964, he bought 40 acres of land in Wisconsin and built his home from the trees on his property that he had personally cut down.

Last year, Smith retired as a volunteer at the Bay Pines VA Hospital, where he had logged over 7,400 hours in almost 25 years of volunteer service.

Smith wore a Hawaiian shirt and lei matching the banquet room’s luau motif. John “Big John” Parker, the VFW post’s chef, catered the event for the party’s sixty attendees.

Upon leaving the party, Smith said, “I had such a good time, I think I’ll come back for another one next year.”



Mel Smith, seated with hat, is surrounded by family and friends

Photo by Jodie Snyder

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