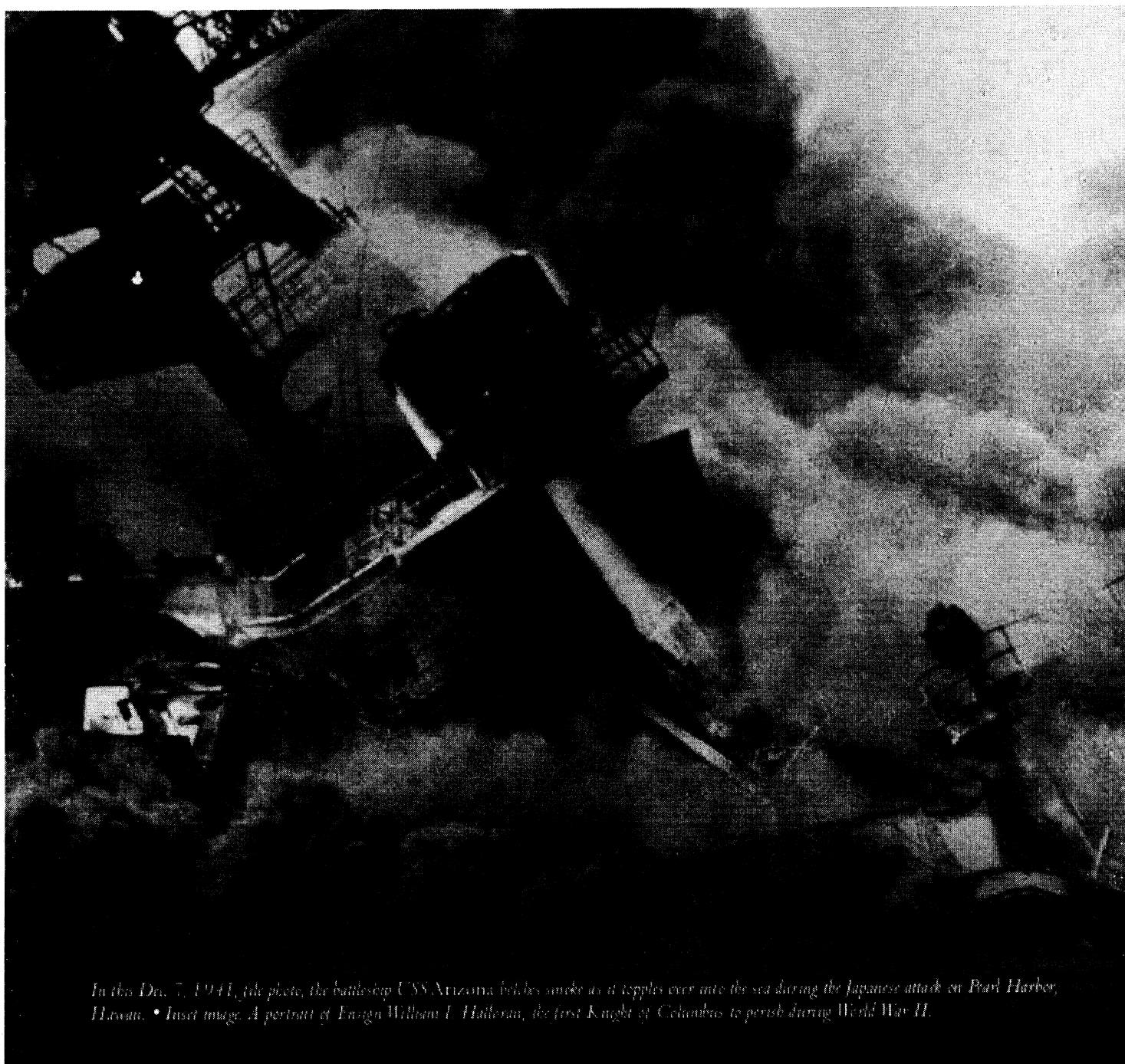




THE FIRST TO FALL

*Seventy-five years ago, Ensign William I. Halloran was
the first Knight of Columbus killed in World War II*

by J.C. Sullivan



In this Dec. 7, 1941, file photo, the battleship USS Arizona belches smoke as it topples over into the sea during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. • Inset image: A portrait of Ensign William I. Halloran, the first Knight of Columbus to perish during World War II.

