

Navajo CODE Talkers

During World War II, more than 400 Navajo soldiers served as "code talkers." They proved that words are sometimes the best weapon.

by Suzanne McCabe



Some "code talkers" were as young as 15.

Shortly before dawn on Sunday, December 7, 1941, Japanese bomber planes approached the Hawaiian island of Oahu. Most of the American soldiers and sailors stationed there were still asleep.

For the next two hours, bombs rained down on the military complex, destroying more than 300 U.S. planes on the ground. Bombs and torpedoes destroyed three huge battleships and damaged many smaller ships.

The attack, which killed 2,388 people and wounded about 2,000, stunned the U.S. Within 24 hours, President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked Congress to declare war on Japan. A few days later, Japan's allies—Germany and Italy—declared war on the U.S.

Now that the U.S. was directly involved in World War II, a wave of patriotism swept over the country. Young men rushed to enlist.

When word of the crisis reached the Navajo reservation—a 16-million-acre expanse that includes