

HONOLULU MEMORIES WITH MHT

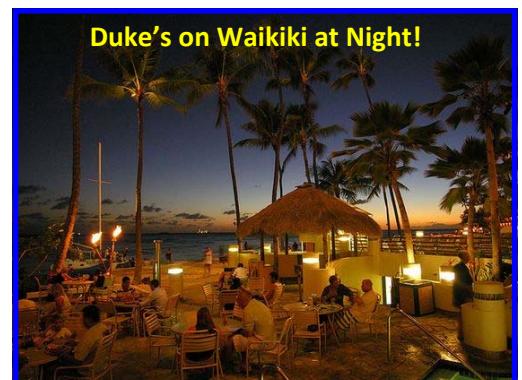
I love going to Hawaii, who wouldn't but with MHT Groups makes it even better. My first time back was in 2005 on the Iwo Jima Post Tour. I arrived on Oahu with the main body returning from Guam where we had

headquartered for the Iwo Jima Reunion of Honor. We were going through customs at Honolulu International when Dale Quillan, a Tennessee Barrister and longtime Judge Advocate for the Third Marine Division Association and an Iwo Veteran came up to me and said his cousin Barney Tucker who had also been a Marine in WWII on Guadalcanal was missing. The Homeland Security Captain assured me Barney could not have just strolled through customs as Dale still had his passport. They doubled people back to the luggage area but to no avail. Gary Andrejak, MHT



Tour Leader Extraordinaire went on to the Outrigger Waikiki Beach Resort. I was outside the Homeland Security line and the Captain said he would find Barney who he swore has to be somewhere in the international terminal. I started walking the front of the airport and over the intercom came the call that a man was looking for his tour. I hot-footed down further and there was Barney sitting in front of an information desk. He was a little forgetful at 86 as he had been a pre-war Marine and didn't recall how he had simple waltzed through security without a passport. Anyway, after grabbing us a cab to the hotel, Barney, Dale & I all had a cold one at Duke's and although the airport events were foggy he remembered everything about the "Canal", Melbourne, his time in Australia for refitting and Cape Gloucester where he was wounded. It was hugely enjoyable sitting on the deck of Duke's looking out over the Pacific and the setting sun while hearing the exploits of these two WWII Marine Veterans.

The 70th Anniversary of Pearl Harbor in 2011 was an amazing experience with the Veterans and the Ceremonies for the "Day Which Will Live in Infamy!" The MHT Group (below left) was treated well and the weather as expected being in paradise was spectacular nothing like December in the mainland! Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam went all out to honor all those who gave their all on that



fateful morning of Dec 7th in the surprise attack on the U.S. Pacific Fleet by the Imperial Japanese Navy's submarines and carrier aviation fleet. Sitting gleaming in Pearl Harbor is the most iconic reminder, The USS Arizona Memorial. It is a powerful experience to board the WWII Valor in the Pacific National Monument shuttle



boat to take the quiet ride over the water to the battleship resting on the bottom in the place it was moored on Battleship Row. It is still the final resting place for many of the 1,177 sailors and Marines who were aboard that Sunday morning. The Arizona was the only battleship not salvaged and you can still see the "tears of the Arizona" fuel oil still leaking to the surface. On December 7th, the ceremony is too big to be held on the Memorial but the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of Midway was held on that deck and in front of the wall with all names of the gallant men entombed below

made it very powerful and made me feel that the U.S. Navy's underdog victory six months later would make those below rest easier.

Within the WWII Valor in the Pacific National Monument the National Park Service has a tremendous salute to the submarine service if you were a fan as I was of WWII Submarine movies



like *Operation Pacific*, *Run Silent, Run Deep* or even the comedy *Operation Petticoat*. Besides getting to tour the USS Bowfish (SS-287) is the great Submarine Museum that gives you a comprehensive history of WWII Pacific Submarine Operations. Also in the park is the conning tower of one of the most decorated boats in the fleet the USS Parche (SS-384) whose skipper Capt. "Red" Ramage earned the Medal of Honor on the night of 29 July 1944 as the Parche sunk four Japanese ships and damaged three more.



