

In this picture, on the starboard side you see gun #1 in the back middle of the picture and as you go left you see #3, then #5, and #7 is out of view behind the men. Guns 2, 4, 6 and 8 were on the port side. Clarence is #102 in the back left of this picture - he was the gun captain on #5.

Clarence's good buddy #21 Vernon Zoller (front right) was the Division 6B gun captain on the port side. Clarence was gun captain with Division 6A on the starboard side on #5 gun. This picture was taken much later after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Later on during the war, after Clarence had left the Maryland, Vernon Zoller and the damage control crew were killed by a Kamikaze attack on the USS Maryland.

The Maryland was the first ship to leave Pearl Harbor after the Japanese attack and head back to Bremerton, Washington, for repairs in dry dock for several weeks. Even at Bremerton, the gun crews still manned the guns 4 on and 4 off and later 2 on and 8 off.



Japanese Mini Submarine HA-19 was on display October 1, 1943, on Main Street - in front of 417 Main (Cliff's Place in 2016). This mini sub was one of five that were used by the Japanese during the attack on Pearl Harbor. The US government brought this sub back to the mainland and put it on tour across the United States to help sell War Bonds...and Manning, Iowa, was on one of those stops!



Maryland February 9, 1942, after completion of her repairs in Puget Sound Navy Yard, Bremerton

Supporting roles

During the Battle of Midway, the Maryland played a supporting role. Like the other older battleships, the Maryland was not fast enough to accompany the aircraft carriers, so she operated with a backup fleet protecting the West Coast of the United States. The Maryland stood by on security, and waited for calls from other ships if they needed support, and in case the US carrier forces were defeated by Japan - the backup fleet would protect the West Coast from a Japanese attack.

After Midway, the Maryland was sent to San Francisco. She continued on training exercises with Battleship Division 2, Battleship Division 3, and Battleship Division 4 until August 1, 1942, when she returned to Pearl Harbor for repairs, her first time in the harbor since the Japanese attack.

The Maryland departed Pearl Harbor in early November with the Colorado and headed to the forward position at Fiji Islands where they patrolled against Japanese incursions. The two battleships acted as sentinels to guard against Japanese forces from threatening Australia.

In early 1943, with the success of the Solomon Islands campaign, the Allied forces went on the offensive. In February 1943, the Maryland and Colorado moved to New Hebrides, where they operated off the island of Efate. Next they moved to Espiritu Santo to guard against Japanese incursions at that location. In August the Maryland and Colorado patrolled the shores off Aore Island Harbor. Back to Pearl Harbor's shipyard, during a five-week overhaul, several 40 millimeter (1.6 in) and around eighty 20 millimeter anti-aircraft guns were installed on the top decks and foremast as protection against anticipated Japanese air raids in future operations.



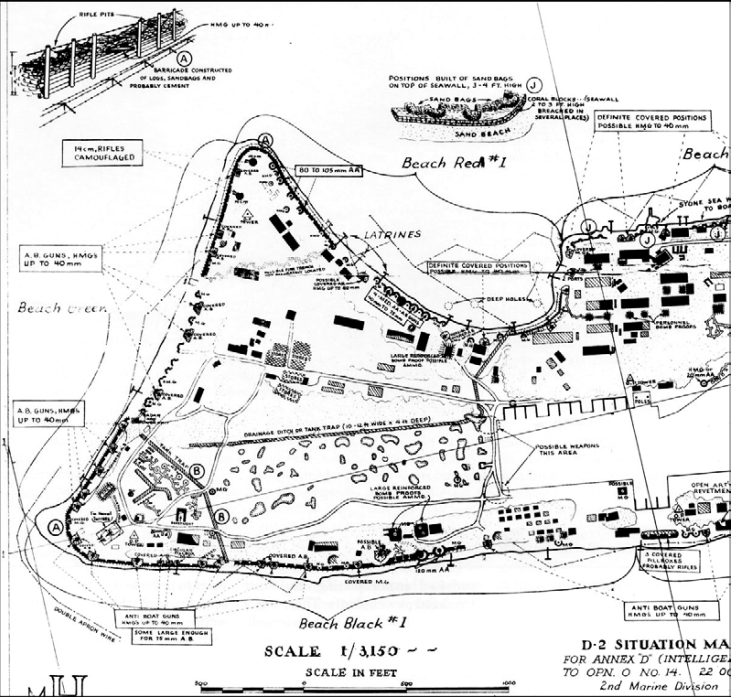
Australia on the bottom left, Kwajalein, and Tarawa top middle, and the Hawaiian Islands top right

