

# Issaquah resident's book commemorates Pearl Harbor anniversary

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By Warren Kagarise



Jerry Kaufman sits at his work desk, on which is spread out an early proof of his book, 'Renewal at The Place of Black Tears,' and the Nikon D300 plus 18-200mm lens with which he shot the images at the USS Arizona Memorial. By Greg Farrar

The shimmering layer on the crystalline water is called “black tears” — a relic and a reminder from the attack on the USS Arizona at Pearl Harbor.

The shipwreck leaks more than a quart of oil each day and stains the harbor near the blinding white memorial to the sailors entombed below.

The interplay between oil and water intrigued Jerry Kaufman. The photographer and Issaquah Highlands resident captured images from the USS Arizona Memorial for the soon-to-be-published book “Renewal at The Place of Black Tears” — a glimpse at the oil seeping from the shipwreck.

“How beauty can emerge even from the deepest tragedies is quite vivid there,” he said.

The attack on the USS Arizona left 1,177 sailors dead. The shipwreck is the resting place for 1,102 sailors. Dec. 7 marks 70 years since the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor.

The attack left more than 2,400 Americans dead and almost another 1,300 wounded. The day after the attack, the United States declared war on Japan and entered World War II

The oil droplets come from about 500,000 gallons of fuel oil trapped inside the deteriorating hulk. The book includes about 30 images.

“Depending on the light and wind and current conditions, you have this kaleidoscope of images,” he said. “It’s just constantly changing. It’s changing moment by moment.”

The ever-changing scene offered Kaufman a rich opportunity.

“People see all kinds of things in these images when they look at them,” he said. “Some of them will have ghostlike figures of faces or body parts, different animals and birds.”

The book is due to be sold at the USS Arizona Memorial. Kaufman said he hopes to offer “Renewal at The Place of Black Tears” at local bookstores early next year.

The initial idea for the photos came after Kaufman traveled to Hawaii not long after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The fearful mood provided a backdrop similar to the tense days after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

“Here I am with all of this stuff going on, and I go out to the memorial,” he said.

The memorial sits beside the shipwreck and is reached by boat. The overcast sky started to sprinkle rain as Kaufman surveyed the scene.

“It hit these sheens of the oil droplets that are still coming up, at that time 60 years later,” he said. “I happened to just be intrigued with those.”

Kaufman returned to Pearl Harbor in 2009 to start documenting the oil leaking from the shipwreck. “It started out as just a photo shoot to capture some interesting images and it kind of evolved into this story,” he said.

Kaufman made several trips to the memorial and, through the process, learned the rhythms of remembrance ceremonies and tourist treks.

“You see children and you see grandchildren of people that visit this place as a sacred place,” Kaufman said. The project also served as a connection to World War II. Kaufman’s photojournalist father “turned 20 on the beaches of Normandy” and long hoped to return.

“Here we are on this beach over in Normandy, and I come to the realization that the trajectory of his entire life changed on that beach — but not only his life, but future generations, my generation and now my kids,” he said. “It touched everybody on the face of the planet.”