Ford Island is a key stop on any trip to Honolulu as the focus of the Japanese attack was on the U.S. Battleship Fleet anchored on battleship row adjacent to the isle in the center of Pearl Harbor. The Pacific Aviation Museum (PAM) is headquartered on Ford Island and is an amazing tour experience but with our great relationship with the PAM we get some special tours of the hangers that still display



some of bullet holes as does the runway. The meticulous job done by the PAM in their museum displays carries over to the aircraft they display. Anyone who saw the “Duke” in “Flying Tigers” will recognize the P-40 to the right in the livery of the 1st American Volunteer Group that flew in China from 1941-42. Speaking of movies in the background of the P-40 is Building S84 that was proximately displayed in both *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (1970) & *Pearl Harbor* (2001) movies. Besides the classic WWII aircraft like the



Tora! Tora! Tora!



A6M Zero & F4F-

Wildcat the PAM has Cold War aircraft like the AH-1 Cobra, MiG-15, F-15 Eagle & F-14 Tomcat plus many more.



Also on Ford Island is the Battleship USS Missouri (BB-63) in a perfect beginning-conclusion imagery to the War in the Pacific as the war ended on the deck of the “Mighty Mo” in Tokyo Harbor on September 2, 1945. After the successful deployment of the “Little

Boy” and “Fat Man” atomic devices over Hiroshima and Nagasaki compelled Imperial Japan to admit the war was lost and saved countless lives by alleviating an invasion of mainland Japan. To be able to explore this colossus of war that fired rounds against America’s enemies not only in WWII but Korea, Vietnam and Iraq over its 48 years of active service and stand on the teak deck where the plaque marks where Gen. Douglas MacArthur accepted the surrender was a power-



ful experience. As an artillerymen I was happy to see the nine Mark 7 16-inch main guns in the massive turrets. As an instructor I had always used the example to the young lieutenants that always hope for battleship fire support as the shock and awe of nearly a ton of HC (High Capacity) projectile (roughly a Volkswagen Beetle) coming in from nearly 24 miles away (from Quantico VA’s Lunga Reservoir to Springfield Mall) would have catastrophic effect on the enemy’s morale. The thought of the Mighty Mo & her sister ship the USS Wisconsin (BB-64) dropping over 950 tons of 16” projectiles in Desert Storm did my heart good.





No trip to Hawaii would be complete without a stop to honor all the heroes at National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific commonly called the “Punchbowl.” The Punchbowl has become one of the area’s most popular tourist destinations. More than five million visitors come to the cemetery each year to pay their respects to the valiant and to enjoy the panoramic view from the Punchbowl. One of the most breathtaking views of the Island of Oahu can be found while standing at the highest point on the crater’s rim.

On the Midway tour, we had a 70th Anniversary Ceremony where since we were in Hawaii in place of the traditional “wreath laying” we used a beautiful blue & gold Lei. I also always make the trek to the gravesite of my Dad’s best friend at the Naval Academy and both entered the Marine Corps from the class of 1945 that graduated in 1944 in time from Okinawa. Both were replacement platoon commanders in the 1st Marine Division and Art Day gave the ultimate sacrifice for his country so I brought a scarlet & gold lei for his grave marker. There are 34 Medal of Honor recipients buried in the Punchbowl including famed correspondent Ernie Pyle who like my Dad’s friend Art was KIA during the Okinawa Campaign.



We make the cross-island trek over the mountains to the windward side of the island to Marine Corps Base-Hawaii at Kaneohe Bay to see the tremendous views and the iconic Pacific War Memorial, that is a duplicate of the Marine Corps War Memorial in Washington, DC that honors the flag raisers on Iwo Jima. There is a crash site of LT Iida, commander of 3rd Aircraft Group, whose Mitsubishi Zero was shot down on the morning of December 7th. His body has been returned to Japan but the site is marked on base. There is an excellent static display at the memorial park.



During the MHT tours we try to get people to the sites they need to see as on the 70th Anniversary we had a relative on the USS Nevada (BB-36), the only battleship to get underway during the attack. We visited the USS Nevada Memorial at Nevada Point where the battleship was run aground to make sure it didn’t sink in the channel.

It is also worth a stop at Wheeler Field that was a prime target of the Japanese due to the Army Air Corps fighter aircraft near Schofield Barracks where there is a large static display of weapons & aircraft as well as the memorial rock.



Any trip to Hawaii is a good but the 75th Anniversary Return this December promises to be an amazing one and worth checking off the bucket list!