"The telegram arrived at 2:30 a.m. on Friday, Dec. 12, 1941, by a Western Union kid in an olive drab uniform riding a bike in the dark," recalled Lawrence ("Larry") Halloran Jr., 92.

Jostled awake by his brother John, Larry stumbled down the stairs of the Halloran home in Cleveland to find his parents and sister, Estelle, in shock.

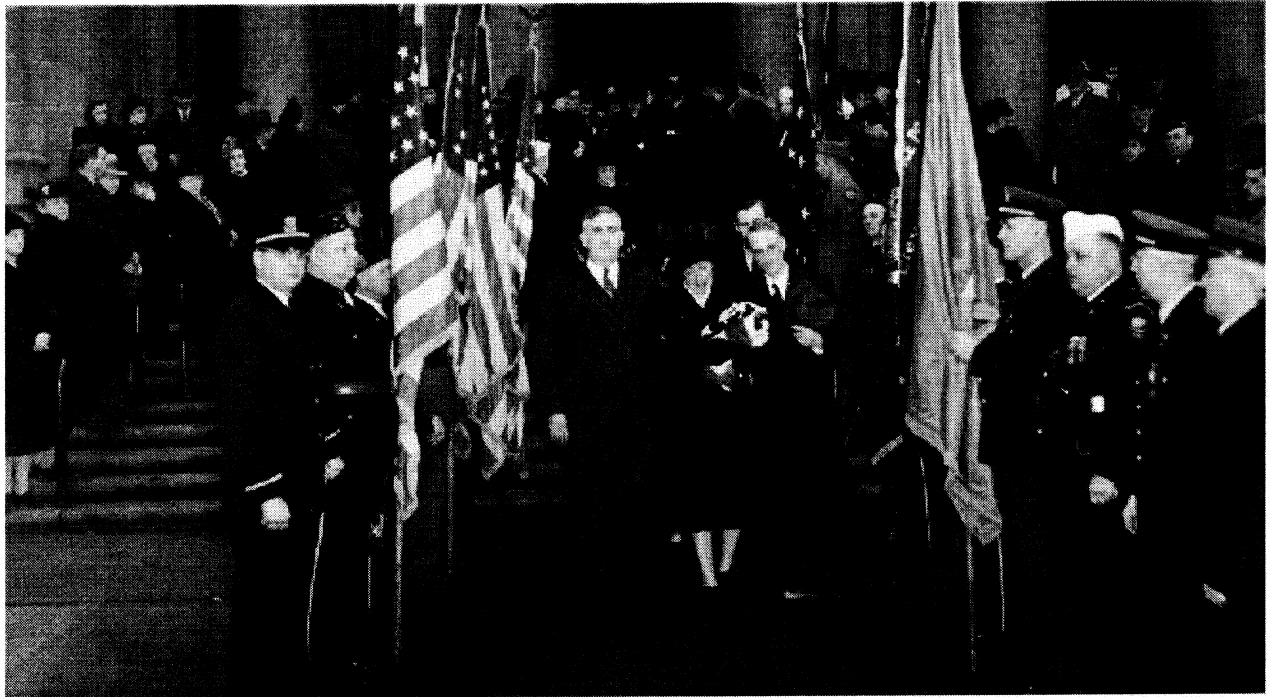
"The Navy Department deeply regrets to inform you that your son Ensign William I Halloran United States Naval Reserve was lost in action in performance of his duty and in the service of his country," the telegram began.

"The family was stunned, and we sat together," said Larry, who was 17 at the time. "Mom was crying. Dad and I were be-

wildered as we later walked to the 8 o'clock Mass. It was a real jolt to his heart and soul."

