

*Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024*

**Statement on the Death of Louis A. Conter**

*April 2, 2024*

This week, America lost a hero.

On December 7, 1941, Lou Conter was serving on the U.S.S. *Arizona*, stationed on Battleship Row at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. His job was quartermaster, assisting with the battleship's navigation. He had just turned 20 years old.

When Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor began that morning, the *Arizona* was hit by several armor-piercing bombs. One hit the ship's magazine, where more than a million pounds of gunpowder were stored. The battleship exploded.

Lou, miraculously, was uninjured. He quickly got to work helping survivors, and he spent the next several days helping to put out fires and recover bodies. In the end, 1,177 officers and crewmen of the U.S.S. *Arizona* were killed. Fewer than 100 of the people on board that day survived.

Lou Conter's service to his country didn't end there. He became a naval pilot, flying hundreds of combat missions in World War II and dozens in the Korean war. He also became the Navy's very first SERE officer, training airmen in critical skills—survive, evade, resist, and escape—in case they were shot down or captured. By the time he retired from the military, he had earned the rank of lieutenant commander. And he never forgot all the brave men he served with on board the *Arizona*. Until he was nearly 100 years old, he attended annual memorial services at Pearl Harbor.

When Lou passed away on Monday at the age of 102, America said farewell to the last known survivor of the U.S.S. *Arizona*.

The women and men who serve in the U.S. Armed Forces are patriots in the highest sense. Like Lou, they risk their own safety for the safety of their fellow Americans. Like Lou, they bravely undertake dangerous missions to defend our Nation's freedom and future. Like Lou, they believe deeply in their duty to their country and their fellow servicemembers and will go to the ends of the earth to fulfill that duty. Our Nation owes them all a debt of gratitude we can never repay.

Today our hearts are with Lou Conter's family and friends and all those he served with over the years, including his shipmates on the U.S.S. *Arizona*. May God bless and keep them.

*Categories:* Statements by the President : Louis A. Conter, death.

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