

The U. S. Navy Band headquartered at Pearl Harbor, 1941. Most of these Navy musicians had trained at the Naval College of Music in Washington, D.C., and had previously been assigned to ships in the fleet.

Bill was originally assigned to the *USS Arizona* at Pearl Harbor, but was soon requested for service aboard the *USS West Virginia*. He and his horn were aboard Dec. 7 when nine torpedoes hit and sunk the *West Virginia*. He barely escaped and swam through burning oil to Ford Island, saving a drowning sailor along the way.

Three days later Bill asked a Navy diver to look for his cornet while doing a damage assessment for the ship.

The horn was located in Bill's storage locker, brought up, and given to him. Only the horn's German silver body remained intact, the rest having melted away by the intensity of the fire. Their bandmaster had been hospitalized with injuries from the attack. As assistant bandmaster, Bill worked to locate and reorganize band available members, rehearsing them and new replacements so the U.S. Naval Band could perform as soon as possible to improve morale on base and as fleet activities resumed at Pearl Harbor. Bill is seated front, right end.





USN Mu2c Bill Harten, soloist and singer, performs on his cornet in the Pearl Harbor U.S. Navy Band for the regular “Swinging in Hawaii” radio broadcasts from Pearl Harbor broadcast to the Pacific Theater. The music heard by sailors and soldiers alike lifted their morale and reminded them of what they were fighting for during almost five years of World War II.

Two Survivors of the 1941 Attack on Pearl Harbor



Bill Harten’s his amazing cornet, a survivor of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Its once shiny, German silver body became blackened and misshapen by the heat of battle, both attest to the intervention of Divine Providence in their behalf.

Two Honored Veterans of the 1941 Attack on Pearl Harbor: USN Mus2c **Bill Harten** and his **veteran cornet** brought up from the sunken *USS West Virginia*. This special horn made appearances with Bill on radio, television, and in area newspapers for over 53 years as he shared his WWII experiences and their amazing survival after both were sunk by torpedoes on the *USS West Virginia*.

Below, Bill is seated front right with the *West Virginia* Band at the famous 1941 “*Battle of the Bands*” at Pearl Harbor just prior to the 1941 attack on Dec. 7.





Pearl Harbor was a crossroads of the world during WWII. Civilians and sailors were coming and going everywhere all hours of the day and night. No one was certain of their future.



Bill arrived in Oct. 1941 and had countless “shore leave” trips home cancelled because “his services were needed” on “Paradise Rock” as he called it. He didn’t step a foot “ashore” or stateside until Feb. 1945.



The exposure to famous musicians afforded Bill many golden opportunities to learn and benefit from associating with them through his music duties. Hollywood composer, arranger and “big band” leader, **Claude Thornhill** (“Snowfall” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iTOLwVB8d6U>) invited Bill to tour with his band over Christmas since he needed both a singer and a cornet player for his current band.



Bill Harten's Musical Legacy: *The Man with The Horn* Copyright © 2011 Valerie Harten Briggs. All rights reserved. Used by permission.



'40s era dance swings into I.F.

Genie Newman remembers the dances during World War II. So does Glenn “Scotty” Scott, Glenn Miller, Duke Ellington. “Don’t Sit Under the Apple Tree.” “In the Mood.”

The dances were respites from long hours of work; a means of escaping the harsh reality of war; and, of course, an opportunity to mingle with the opposite sex.

“When I wasn’t on shift work we used to go dancing. We girls just all went to the USO (United Service Organizations) and there were always sailors to dance with us,” recalled Newman, of Idaho Falls, who was a member of the Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service, or WAVES, during the war.

The dances weren’t “date” events, like they are now, Scott said. The guys would go in a group and the women would show up with their female friends. Men and women often had a different dancing partner for each song.



MAGGIE HALL WALSH

MAINSTREET

“We just danced with the girls who were there,” Scott said from his Idaho Falls home. “But the way they dance nowadays is a lot different than the way we danced back then. In our day, two people had their arms around each other and they danced together. You’ve got to remember that 95 to 98 percent of us weren’t married.”



Bill Harten recalls a slightly different view of the 1940s dances. Instead of jitterbugging on the dance floor, he was in the bandstand providing the music. An accomplished musician (whose wife, Jeane also served during World War II and is a musician herself) Harten said the music he and his band provided for the troops did wonders for morale. His band traveled around the world doing USO shows with the likes of Bob Hope and Jack Benny. He had a ball.

“I hate to say this,” said Harten who narrowly survived Pearl Harbor, “but except for that experience in Hawaii, I really had some great times during the war. I was lucky.”

