

## The Day After Pearl Harbor

radio interviews

The Library of Congress is the research library of the United States Congress. It is also the national library of the United States. It has more than 144 million items—not only books, but also the world’s largest collection of legal materials, films, maps, sheet music, and sound recordings. This radio interview transcript offers a glimpse of some ordinary Americans on December 8, 1941.

1 The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. After two tense  
2 years spent watching the war overseas, “the day that will live in infamy”  
3 thrust the United States into World War II overnight. The day after the  
4 attack, the Library of Congress sent archivists around the country to record  
5 the thoughts and fears of a citizenry newly at war. Stored at the Library  
6 of Congress for nearly sixty years, these interviews—conducted on 9th  
7 and 13th Streets in Washington, D.C.—captured the voices of ordinary  
8 Americans at one of the most cataclysmic times in the nation’s history.

9 | *(Ambient pool hall sounds.)*

10 | **INTERVIEWER:** Tell me what your feeling about this war with Japan is.

11 | **WILLIAM KEITH:** I say as far as my concern, this country is involved in war,  
12 and I think we should be patriotic regardless of creed, color, and condition.  
13 I will say, furthermore, I will say that I believe it is a stab in the back, and  
14 I hope that this country will wipe her off the face of the world. That’s as  
15 much as I have to say about that.

16 Well [my] name is Keith, William H. Keith. My occupation is bricklaying  
17 for the last 37 years. I don’t believe in Nazism at all. I believe that Adolf  
18 Hitler despises every black face that the world has ever known. He is really  
19 an enemy to the Negro. That’s my thought about it. And as far—the Jews  
20 and the Negroes, they don’t mean nothing in Hitler’s sight. He doesn’t  
21 think anything about them. He thinks they’re nothing but a bunch of bums.  
22 That’s all to him. And if he had his way with the Negro people of America, I  
23 believe he’d come here and annihilate the whole bunch.

24 | *(Pool hall sounds fade out.)*

## TOTAL WAR STRETCH TEXT 4



- 1 | *(Street sounds fade in.)*
- 2 | **INTERVIEWER:** How did you feel when you first heard the news about the  
3 | Japanese attack?
- 4 | **PONEMKIN:** Well, I was surprised that it was so sudden.
- 5 | **INTERVIEWER:** Are you eligible for the draft, too?
- 6 | **PONEMKIN:** Yes, I'm in the July draft. I expect to be called any week now.
- 7 | *(Everyone yells at once.)*
- 8 | **INTERVIEWER:** Has the feeling of the people changed a lot? Have you  
9 | noticed the people you meet in the street, is there a —
- 10 | **VOICES:** Yes it has. Those that were against war.  
11 | They're for it now.  
12 | They're now for it.
- 13 | The everyday isolationist has changed into an everyday defeatist of Hitler  
14 | . . . defeatist of Nazism . . . or any -ism . . . outside of Americanism.
- 15 | **INTERVIEWER:** All right, sir. Thank you very much. Thank you all.
- 16 | *(Street sounds fade out.)*