Larry's oldest brother, William, had been assigned to the USS *Arizona* at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. Earlier that week, the family had listened to the radio as President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared Dec. 7, 1941, "a date which will live in infamy." That was the date the Japanese navy attacked the U.S. Pacific fleet anchored at Pearl Harbor, killing 2,335 military personnel, including 1,177 on the *Arizona*. It was also the birthday of Stella Halloran, Ensign Halloran's mother.

William Halloran, who at age 26 became the first Ohioan, newspaperman and Knight of Columbus to die in World War II, would be remembered as a hero. His mother soon led



a tremendous war bond drive, backed by the Knights, to fund the construction of a destroyer escort ship — the USS *Halloran* — on which Larry Halloran would eventually serve until the end of the war.

'A PRINCE OF A GUY'

The eldest of four children, William Ignatius Halloran was born July 23, 1915, to Lawrence and Stella (née McGuire) Halloran. Lawrence worked for the postal service in the West Park neighborhood of Cleveland, and Stella was a homemaker. The family attended St. Ignatius of Antioch Church, a few minutes' walk from their house.

"We always went to Mass together. Everybody was very religious in our family," said Larry, who has fond memories of his brother and of growing up in a happy home.

"Even though Bill was nine years my senior, we got along well and were always into sports," Larry recalled. "He organized the local kids into baseball teams, and I was his batboy. When we needed a football, Bill bought it, as he was working. He was just a prince of a guy, and everybody liked him."

Larry's sister Estelle, who died in 2008, described their brother's interests in a biographical profile she composed in 1986 at the request of the Knights of Columbus in Hawaii.

"Bill served as an altar boy at St. Ignatius," Estelle wrote. "I remember when he was studying the Latin *Ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meam*, which all acolytes were required to know."

Both Larry and Estelle noted that William loved exploring the woods around Cleveland, which was known as Forest City.

"Growing up we used to hike along in the woods," Larry said. According to Estelle, William often "brought home little violet

plants or sprouts of trees to plant. For a while our yard looked like a park."

William also had a talent for art, and especially for writing, which he eventually turned into a career.

"He always loved journalism," Estelle wrote. "He practiced it in elementary school, and he pursued it at Cathedral Latin High School. ... In his senior year he held the position of editor-in-chief of *The Latineer*, which was a great honor."

Throughout high school, William woke up early to deliver the *Shopping News* before school, and he later worked as a reporter and editor for the delivery boys' newspaper, *Shopping News Jr.*

After graduating from Cathedral Latin in 1933, he attended Cleveland's John Carroll University for two years.

Desiring a more rigorous journalism program, William opted to complete a degree in journalism at The Ohio State University, even though it was not his first choice.

"He really wanted to go to Marquette," Larry explained, "but it was the Depression and we had no money, so it was off to OSU where he worked as a page in a sorority to get a meal."

Estelle wrote, "Bill's faith meant so much to him that he joined the Newman Club as soon as he arrived in Columbus. He eventually became president of the club, as well as president of the Ohio Valley Union of Newman Clubs, which included four states."

William served on the editorial staff of *The Lantern*, the Buckeye school newspaper, and was also president of the university's Interracial Council, "a group that was way before its time," according to Larry.

Upon graduating from OSU with a journalism degree in 1938, William accepted a position with United Press in Columbus, where he was an active member of the Catholic Youth Or-

Left: William Halloran's family and other mourners leave St. Ignatius of Antioch Church in Cleveland following a requiem Mass for the slain ensign Dec. 17, 1941. More than 1,100 people were in attendance. • Right: The USS Halloran is launched from Mare Island, Calif., Jan. 14, 1944. William Halloran's mother, Stella, christened the ship just moments before, and it was placed in commission four months later.

ganization. In 1940, he advanced to the Cleveland bureau as sports editor.

At the invitation of his uncle, John Stock, William also joined the Knights of Columbus, becoming a member of Cleveland's West Park Council 2790.

THE WAR YEARS

As war broke out in Europe and the Axis powers advanced, William volunteered for active duty in the Naval Reserves on Aug. 14, 1940. On the next day, the feast of the Assumption, he wrote a letter to his boss, Ralph C. Teatsorth, explaining his decision and requesting a leave of absence from United Press. Teatsorth later called this letter "perhaps the finest thing he ever wrote" (see sidebar on page 12).