Tarawa

On October 20, 1943, the Maryland headed for the South Pacific. The Maryland became flagship for Rear Admiral Harry W. Hill's V Amphibious Force and Southern Attack Force in the Gilbert Islands Invasion. Also aboard were Major General Julian C. Smith, commander of 2nd Marine Division; General "Howling Mad" Smith, commander of the Marine landing forces; and Colonel Evans Carlson, commander of Carlson's Raiders.

"General Smith, was a very little guy, I got a kick out of him - he was an ornery devil. He would come up and visit us on the gun deck. I asked him one day how's come he didn't stay with the officers. Smith told me, "hell, those 90-day wonders don't know anything, if I want some information I'll talk to you guys who know something." He was always visiting us and asking us questions."

The Maryland returned to the Efate Island staging area, where she joined a large task force preparing for an assault on Tarawa.



To the left: map that shows the southwest part of Betio Island

The battle of Tarawa began on November 20, 1943, in Maryland's first offensive action of the war. She opened fire at 5:00 a.m. and destroyed a shore battery on the southwestern point of Betio Island in the Tarawa Atoll.

At 6:00 a.m. she bombarded the shore to destroy Japanese defenses, ahead of the US landings. Maryland moved closer to shore to draw Japanese fire and locate their artillery emplacements. They raked Japanese gun emplacements, control stations, and pillboxes.

Clarence and the 5-inch gun crews maintained their general quarter's stations even though there really wasn't any threat of aerial attack by the Japanese on the US ships.

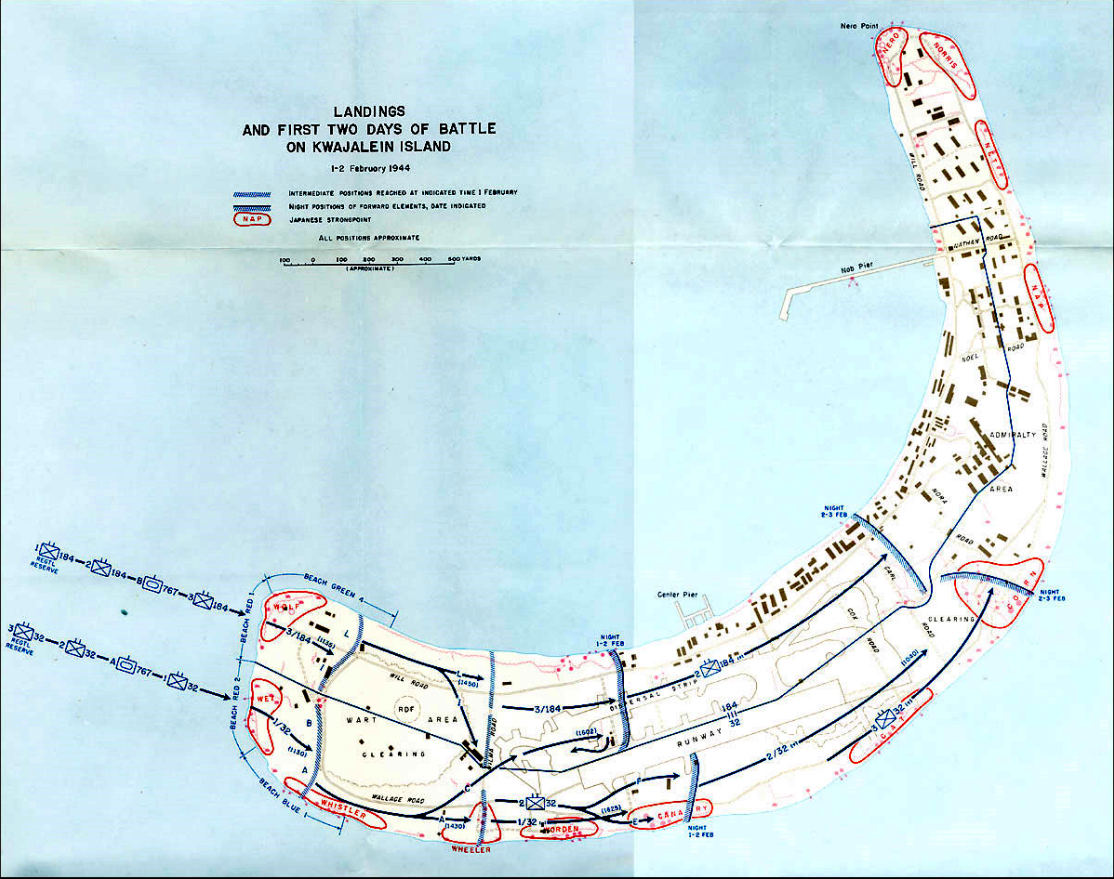
Clarence explained that the Japanese had captured a British Naval ship sometime previously and removed one of the "over and under eight-inch guns" from that ship and positioned it in the hills.

