



Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet
69th Anniversary Pearl Harbor Day Commemoration
Pearl Harbor Visitor Center
Admiral Patrick M. Walsh
Tuesday, 7 December 2010

Governor Abercrombie, Secretary Strickland, Director Jarvis, Admiral Fargo, distinguished guests, Pearl Harbor survivors and World War II veterans ... I am humbled and especially grateful to be part of this commemoration and dedication.

It is easy to lose track of time when we are here. There is so much to see, to contemplate, to discover, to learn and to absorb about the historical narrative that led to this fateful date sixty nine years ago. And it is equally thought-provoking to realize that in the short length of time that it will take to complete this morning's ceremony, the attack was over and the world changed forever.

This morning, we recognize and memorialize men and women who were simply extraordinary. By every measure, they transformed the horrific events from a day that would live in infamy...into this quiet, idyllic, peaceful setting...that stands before us as a stalwart symbol of valor, courage, and sacrifice. This museum gives us a view into their lives, a window into the enormity of their task, an appreciation for the heaviness of their burden, the strength of their resolve, and the powerful commitment they undertook on behalf of their fellow man in the war that they fought and the peace that they won. Today, this setting, these hallowed grounds, and our memorial is at-rest in hushed silence; admired...revered...and respected, as a perpetual source of national pride that represents the promise and potential of youth as well as the promise and commitment of a grateful nation...now fulfilled.

The benefit from the study of history is that it offers the opportunity to learn from many perspectives, to understand competing points of view, and to examine...as well as

challenge the policies and decisions that led to remarkable chapters in the human experience. The lessons learned from the attack on Pearl Harbor are no different, and in many respects, while many and varied, depend on the lens that you adopt and the outlook that you take.

One such example was the work done by Dr. Carl Ackerman, a teacher at the Punahou School, who wrote, “The Day the Bombs Fell,” on the sixty year anniversary of the attack...dedicated to the people of the Hawaiian Islands. Through his students, he collected oral histories of family members, friends, and neighbors who gave their personal account about life on the neighbor islands during the war. The stories “provide a glimpse into people’s lives with information often passed over [by textbooks].”

The introduction written by David McCullough, Jr., reminds the reader: “there is a danger...in extracting any event from its human context and elevating it into History, even one as significant, as colossal, as a world at war. With bare statistics, no matter how staggering...one tends to lose touch with the vivid immediacy, the human impact, the pertinent realities, of moments quieted by the passage of time. But they were real of course, so too the people who lived them. Indiscriminately, the war consumed sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, young and old...vital, real people...for the United States, it began here: [when] one bright Sunday morning the island of Oahu awoke to thoughts of services at Central Union or surfing at Makaha, thoughts of coffee and the *Advertiser*, thoughts of rolling over for a little more sleep. Then the explosives began falling from the sky.” The author gives us a rare and authentic view into the extraordinary human toll the war placed on people here, with the strength, selflessness, and resilience of Hawaiian people captured in the innocence of their own words. As you walk these grounds you will sense the close, deep, and abiding personal connection between the people of Hawaii and members of the armed forces who suffered together during that fateful moment in history.

Despite the pain and anguish of the longest day in our history, those who survived the attack...fought the war, won the peace, and in the decades that followed, went forward

with their respective lives, settled, started their own families, new careers, built homes, lived in neighborhoods, grew close to relatives, children, and extended family, in each of the fifty states, and in countries around the world.

But today, many have come home here...248 Pearl Harbor survivors chose these waters for their final resting place. When asked, why, survivors of that fateful 2 hour battle, want Pearl Harbor to be their final resting place after a very full life...the answers are without hesitation, quick, sharp, full of wit and wisdom, and reveal character, spirit, and yet another commentary on the human experience brought on by war. Here is a sampling of their comments:

With his eyes welled up, one veteran told me, "it would be the highest honor to rejoin my shipmates." "We loved Hawaii...this always felt like home."

Another said, "We joined the Navy in 1940; my buddies knew the country was in real trouble. We grew up fast that day."

Yet another comment, "We lived...while others died. Those of us who survived felt obligated to take care of each other. You develop deep bonds and close connections to people under those circumstances. It was the proudest moment of my life."

Pearl Harbor was not just a homeport for these young men and women, it was their HOME. For survivors, it represents the home of their youth, the home of their memories, the home of their history and the home of their beloved shipmates and friends. They come back to this sacred setting, these historic waters, and this hallowed ground because -- out of anger, anguish, and ashes...Pearl Harbor has become a place of healing and transformation...of new beginnings.

To our veterans and survivors - the quintessential gift that you have given us is the opportunity for a peaceful world and an opportunity for a new beginning with our

counterparts from the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force. Today it is a strong relationship that exists now between families, based on trust, mutual respect, and an inner strength...understood and respected by the descendents of former combatants made possible by the promise and commitment that you made to the nation.

Your example has taught us that --

If ever there was a country worth living in

If ever there was a country worth defending

If ever there was a country worth fighting for

If ever...in the history of the world there was a country whose values and principles were worthy of our sacrifice...it is the United States of America.

On behalf of a very grateful Navy -- Thank you