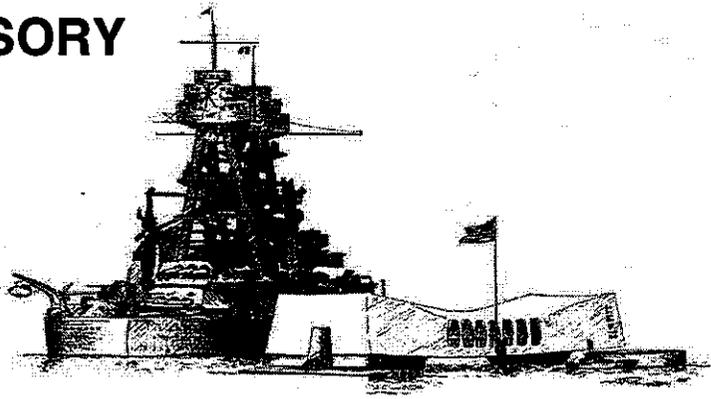


# NAVY MEDIA ADVISORY

NAVY REGION HAWAII  
PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE  
517 RUSSELL AVE., SUITE 110  
PEARL HARBOR, HI 96860

Tel: (808) 473-2888  
Fax: (808) 473-2876  
www.hawaii.navy.mil



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**July 7, 2003**

**POC: LCDR Jane Campbell**

**RELEASE #033-03**

## **CDR ADOLPH CZERWENKA BURIAL IN THE WATERS OF PEARL HARBOR**

**Ford Island, HI** – The Czerwenka family and the United States Navy will celebrate the life and honor the passing of a their Father, Grandfather, Husband and Pearl Harbor Survivor on Tuesday, July 8th at 10:00 a.m. The funeral will be held at the USS Utah Memorial, ultimately ending with his ashes being scattered over the waters of Pearl Harbor.

Adolph “Ski” Czerwenka was born in Chicago Illinois in September 1919. He attended UCLA, but could not afford to continue college and decided to join the Navy in 1939. Ski was a 22-year-old radioman third class, stationed aboard the battleship USS West Virginia, the “Wee Vee” during the Pearl Harbor attack on Dec. 7, 1941.

He was in the petty officers’ washroom that morning. He was stark naked, laundering uniforms due to the heat. Almost immediately, a torpedo hit the ship and general quarters sounded. He rushed to his battle station in the transmitter room – no shoes on, nothing. The radiomen tried to get the communications going and the radar turned on. The ship began listing to port, and the lights went out -- all in less than 30 minutes. The order came to abandon ship. During the evacuation, Ski helped a couple of injured engineers to safety.

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*Media representatives who would like to attend the ceremony should contact Navy Region Hawaii Public Affairs Office at 473-2888. Media representatives will be met at the Bowfin Parking lot – adjacent to the Arizona Memorial Visitors’ Center at 9:00 a.m. to be escorted to the USS Utah Memorial for the ceremony.*

USS Arizona blew up just as Czerwenka got on deck. Oil and fire were everywhere in Pearl Harbor. He just sort of slid down the port deck and into the water. An empty motor launch drifted by, and Ski climbed in and got the engine going. He picked up a couple of guys, a coxswain and an engineer. They took the helm and the engine. The three Sailors began fishing survivors from the water. They took them ashore, and went back for more time and time again.

When Czerwenka got to the Pearl Harbor receiving station later in the day, civilian women were there making up bandages. That's when he realized he was almost naked, and had been naked most of the day. The one thing that impressed him most about the whole incredible chain of events was that in the midst of all that surprise and confusion and destruction, everybody reacted by doing their job, the job they had been trained to do.

As with many members of "the Greatest Generation" and Pearl Harbor Survivors in particular, Czerwenka spoke humbly of the experience. In a 1999 *Newsweek* article he stated: "...I didn't have time to be afraid. There was too much to be done."

Adolph Czerwenka went on to spend a total of 31 ½ years of his life serving in the United States Navy, earning a commission in March of 1944. He retired as a Commander in July 1971 after serving around the world, onboard numerous ships and at a variety of shore stations.

Cmdr. Adolph "Ski" Czerwenka died on September 14, 2002. His family has traveled to Hawaii to fulfill his request to return to Pearl Harbor to be buried with his shipmates.

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