After attending the Naval Reserve Midshipmen's School at Northwestern University, William received his commission as ensign June 12, 1941. He left Cleveland and reported on board the battleship USS *Arizona* at Long Beach, Calif., June 30. While stationed at Pearl Harbor, Ensign Halloran penned numerous letters to friends and family.

A postcard from the *Arizona* addressed to "My Friends in the School of Journalism" at OSU depicted scenes from Hawaii. One of several letters written to Larry asked, "Have you joined the scouts yet?"

In a *Cleveland News* interview, his mother later recounted, "On Dec. 8, we got his last letter. It was a check for me... for my birthday."

After the news of William's death, Stella Halloran never celebrated her birthday again, and instead spent the day in prayer. "It's Bill's day now," she said.

A solemn requiem Mass was celebrated for Ensign Halloran on Wednesday, Dec. 17, at St. Ignatius Church. More than 1,100 people attended.

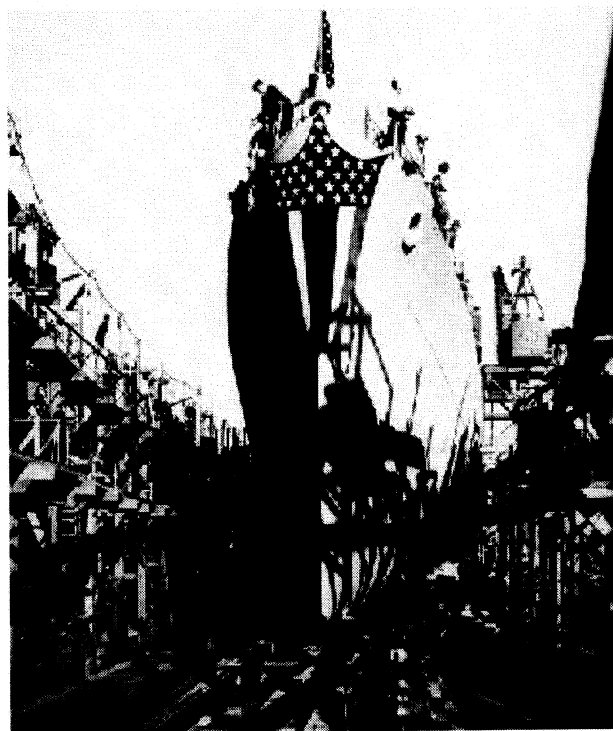
Stella, Cleveland's first gold star mother of the war, soon became a speaker on Cleveland's Public Square in support of the war effort.

"There would be three or four thousand people standing there at these downtown rallies," Larry recalled. "And she would be there next to a 6-foot picture of Bill."

In 1943, shortly after posthumously awarding William the Purple Heart in May, the Navy Department announced a destroyer escort was to be named in his honor.

At the time, West Park Council 2790 was in the midst of a war bond campaign to sponsor a fighter plane. Both John and Larry had joined Council 2790 shortly after their brother's death, following in his footsteps.

Deeply appreciative of the honor bestowed on one of its



members, the council redirected its efforts by sponsoring a massive war bond drive to raise \$5 million to fund the construction of the USS *Halloran*. More than 120 councils in Ohio joined in the effort, which raised well over \$6 million, including a \$1 million contribution from the Supreme Council.

The USS *Halloran* was christened by Stella Halloran at Mare Island, Calif., on Jan. 14, 1944. She was joined by her husband and their son, John, who was in the Navy at the time, while a contingent of California Knights "housed and treated them royally," according to Estelle.

"The night before, Admiral (Wilhelm) Friedell hosted them for dinner and Mom practiced and practiced hitting the bow of the ship with a champagne bottle," said Larry. "Well, the next day she did a great job."

