

Mervyn S. Bennion, Sr.
Pearl Harbor Medal of Honor Recipient

Mervyn S. Bennion was born in Vernon, Utah Territory on May 5, 1887. Son of Israel Bennion and Jeannette Bennion (Sharp). His Welsh grandfather, John Bennion, had immigrated to Utah with the Mormon pioneers and established successful cattle operations near Taylorsville, Utah. Mervyn was living near Preston, Idaho when he received his acceptance to the United States Naval Academy. Bennion graduated third in his 1910 class from the USNA. Coincidentally, his younger brother Howard Bennion, graduated first in his class of 1912 at the United States military Academy.

Mervyn's first assignment after graduation was on the USS California (ACR-6) in the engineering division. In December, 1917, he was an ordnance and gunnery specialist serving in the Ordnance Bureau at Washington Naval Yard during World War I. His first command was the destroyer USS Bernadou (DD-153), followed by command of Destroyer Division One.

The last twenty-one years of Mervyn's naval service began with the job of helping to fit out the Battleship Maryland at Newport News, and when the ship was commissioned, he became the Assistant Fire Control Officer. He had the pleasure of meeting members of the Danish royal family, and at a garden party at Holyrood Castle in Edinburgh, he met King George V and Queen Mary, the present King George VI and his bride, together with other members of the British royal family.

During his Naval Career, he met and married Louise Clark in Washington D. C., they later married on February 5, 1920 in the home of her parents in New York, where they were living for a time. A few months later, when Mervyn was able to get leave from his duties in the Navy Department, he and his bride went through the Salt Lake Temple. Their first home was in Washington for a number of months. Thereafter, as is the lot of navy families, they lived in many places. They had one child, Mervyn, Junior, and he was born in April of 1925.

Mervyn S. Bennion, Sr., was killed in action during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, while in command of the battleship USS West Virginia (BB-48) when shrapnel from a bomb that blew up part of his command deck hit him. Several sailors attempted to move Bennion to a first aid station, but he refused to leave his post. Using one arm to hold his wounds closed, he bled to death while still commanding his crew. Captain Bennion posthumously received the Medal of Honor.

You can find his gravesite here in the Salt Lake City Cemetery in Plat West, Block 3, Lot 148, Grave 1 East.

