



Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet
Admiral Scott H. Swift
USS Arizona Survivor's Dinner
Hilton Hawaiian Village
Honolulu, Hawaii
December 8, 2016
As prepared for delivery

Good evening. It is such an honor to have been invited to attend what represents an intimate gathering of USS Arizona survivors. Lauren Bruner, Louis Conter, Ken Potts, and Don Stratton, what an honor for me to be able to share in this evening with you. Tonight, to me, is about the commemoration of the bravery, fortitude, and loss of your shipmates 75 years ago. It is a legacy that continues to inspire those who serve today, especially here in the Pacific.

In my role as Pacific Fleet commander, I am reminded daily of the historic attack on Pearl Harbor and the heritage that all Pacific Fleet Sailors share with its survivors. From the command suite at building 250 where I work, the same office space Admiral Nimitz planned, organized and executed the defeat of the Japanese Imperial Navy, to the rooms of Nimitz House where I live -- many things are as they were 75 years ago. USS Arizona rests where she settled in such violence to the bottom of Pearl Harbor, just off Ford Island, not far from where USS Missouri is now moored. As they rest now, these two great warships, battleships each, represent the bookends of the war. One signifying the beginning of an uncertain war, waged by a nation whose commitment to win was galvanized within the two hours the attack took, the other representing the successful closing of the war with the articles of surrender being signed on her deck.

Yesterday morning, the destroyer USS Halsey, namesake of the Commander of the Third Fleet, Admiral Bull Halsey, rendered honors to Arizona as part of the December 7th remembrance ceremony. No doubt many of the young Sailors on board Halsey were the same age as many Arizona Sailors resting in eternal peace, entombed within her.

It is in this context that history and heritage are worth distinguishing in my view. Put simply, history is made; it is reflected in the record of history chronicling your actions on December 7th, 1941. History is reflected in textbook descriptions about the raid on Rabaul, the Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway Island, and in landings at places like Tinian, Iwo Jima and Okinawa. History is about actions taken by people, ships and aircraft. It records names of ships like Coghlan , Pringle, Stack, and of course, Arizona.

Heritage is an amalgamation of individual historical events. Heritage is a legacy, an inheritance; it is a birthright of those who wear the same uniform of those that have delivered that heritage to us, based on their historical actions. Heritage is what you have given us, to guide us when our duties take us in harm's way as we execute our common oath to defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. Embodied by, and passed on through Pearl Harbor Sailors who toiled within gun turrets in the deafening din of battle, by those who flew combat patrol missions and survived shark attacks off of New Guinea, or those who recovered from wounds only to return to the fight again.

Those of us who serve today, do so mindful of two simple truths: First, birthrights to a heritage must be earned every day by actions emblematic of those who originally earned them. Second, we must be mindful that our actions today, the honor, courage and commitment we demonstrate in the execution of our national duty, will form the heritage of the Navy we will pass on to those who follow us.

Gentlemen, we honor you tonight because you made history in the Pacific. But much more than that, you are our Pacific Fleet's heritage. You and your generation embody the best of who we are, and who we strive to be. In following your example, Pacific Fleet Sailors proudly inherit your toughness, tenacity, initiative, and fighting spirit.

A capable and credible Pacific Fleet will continue to provide security to reassure our allies and deter potential adversaries from costly miscalculation. This is the future that Pearl Harbor survivors fought to secure, and which the Pacific Fleet continues to uphold. Only those like you who bear the scars and carry the burden of that morning in 1941 will ever truly know the shock, fear, anger, and determination to keep fighting. No Sailor of any nation needs to learn the lessons of December 7th again.

We are grateful for your many sacrifices then and now. You are living records of the wounds our nation endured on December 7th, 1941 and of the resilience that allowed us to fight back, turn the tide of war, and ultimately achieve peace and reconciliation with former adversaries.

Tonight, we honor the memories of all those who gave their lives that morning, and those who ensured that their sacrifice would not be in vain. On behalf of a grateful Pacific Nation, and on behalf of a grateful Pacific Fleet, I thank each of you for the gift of Navy heritage you have given us. May God bless this great nation we are honored to serve and may God continue to bless each one of you as he has in bringing us all together here tonight. Thank you.