



## Commander U.S. Pacific Fleet

Pearl Harbor Day Ceremony

Admiral Patrick M. Walsh

12/7/2009

Governor Lingle and Mrs. Inouye, Admiral Willard and distinguished guests, Pearl Harbor survivors and World War II veterans ...

Today we gather for a solemn moment of remembrance – and pay tribute to the men and women who served in World War II, who survived the attack at Pearl Harbor, and especially, those who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our country.

We have the honor and privilege to stand in the presence of people who gave so much of themselves, their lives, and their livelihoods, so that we could have lives of promise, potential and opportunity. Their storied acts of courage and heroism endowed special meaning to all who serve and support the United States Navy.

This morning is especially significant because it is an opportunity as sailors, to express our gratitude for all that we inherited ... from what history fondly remembers as the greatest generation. The bravery, valor and self-less sacrifice that took place in these waters defined us as a navy and the recovery that took place in this same historic setting, charted the path for a wounded nation.

It is important to remember ... what those who served experienced, in the hours that followed tragedy. It is important to know the humanity of their stories because it is their biography that inspires us, and gives us the strength, commitment, character and resilience for the fights that are ahead of us.



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They were grief-stricken, emotionally tattered and physically drawn. For each ship, each crew, and each family, it was a time of shock, then guilt, then anger. It was a period of sad reflection and respect followed by acceptance and hope.

It was a moment in time that tested our nation – and served as a clarion call for citizens to serve the country. It was a moment in time that tested our Navy. Yet those who walked before us found a way – to see clearly through the grief that overwhelmed them and discern the path to take ... to move with resolve and dispatch ... for recovery ... and then victory ... from the charred ruins in the harbor, and begin the long journey out of the ashes of tragedy.

An extraordinary level of personal strength, will and determination was necessary to respond to the attack on Pearl Harbor. In the aftermath, recovery efforts proved the strength of those in uniform and the people of Hawaii. Complex salvage operations to recover sunken and damaged ships required dangerous work. Doctors, nurses and corpsmen cared for the many wounded. Through innovation and fierce determination, the Pearl Harbor shipyard repaired the fleet, and many damaged ships could sail once again. Just six months later, these efforts led to victory at the Battle of Midway, and turned the tide of the war in the Pacific.



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Today, our naval history and heritage command cites a letter written by a Sailor in 1943 who said, "Wherever we go, we are part of America, a part of history." His words are just as true and enduring today because of the extraordinary acts that took place here ... people whose actions proved that they were stronger and more resilient than they ever realized or imagined.

The story of Pearl Harbor became the story of the fleet...and the story of the fleet became the story of the nation. The strength of our ideals and all that we hold dear, the willingness of so many Americans to defend life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness served to guide us from tragedy to triumph.

Future generations will long cherish the heroism and valor of those at Pearl Harbor. We will never forget their loss, their sacrifice and their service ... and the world will never forget how many are free because of it.

On behalf of a very grateful Navy -- Thank you