Newman, Scott and the Hartens will have an opportunity to relive the fun they had at USO dances during the war this Saturday night in Idaho Falls.

Wal-Mart and the Idaho Falls Elks Lodge will sponsor a 1940s dance Saturday from 7 p.m. to 1 a.m. at the Elks Lodge, 640 E. Elva.

The public is invited to attend and dance to the World War II-era music of The Tech Tones. The cost of the dance is \$12 for a couple and \$7 for individuals.

Best of all, all proceeds from the dance will be donated to the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C.



The Royal Hawaiian Hotel “Peacock Room” had a lovely stage and ballroom and hosted celebrities as well as the USN Band to entertain officers and sailors home on leave. As Assistant Band Master part of Bill’s duties were to rehearse the band and train incoming new musicians in their cinderblock rehearsal hall some blocks away to blend in with the desired sound. At times these musicians played for formal dances and military balls, other times they would play like the Big Bands for fast-paced dancing.

Arrangements were difficult to come by in Hawaii since ASCAP was on strike during most of the war, new recordings were being made mostly for broadcast purposes, but not for sale or distribution. Bill’s marvelous record collection was extremely helpful to help him analyze the sound and assign the various instruments to create it. Other events may call for a full military band sound and it was the Director and his Assistant who knew how to achieve that. In addition the Navy produced a weekly radio show to broadcast news and music to the troops in the Pacific fleet across the Pacific ocean. Bill was a star singer and performer on that broadcast nearly every week. The family has a few recordings of him singing and playing that survived the war years.



MUSIC TO CALM THE SAVAGE BEAST: 1943

Royal Hawaiian Navy Band plays for Valentine's Day dance, but notice who's wearing white: Bill, who will leave after the dance for Shore Patrol duty, trading his horn for a military revolver to help keep the peace. Dances were held during daylight hours to obey enforced "Lights Out" after dark. Behind closed curtains and doors the partying usually continued which required a roaming street and shore patrol presence to keep the peace.

The relaxed group below is the USN "Breakers Band" who look like they could get a little rowdy at times in their R&R moments. The band usually lived together in a larger barracks or apartment complex.

Bill was entrusted with keeping the peace, and his

bandmates under control, whatever it took. They respected him and usually he had no real problems switching between his duties directing behavior and directing the band. Music helped with the stress of the constant unknowns of wartime.



Royal Hawaiian Hotel at Waikiki, Honolulu, Hawaii



Marine Corps US Navy Band early in 1945 in Oahu, Hawaii at the “Breakers” Club (note the backdrop) of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel on Waikiki Beach. The hotel served as the headquarters for R&R for the Pacific Submarine Fleet. Bill is 3rd from the right on the back row.



Bill was Assistant Bandmaster and vocalist of the “SepSenders” US Navy Band in 1945 in Pensacola, Florida. Dances and music helped ease sailors and pilots return to civilian life as the war wound down. He plays lead trumpet at left. He and his wife Jeane were finally able to get leave to see each other more often. Finally they were both transferred to Jacksonville, Jeane was able to leave the Navy after their daughter was born mid 1946.



Bill used his G.I. Bill to help fund his education and he graduated in Business from Idaho State College in Pocatello. He became a businessman, and band leader, shown here in 1949 at Pocatello's *30 Club*. Often his wife, Jeane, would play piano with Bill's dance band which she did for several years in Pocatello.



Above: Kenny Harten (brother), Bill Harten, (unknown) and George Hart were known as the Pocatello Trumpet Trio for many years. On patriotic holidays they would stand at three spots and bridges along the Portneuf River and play special musical numbers and usually “Taps,” and some-times “Echo Taps.” It mesmerized those who heard the melody float through the air. They also played in the symphony.

