

# From Pearl Harbor to Calvary

**“I would give anything to retract my actions at Pearl Harbor on December 7th 1941, but it is impossible,” said Mitsuo Fuchida**, former General Commander of the Japanese air squadron that destroyed most of the American Pacific Fleet peacefully anchored in Honolulu, Hawaii. “Instead, I now work at striking a death blow to the basic hatred which infests the human heart and causes such tragedies. And that hatred cannot be uprooted without assistance from Jesus Christ.”

With the release of a new Pearl Harbor movie in June 2001, interest in this tragic WW II story of 3,077 U.S. Naval Personnel killed or missing and 876 wounded, plus 226 Army killed and 39 wounded as well as the loss of many Navy battleships has increased and the movie has become a frequent subject of conversation.

However, a story the Pearl Harbor movie did not tell is how Commander Mitsuo Fuchida, who led the devastating 360 plane raid on Honolulu, eventually became a Christian missionary evangelist traveling across Japan, the Orient and even in the U.S.A. preaching the Gospel. And, if this were not amazing enough, it was an American Airman named Jack DeShazer who first presented the Gospel to Commander Fuchida.

## **Here’s how it happened:**

Jack DeShazer, who enlisted in the U.S. Air Force with a personal “vendetta” of hatred for Commander Fuchida, participated in Jimmy Doolittle’s secret bombing raid over Tokyo on April 18th 1942. However, the plane DeShazer was in ran out of fuel, landed in Japanese occupied China, and he became a prisoner of war for 40 months. (34 of those in solitary confinement)

Close to death as a result of starvation and torture, he begged his captors for a Bible. As a result of intense study on the Word and God’s grace, on June 8th, 1944 DeShazer read Romans 10:9 and confessed the Lord Jesus as his Savior. “I suddenly discovered God had given me new spiritual eyes,” DeShazer said. “I found my bitter hatred for them (Japanese officials and guards) changed to a loving pity.” He realized that his captors knew nothing about the Savior and that if Christ is not in a heart it is natural to be cruel. Also, God revealed to him how to endure suffering by looking at Jesus on the Cross. At last, freedom came in 1945 when parachutists invaded and released all prisoners.

After a long recovery, DeShazer graduated from a Christian college and went to Japan as a missionary to obey Jesus’ clear command to “Go, teach those who held you prisoner the way of salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ!”

Mitsuo Fuchida stepped off a train one day in Tokyo’s Shibuya Station and an American handed him a pamphlet entitled, “I was a prisoner of Japan.” Impressed with the peace of salvation DeShazer wrote about, the desperately unhappy Fuchida purchased a Bible and began to study God’s Word.

“I read in Luke 23:34 the prayer of Jesus at His death. ‘Father, forgive them; for they don’t know what they are doing.’” said Fuchida. “I was impressed that I was certainly one of those for whom He had prayed. The many men I had killed (at Pearl Harbor) had been slaughtered in the name of patriotism, for I did not understand the love, which Christ wishes to implant within every heart. I requested Him to forgive my sins and change me from a bitter, disillusioned ex-pilot into a balanced Christian with purpose in living.”

Mitsuo Fuchida passed away in 1967 having spent the last 25 years of his life as an “ambassador of peace,” sharing the gospel message of forgiveness through Christ. His and DeShazer’s story shows the power of the living God to change even a person of war into a person of peace, and reveals Christianity or any faith in Christ, as a universal religion which transcends any cultural barriers or differences, making even former enemies into friends and brothers or sisters in their common faith.

He (Jesus) is the only one powerful enough to change my life and inspire it with His thoughts,” said

Fuchida. "He is the only hope for this troubled world."

Source: Gordon W. Prange, Donald Goldstein, and Katherine Dillion, *God's Samurai: Lead Pilot At Pearl Harbor*, Brssey's Publishing, Washington, 1990.