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Electrician's Mate 3rd Class Charles Brown of Arcola was killed in action while serving on the USS West Virginia during the Japanese Navy's attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941 during World War II. Now that his remains have been identified, a graveside service with Navy funeral honors will be at 10 a.m. Saturday at Arcola Township Cemetery. In this photo made available by the U.S. Navy, a small boat rescues a seaman from the West Virginia burning in the foreground after the attack.

HOME AT LAST

Sailor killed at Pearl Harbor to be buried in Arcola

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ARCOLA — Eight-two years after his death at Pearl Harbor, U.S. Navy sailor Charles Darling Brown is set to be laid to rest on Saturday in his hometown.

The remains of the 22-year-old electrician's mate third class had long been buried at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii among other unknown military casualties of the Imperial Japanese Navy's attack on Dec. 7, 1941, which drew the United States into World War II.

In 2017, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) exhumed 35 unknowns and began using modern forensic science, including DNA analysis, to try to identify them.

Brown was subsequently identified. They also identified his USS West Virginia shipmate, Navy Machinist's Mate 1st Class Keith Tipsword, 27, of Effingham County, who was buried on Nov. 15 in rural Beecher City.

"Being able to recover and identify the remains of sailors aid is closure for the families and it is especially important to the Navy to honor these sailors who



Brown

paid the ultimate sacrifice and gave their lives for our country," said Navy Casualty Director Capt. Jeff Draude in a news release. His office is responsible for returning POW/MIA sailors to their families.

Now, Brown is scheduled to be buried at 10 a.m. Saturday with Navy funeral honors among the graves of his family at Arcola Township Cemetery, located at 950 E. County Road 200N. This burial site is located on the southeast side of Arcola, along Interstate 57.

Local historian Carolyn Cloyd reported in a recent article about Brown and his family history that the then 19-year-old, who was the youngest son in a family of 13 children, enlisted in the Navy on May 13, 1938. His brother, Harry, also joined the Navy during this timeframe.

Cloyd reported two of Brown's nieces, Eloise Elder Quinley and Alyson Wright Davis, in past interviews recalled the family story that the boys' father had encour-

aged Harry to "go with Charles to keep an eye on him." The two brothers were subsequently both assigned to the West Virginia.

The two Arcola men were still serving with each other when their battleship was caught up in the sneak attack on the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor. The West Virginia was hit by at least seven torpedoes and two bombs, ultimately sinking despite the crew's efforts to keep the burning ship afloat.

"It is not known exactly what happened to Charles Brown that morning. Harry was topside while Charles was still below decks getting dressed when the attack began," Cloyd wrote. "Harry was injured, but survived and Charles was missing."

Cloyd reported that Brown's parents, James and Lillie Brown, back in Arcola received a first Navy telegram about a week later saying he had been lost in action, followed by a second telegram within a few more days saying he had survived.

After two months passed with no updates, Brown's parents began inquiring with the Navy. They subsequently received a Navy letter dated Feb.

27, 1942 saying Brown had died in the attack and been misidentified as a survivor due the chaos surrounding so many dead and wounded sailors.

"Eloise Quinley and Alyson Davis said their mothers didn't talk much about what happened to their brother Charles. Their generation tended to be stoic, but it was clear it hit them hard," Cloyd wrote. "The loss of Charles had devastated the Brown family."

During the Mattoon City Council meeting Tuesday night, the subject of this sailor lost at Pearl Harbor finally being found and returned home was brought

Please see **SAILOR**, Page A2

Sailor

From A1

up by council member Dave Cox.

Cox noted that Brown still has family in the area, including in Charleston and Mattoon, and that his upcoming burial service has gotten a lot of interest

from community members wanting to honor his sacrifice.

"When we say we never forget, it's not just words, it's true," Cox said. "I

wanted to point that out and send good wishes to the family."

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