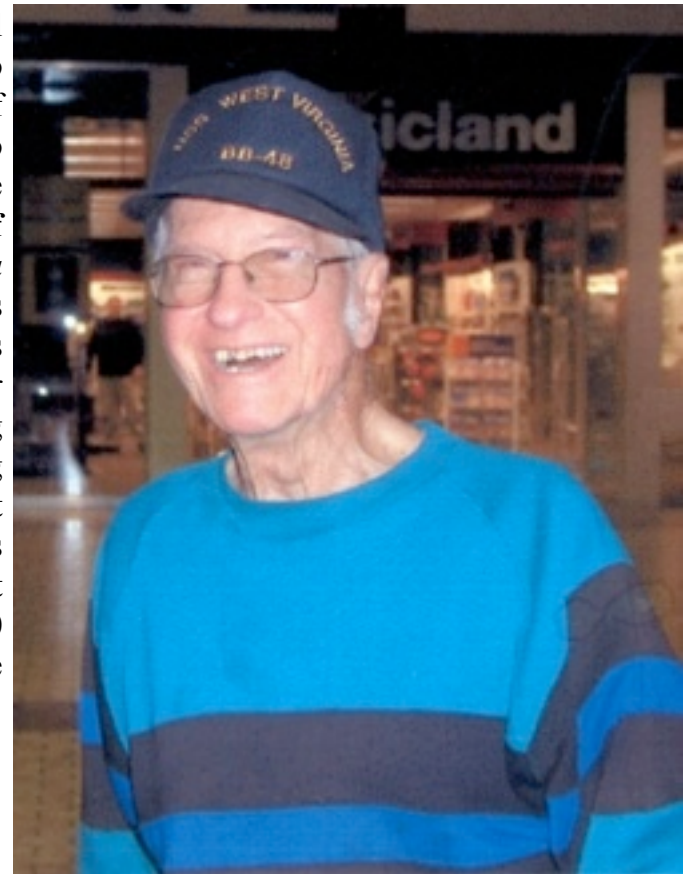
Right: After moving to Idaho Falls in 1953 Bill performed with a popular 3-man combo composed of himself on trumpet, Art Cooper on organ, and Sheriff Wayne Shivers on clarinet. They had a popular TV show called “Stump the Organist” on KID-TV Channel 3 for several years where audience members could call in and suggest a title. Between the three professional musicians, they could usually come up with the melody and play it. If not, the audience member won a prize. This talented trio also played for weekly dances at the local Elks Club where everyone enjoyed dining and dancing with great music. Bill also traveled to other engagements in other cities, playing there with other professional musicians he enjoyed working with.

Bill always remembered those who had served our country and was on hand at least weekly to play “Taps” for veterans’ funerals in the Idaho Falls area sometimes more than two in one day. He was there rain or snow, ready to provide the honors with live trumpet music until he retired at the age of 80. He received numerous honors and recognition for his service over the years at the 50th Commemoration of the Attack on Pearl Harbor. The family has a variety of TV and news interviews on file for Bill.





In 2001 our family gathered in Pearl Harbor-related T-shirts Valerie created, to accompany Bill to the local premier of “Pearl Harbor,” to honor and pay tribute to his service and sacrifice, especially on the **50th Commemoration of that Day of Infamy**. Bill, in his *U.S.S. West Virginia* (BB-48 = Battleship 48) cap with his “Survivor of Pearl Harbor” license plate, as usual, gathered a crowd and a news reporter and cameraman. He was on the evening news briefly telling his story and telling how he actually appreciated seeing what was going on topside during the attack, as portrayed in the movie, because on that horrific day he was trapped in his ship 30 feet below deck and below the water line and spent that ~~entire time being~~ torpedoes,



knocked around, and trying to find a hatch that wasn’t jammed from which he could escape. He had missed all the aerial bombing portrayed in the movie, yet reeled from its effects that nearly took his life. Also in tribute that year Hasbro created a Pearl Harbor GI Joe series and one of the head sculpts had a striking resemblance to Bill so the creator of that figure autographed one for him, and the Salt Lake GI Joe Collectors’ Club presented Bill with it that summer. Bill did so many television interviews that he was more celebrity than usual and drew attention in the mall with his favorite cap. 70 years later in 2011, he’ll be with us in memory as we thank God for sending him and others like him to help secure our freedoms.

The Man with The Horn:

Bill earned his cornet in high school in the middle of the Great Depression to enable him to support himself and contribute to his mother's care. His horn was part of his education about life and the pursuit of happiness and independence, while bringing joy to others through its golden tones that he played so well. It gave him a positive sense of who he was. This cornet went with him when he was initially assigned to the US Naval Band aboard the *USS Arizona* at Pearl Harbor in Oct. 1941. He cared for it like for a family member, cleaning and securing it each night in his footlocker in their rehearsal and living quarters aboard the *USS West Virginia*, as he did on December 6, 1941. Just a couple of weeks later he was transferred to fill the need for a first cornetist on the *USS West Virginia*, a simple reassignment that would save Bill's life.

After the attack when salvage divers were sent into the harbor to check the damage to the *West Virginia*, Bill requested that a friend who was diving see if the horn had survived in its case in their compartment's locker. The horn was found exactly where it was secured, but all its shiny and precious silver and brass parts had melted away, leaving only the bell and stem, charred, pitted, and misshapen. Bill's horn and companion of the past five years had miraculously survived nine torpedo blasts, and so had he. He knew that God had watched over and protected him during the attack and enabled him to escape the burning fire aboard ship and swim through the burning oil floating on the harbor waters, and rescue another nearly-expired sailor. Bill knew he would never play a note again with that horn, nor make "Taps" sound across a sacred burial place to honor one who gave the last full measure of devotion.

