

25 Pearl Harbor survivors form unique VFW post

By Betty Burroughs

25 of Delaware's survivors of the Pearl Harbor attack were sworn in yesterday as charter members of a unique Veterans of Foreign Wars Post.

It is Pearl Harbor Post 12741, VFW, a worldwide exclusive in name, number and nature.

Wilbur H. Roberts Sr. of Wilmington was elected and installed as its first commander. A Navy veteran of World War II, he was an 18-year-old "water tender" on the USS Nevada, anchored in Pearl Harbor on the day of the attack.

Among other officers installed at yesterday's charter meeting on Silverside Road were:

E. Hart Davis, New Castle, senior vice commander; George B. Buckalew Sr., Wilmington, junior vice commander; Harry O. Hill, New Castle, quartermaster; William P. Stratton, Wilmington, chaplain; Forrest Rodden, Wilmington, judge advocate; and Paul E. Sweeney, Canby Park, surgeon.

All charter members of the new post belong to Delaware Chapter 1, Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, organized in 1970.

VFW Post 12741 was formed last Dec. 7 at a meeting of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, which has a membership of 39.

At the expiration of the required 90-day period, the post

became eligible for its VFW charter and election of officers yesterday.

Regular membership in Delaware's VFW Post 12741 is open not only to others in the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association but to any veteran anywhere in the world who was at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. Their wives will form an auxiliary.

Among charter members of the new post are the oldest and next-to-youngest survivors of Pearl Harbor.

The oldest is Joseph Olejniczak of Wilmington, who will be 74 on March 17. An Air Force veteran he was "going on 42" and serving as a tech-sergeant with the 46th Pursuit Squadron at Wheeler Field at Honolulu when the bombs struck.

Stratton, 48, the post's chaplain, missed by about a month being the youngest of the nation's estimated 7,000 Pearl Harbor survivors. He enlisted in the Marines at Pittsburgh when he was 15 by falsifying his age.

