

PHC JOHN PAUL ZELENOCK, USN(RET)

1922 - 2006

PHC John Paul Zelenock, an honorary member of the Blue Angels, dies at age 83.

John Zelenock was only 19 when Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese on December 7, 1941. He had been in the Navy less than a year but on that day over 65 years ago, his introduction to combat photography was no practice drill. What he saw and photographed from the roof of the Administration Building on Ford Island was real. He witnessed the sinking of the USS Arizona and shot pictures later used in Life magazine.

This was history in the making.

Twenty-two years of active service followed the days at Pearl Harbor and a camera was John Zelenock's constant companion. While attached to the Joint Intelligence in the Pacific area under Admiral Chester Nimitz, he made two war patrols on USS Sun Fish submarine reconnaissance.

He relied on his underwater experience later when he contributed to the design of a Mark IV periscope camera used to shoot overlapping photographs for making mosaic strip maps of enemy positions in the Pacific. As a combat photographer, he landed with the Second Marine Division on Tarawa, and hit the beach at Guam with the 77th Army Infantry.

Later, sea duty included a tour aboard the USS Sicily (CVE118) in 1947, and duty on the USS Wasp (CVA18) during the Korean Conflict.

Between the war years, Mr. Zelenock did a tour of instructor duty at Naval Schools of Photography in Pensacola and attended the Armed Forces Information School at Fort Slocum, NY in 1952. As photo-navigator with the Navy's Heavy Photo Squadron (VCP61), he spent 18 months at Guam. He also served with the Navy's Heavy Photo Squadron (VCP63) and in 1950 was assistant to Cdr. Zeke Cormier, USN (Ret.) former leader of the Blue Angels and Technical Director on the movie "The Blue Angels." Mr. Zelenock shot all the aerial photography for the movie.

In 1961, PHC Zelenock returned as an instructor to the Photo School in Pensacola. This last tour ended in 1963 when he retired as a Chief Photographers Mate.

Mr. Zelenock and his wife, the former Irene Barbarish of Edwardsville, PA, settled in Florida where they both obtained licenses as real estate brokers. But John had spent too much time with camera equipment to stay away from photography. They moved to the Washington area and John accepted employment as a color expert at the Naval Ordnance Station (NOS) Photo Lab in 1965. He was made Public Affairs Officer on October 23, 1967.

During the 11 1/2 years John served as PAO, he conducted literally hundreds of tours for a wide-ranging variety of dignitaries and prestigious groups for both government and civic organizations. He provided NOS and tenant command activities with outstanding professional photographic, audio and public affairs support, which included a long list of change of commands, numerous award ceremonies, various balls, countless retirement ceremonies and parties. Past Naval Relief Drives benefited significantly from his flair for theatrics. He enhanced the NOS reputation in its relations with the surrounding communities, and it was through his initiative and foresight that the Veterans Liaison Committee was organized. The organization of this Committee significantly improved the Station's ability to coordinate various programs with the many veteran groups throughout the local area.

John devoted many extra hours of his time supporting the public affairs effort for the station. His total dedication has been well recognized over the years by innumerable acknowledgments, awards and commendations from various important individuals, groups and civic organizations.

John P. Zelenock retired in March after more than 35 years of government service. Twenty-two of those years were spent on active duty in the U.S. Navy.

John was a member of the "Pearl Harbor Survivors," Submarine Veterans World War II, US Submarines Veterans, Inc., Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 706, Fleet Reserve Association Branch 22, and an honorary member of the US Navy's Flight Demonstration Team, "Blue Angels" since 1956.