However, Bill kept that horn near and dear to him all his life, respecting what it represented and using it to teach others and to visually impress upon them the price and sacrifice of war. He used his own military pay to purchase another suitable cornet as quickly as was possible so he could regroup with his band and make the music he loved to bring joy to those who were suffering all around him.

Three years and many music assignments and travels would pass before he received an unexpected check reimbursing him the \$350.00 for the loss of his precious instrument. Uncle Sam knew how much it meant to a musician, specially trained to give military service with that very instrument, and the pain and suffering caused when it was tragically lost in service to our country.



(Photo by Robert Bower, *Post Register Newspaper*, Dec. 9, 2001)



Bill Harten plays Taps for the 50th Commemoration of the Attack on Pearl Harbor, Dec. 7, 1991 with the Naval Reserve Unit in Idaho Falls, ID. (Photo by Randy Hayes, *Post Register Newspaper*, Dec. 9, 2001)

Who
will play
'TAPS'
for
them
now?

'Taps' now prerecorded

June 6, 2000 just after Bill Harten retired
By MAGGIE HALL WALSH
Post Register

When Bonneville County veterans gather at cemeteries throughout the area Monday to pay tribute to their fallen comrades, it will just take one finger to sound "Taps" — the one used to hit the play button on the tape recorder.

For months, the veterans team responsible for military funerals has had to make do with canned music. Their numbers are dwindling, and they've run out of members able to sound the emotional tune on a bugle.

"We put the tape recorder behind the tombstone and try to make like it's real, but it's not," said Wayne Schneider, an American Legion member and head of the Bonneville County Memorial Team. "It adds a lot when you have a real bugler."

For years, the team relied on the musical talent of one of its members at the 90 or so graveside tributes performed each year, but he is at home caring for his ailing wife and isn't able to make the burials anymore. Periodically, the team is assisted by high school musicians, but with so many burials, members say it's hard to get a commitment. They usually resort to the tape recorder.

Playing for the services requires a lot of dedication, said James Greenhalgh, American Legion commander. "Nobody on the team gets paid. They do it because these are their comrades. It's their service," he said.

But team members agree that at a military burial, which includes the folding and presentation of the American flag and a 21-gun salute, a live rendition of "Taps" is one of the most touching moments.

"It makes it good for the family," said Dan [name obscured], the American Legion chaplain. "It's the final thing. It really brings tears."

* referring to veteran Bill Harten





Before his passing in 2004, Bill recounted the recovery of his cornet: “Three days after the attack a deep-sea diver friend of mine was on salvage duty and dived down to check the damage to the *West Virginia*. I asked him to look for our instruments if he was able to get near the band compartment. When he finally surfaced, he brought up what was left of my trumpet, a much-loved companion of many years. The pure German silver stem and bell were charred and blackened, the upper stem having curled in a half circle from the heat. The solder had melted in the heat causing the brass mouthpiece, valves and fittings to fall off.

“Sixty years later, I treasure this battle-scarred relic of history, another survivor of the attack on Pearl Harbor, and an evidence of miracles in my life. I have it always in view, mounted in a clear case, to remind me that the Lord was with me that day.”



PHOTO CREDITS: U.S. Navy photos of Bill in uniform or in Navy Bands, on pages 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 are from Bill Harten’s own private collection of publicity photos given to him by the Navy.

PHOTO CREDITS: Bill and others on pages 1-4, 14, 15, 16, and 17:

pp. 1-4 photos are from the Pocatello High School *Pocatellian Yearbook*, 1940.

pg. 6 photo is a Times-Herald Photo, Jan. 21, 1941.

pg. 15 photo of the Club 30 Band is from the *Pocatello Tribune*, Pocatello, ID

pg. 16 sources unknown

pg. 17 photos are by Valerie Harten Briggs, Idaho Falls, ID

pg. 18 photo by Robert Bower, *Post Register Newspaper*, Idaho Falls, ID, Dec. 9, 2001

pg. 19 and 21 photos of Bill by Randy Hayes, *Post Register Newspaper*, Idaho Falls, ID, Dec. 8, 1991

pg. 21 closeup photo of Bill holding his German silver cornet horn as it was after surviving the attack on Pearl Harbor, photo by Lucinda B. Willits, *Idaho Falls Free Press*, Nov. 11-18, 1998

The HORN
with the Man



Both
SURVIVORS
and
VETERANS
of
PEARL HARBOR
December 7, 1941

