

Mickey Ganitch – A True Man of Honor

By Laurie Snyder



Twenty-eight ribbons were earned during 23 years of service to America and the world by Pearl Harbor survivor and Orinda Masonic Lodge chaplain, Mickey Ganitch. "Do unto others. Make a better world," he urges.

Photo Ohlen Alexander

A Master Mason since 1969, Mickey Ganitch has been a member of Orinda's Masonic Lodge since 1992, and currently serves as its chaplain. He is also one of the few Pearl Harbor survivors remaining in America.

An Ohio farm boy who grew up driving a Ford Model T, he recalls his parents giving away a significant portion of the corn, potatoes and fruit they grew to hungry relatives during

the Great Depression. He continues their goodness, helping with his church's pantry and serving Thanksgiving meals. He's been an usher for 46 years.

His hero's journey began before the Pearl attack even launched. "Germany was taking over so many countries. Japan was already expanding. I saw the handwriting on the wall," he said. He enlisted Jan. 16, 1941, joining the flagship of America's Pacific

Fleet – the USS Pennsylvania. "We always had an admiral aboard."

That ship would have been one of Japan's first targets – save for serendipity. Propeller issues had forced the ship into dry dock. "We weren't in our normal place," he said.

Ganitch saw it all from the crew's nest. While readying for morning football practice ahead of a big game against the USS Arizona, the Pennsylvania's guns thundered. Clad in everything but helmet and spikes, he clambered up his ladder. One bomb missed him by just 45 feet.

The Downes belched a half ton of torpedo tube onto his ship's forecandle before being damaged by the Cassin's rollover. The USS Shaw exploded. The Nevada tried to steam clear – until ordered to stop before she could be sunk to block the harbor. A friend wriggled from a porthole on the Oklahoma. ... continued on page B7

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The USS Cassin shown capsized against the Downes in front of the USS Pennsylvania, shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Visible at the center in the distance is the rolled Oklahoma with the Maryland beside her. The sunken and burning Arizona billows smoke out of view behind Ganitch's ship; the California is partially visible, extreme left.

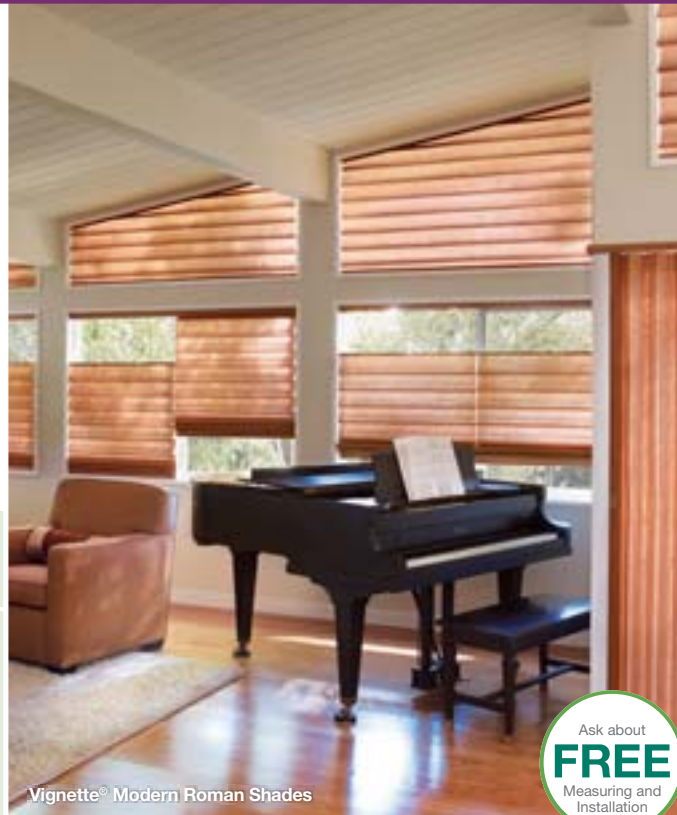
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