Later that year, Larry's "dream came true" when he was assigned to serve aboard the USS *Halloran*. The ship sailed throughout the Pacific and survived kamikaze hits that killed four sailors and wounded 23 during the Battle of Okinawa in 1945.

"We were later blowing up mines in the Philippines when the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and then Nagasaki," said Larry. "That was the end of the war, and the *Halloran* was finally sold for steel."

FOR GOD AND COUNTRY

In the years that followed, Stella Halloran was recognized for her efforts during the war. In 1952, she received an invitation to the White House from first lady Bessie Truman.

"A three-cent stamp was on it with Mom's name in gold letters," recalled Larry. "She had been made a member of the

Lawrence Halloran, 92, is pictured at his home in Beverly Hills, Mich., with medals posthumously awarded to his brother William. Clockwise from top left, William was awarded the Purple Heart, World War II Victory Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal and American Defense Service Medal.

Society of Sponsors of the United States Navy and was invited to meet President Truman and his wife, Bessie."

Two other such visits to the White House followed during the Eisenhower administration.

William Halloran, meanwhile, continued to be honored in numerous ways by his country, local community and fellow Knights.

In 1945, the City of Cleveland began work on Halloran Park — its first memorial to a WWII hero. Located in the Hallorans' old neighborhood, the park was rededicated in 2000, following renovation.

Halloran House, a dormitory for engineers at Ohio State, was named in William's honor in 1963.

In 1991, on the 50th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, Larry and Estelle visited the USS *Arizona* Memorial, where their brother was still entombed on the battleship with nearly 1,000 fellow servicemen. The Hawaii State Council and Knights from Brother Joseph Dutton Council 7156 in Honolulu hosted the Halloran siblings and took part in a ceremony with them at the memorial.

"The admiral's boat took us there, which was a great privilege," said Past State Deputy Victor M. Abbatiello, who now serves as the state council historian. "We had a wreath-laying ceremony and then went inside the foyer area, where they saw his name engraved."

As Hawaiian Knights are planning events to honor Halloran in observance of the 75th anniversary of Pearl Harbor attack this month, so too are the members of West Park Council 2790 in Cleveland. Council 2790 will host a mid-December dinner for more than 120 Navy recruits.



"It is such an honor to be associated with a member of the *Arizona* who was also a member of our council," said Past Grand Knight Clement Nirosky Jr. "We want to honor Halloran's memory by recognizing these young men and women who are preparing to serve our country."

As for Larry Halloran, never a day goes by when he does not remember his brother William's sacrifice. A replica of the flag that flew above the *Arizona* hangs on the front of Larry's house today, and the battle flag of the *Halloran* is on display inside.

"Bill was a real guy who loved the world, and he was proud to be a Knight," said Larry. "He believed in God and country, and I've followed his philosophy my whole life." ♦

J.C. Sullivan, a U.S. Army veteran of the 2nd Armored Division, writes from Northfield Village, Ohio.

WILLIAM I. HALLORAN'S PATRIOTIC CREDO

On Aug. 15, 1940, the day after William I. Halloran joined the Navy Reserves, he wrote a letter to his boss at United Press, Ralph C. Teatsorth, explaining his decision. After William's death at Pearl Harbor, this patriotic statement was printed in papers nationwide.

I WANT you to know, Ralph, why I feel I should go. Some people will say I'm crazy perhaps but —

First of all you know I'm no militarist. I don't believe in war as a means of set-

tling international differences. It's not so much the horror of it but the fact that it's impractical, crazy and un-Christian. I no more believe that nations should settle their differences by war than I do that individuals should settle their disputes in back-alley brawls. I wish we could get along without such a tremendous armament program and devote the money to improving our civilization.

But when there are wolves and brigands about it is not well to go unarmed. So let us arm and learn how to

use these arms. That is where I, and thousands — even millions — of other young Americans, should fit into the picture. We who have benefitted should be ready to sacrifice.

I feel that I have been particularly fortunate: I have been able to work through college and am now employed at a fine, outstanding concern with a great future. Others have been less fortunate. They have less reason to give up a period of their life. So, therefore, the more fortunate ones such as myself should go. ♦