"The first time they fired at us the shell was short, then they adjusted their sites and the shell went over us. Finally # 1 and #2 turrets on the Maryland took aim and destroyed that gun in the hillside. Fortunately they didn't get a third shot or they probably would have hit us."

Clarence noted that while the US Naval and Marine Airforces had bombarded the island ahead of the invasion, they miscalculated the protection that the tunnels and trenches provided the Japanese, so when the first few waves of US Marines hit the beach they were met with heavy resistance.

At 9:00 a.m. Marine landing forces encountered heavy Japanese resistance and took heavy casualties from the emplaced Jap crossfire. The Maryland provided covering fire to eliminate several Japanese machine gun nests. Her scouting plane then began to cover the progress of the Marines' assault, with Maryland providing artillery support. Their plane was damaged and pilot wounded in this action.

After three days of covering the offensive on Betio Island, she moved to Apamama Island to guard Marine landings where only light resistance was met, and two prisoners were brought on board the Maryland. On December 7, Maryland left Apamama Island for Pearl Harbor for a brief stopover and then headed for San Francisco for repairs.



Battle of Kwajalein Atoll - map above shows the first two days of battle

The Maryland steamed from San Pedro, California, on January 13, 1944, and rendezvoused with Task Force 53 at Lahaina Roads for two days of loading ammunition, refueling, and other provisions. As part of the Northern Support Group of TF 35, on January 30, 1944, the Maryland moved to support landings on Roi Island, along with the ships Santa Fe, Biloxi, and the Indianapolis.

During the early morning hours of January 31, the ships began a bombardment of Kwajalein Atoll. The Maryland destroyed numerous Japanese stationary guns and pillboxes. In the course of the battle, the liners in the guns of Turret # 1 split from constant use which put it out of action for the rest of the day.

Clarence remembered there was one concrete pillbox that wasn't damaged. They couldn't see any activity in it but they decided to fire an armor piercing 16-inch shell at it from the Maryland, which destroyed it.

Clarence noted that lessons were learned from Tarawa so more armor-piercing shells were used at Kwajalein...one in particular destroyed a large block structure.

Clarence remembers another instance where they fired a gun from the turret and the shell hit a pile of Jap ammunition and it exploded in a huge ball of fire.

On February 1, the Maryland continued her attack on Japanese positions as the U.S. landing forces advanced. For the next two weeks the Maryland became the flagship for Admiral Connelly and they resupplied and refueled many of the smaller ships in the operation.

When the USS South Dakota joined the fleet, Clarence distinctly remembers the "boom, boom, boom," from its twin turrets with new range finders that could fire continuously. One time Clarence remembers "Tokyo Rose" talking on the Japanese radio station and she commented how the Americans must have a 5-inch automatic gun on one of their ships (referring to the USS South Dakota).

On February 15, 1944, the Maryland, along with a task unit of carriers and destroyers headed for the Bremerton Navy Yard, where Maryland's guns were replaced.

When they arrived in early March it was at this time when Clarence was transferred off the Maryland and assigned to the LCI. His rank when he left the Maryland was Boatswain Mate 1st Class.



LST 120 at sea

Clarence Pfundheller assigned to the Landing Craft Infantry November 21