

# PEARL HARBOR AND THE "MIGHTY MO"

---

*This STB is the text of an address given to the delegates attending the Conference of Grand Masters and the Conference of Grand Secretaries in Honolulu, in Feb. 1999. At that time Randy TS. Chang was serving as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Hawaii. These remarks were given aboard the Battleship Missouri, the "Mighty Mo." -Editor*

Inasmuch as we Freemasons are committed to peace and harmony among all people, and many outstanding patriotic Americans were Freemasons who served our country well, and many of them served in the Armed Forces of this country, both in its founding and in the wars to defeat tyrants and dictators, we believe it is most appropriate that we hold our opening ceremony at this very special place in American History. I am referring to such men as George Washington, John Paul Jones, Paul Revere, Benjamin Franklin, Andrew Jackson, David Farragut, Edward Preble, and in later years . . . Teddy Roosevelt, Eddie Rickenbacker, Jimmy Doolittle, Theodore Roosevelt Jr., Ernest King, Homer Wallin, and Marc Mitscher.

Of the 123 Medals of Honor awarded in World War I, 16 were to Freemasons. Of the 434 medals awarded in World War II, 21 were to Freemasons. Out of 131 medals awarded in the Korean conflict, 3 were to Freemasons. And out of the 240 medals awarded in the Vietnam Era, 4 were awarded to Freemasons.

Since we are at Ford Island in Pearl Harbor let us start with some of the major events that occurred here. World War II began for the United States at this very location on December 7, 1941. In a surprise attack the Imperial Japanese Navy's First Carrier Strike Force struck most of the United States Military Bases on the Island of Oahu of the then Territory of Hawaii. Pearl Harbor suffered the greatest number of casualties and the destruction of many ships. When the Battleship Arizona blew up and sank, 1,177 men were trapped, some dead and others dying, in a twisted mass of metal, engulfed in flames. In spite of the most intensified efforts to extricate the dead only the bodies of 75 men could be removed, and 1,102 are still entombed in the Arizona. When Pearl Harbor was attacked on that tragic Sunday morning of December 7, 1941, this berth now occupied by the "Mighty Mo" was part of the area known as "Battleship Row." Seven battleships were berthed in "Battleship Row" in a North-South direction positioned as follows: First was the NEVADA, followed by the ARIZONA which was inboard of the repair ship Vestal. Next was the TENNESSEE, inboard of the WEST VIRGINIA. Next in line was the MARYLAND which was berthed inboard of the OKLAHOMA, followed by the tanker Neosha, with the CALIFORNIA at the end of the row. These battleships were the main targets of the Japanese Task Force. All but the Arizona and the Oklahoma were eventually returned to service. The attack was carried out by two waves of aircraft and lasted for about two hours. Fortunately, none of the three U.S. Aircraft Carriers were in port at the time of the attack. The Enterprise was enroute from Wake Island, the Lexington was enroute to Midway Island, and the Saratoga was at the San Diego Naval Base. Equally important was the fact that the Imperial Japanese Navy did not know the whereabouts of the three carriers.

Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Japanese Fleet and principal architect of the Pearl Harbor attack, was a strong proponent of air power and had counted heavily on destroying the American Aircraft Carriers. Although the attack was highly celebrated as a great victory by Imperial Japan, Yamamoto considered it to be a seriously flawed victory because he realized that the U.S. Carriers posed a powerful threat to any Japanese plans for further conquest in the Pacific. As events evolved Yamamoto's fears became a reality, beginning with the Imperial Japanese Navy suffering a humiliating defeat in the Battle of Midway on June 4-6, 1942. The vastly outnumbered and under-equipped Americans inflicted the worst defeat on the Empire of Japan's forces that they had ever experienced. The Japanese carriers Akagi, Kaga, Soryu, and Hiryu that had participated in the December 7th attack on Pearl Harbor were sunk, and about one-third of their pilots, all seasoned veterans, were lost. Many Americans look back at the December 7th surprise attack as a one-time successful strike and nothing more than an end in itself. This was not the case. The Japanese attack on Midway was the initial phase of "Eastern Operation," Admiral Yamamoto's plan to conquer and occupy the Hawaiian Islands. Taking Midway was to be followed by occupying the Island of Hawaii in October of 1942, with the invasion of the Island of Oahu scheduled for March 1943. The Japanese defeat at Midway brought "Eastern Operation" to an abrupt halt, never to be revived. The Battle of Midway turned the tide for the United States and its Allies in the Pacific. By war's end, all the Japanese ships, carriers and submarines that had participated in the December 7, 1941 surprise attack had been sunk or destroyed by the Americans. As you can see, we are located at one of the most significant historical sites in the annals of American History. But there is more to come. Let us leave the days of "Battleship Row" and the decisive victory of the Americans in the Battle of Midway, and move on to the "Mighty Mo" and its role in our history.

She was battleship gray not black like Commodore Perry's ships in 1853. She made her way into Tokyo Bay on a mission that formally ended the most disastrous war the world had ever endured. She was the USS Missouri.

All the arrangements were made and everything was in place for the great event. The date was September 2, 1945, and the representatives of the defeated Empire of Japan boarded the USS Missouri to sign the instrument of surrender. Overhead General MacArthur's five-star flag, along with Admiral Nimitz's five stars, floated beneath the American flag that had flown over the Capitol in Washington, D.C. on December 7, 1941. Commodore Perry's flag was flown in from the Naval Academy at Annapolis and draped over a bulkhead.

At 9:00 a.m. after the Chaplain had given the invocation and the recorded playing of The Star Spangled Banner over the ship's public address system, General MacArthur appeared and stepped directly to the microphone, and with a single sheet of paper said:

We are gathered here, representative of the major warring powers, to conclude a solemn agreement whereby peace may be restored. It would be inappropriate to discuss here different ideals and ideology or to meet in a spirit of distrust, malice or hatred. Instead both the conquerors and the conquered must rise to that higher dignity which alone benefits the sacred purposes we are about to serve. It is my earnest hope and indeed the hope of all mankind that a better world shall emerge, one founded upon faith and understanding, a world dedicated to the dignity of man and the fulfillment of his most cherished wish for freedom, tolerance, and justice. As Supreme Commander

for the Allied Powers, I announce it my firm purpose, in the tradition of the countries I represent, to proceed in the discharge of my responsibilities, while taking all dispositions to insure that the terms of surrender are fully, promptly, and faithfully complied with.

MacArthur's speech was without vengeance and stunned the Japanese delegation who had expected the worst, especially those who were associated or familiar with Japan's actions following the surrender of Singapore, the Philippines, and the horrors of Nanking.

Two copies of the surrender documents had been placed on an old mess table. One bound in leather for the Allies, and the other canvas bound for the Japanese. General MacArthur used five pens to sign his signature on the documents. He was followed by the delegates of the Allied Powers. MacArthur handed the first pen to Lieutenant General Jonathan Wainwright who had taken over command of the U.S. and Philippine Armed Forces in the Philippines when MacArthur was evacuated to Australia by order of President Roosevelt. The second pen went to Lieutenant General Arthur Percival who had surrendered Singapore. The third pen would go to West Point and the fourth to the Naval Academy. The last one was an inexpensive red-barreled pen that belonged to his wife which he used to sign the "Arthur" in his name, which she gave to their son.

Getting up from his chair at 9:25 a.m. MacArthur walked to the microphone and in a steely voice said: "These proceedings are now closed." As the Japanese delegation was being led away, he put his arm around Admiral Halsey's shoulders and said: "Bill where the hell are those airplanes?" At that precise moment a fleet of B-29 bombers and Navy fighter aircraft came in from the South and roared across the sky overhead as they flew toward the mists shrouding the sacred mountain Fujiyama.

The 01 veranda deck of the "Mighty Mo" has a plaque on the spot where the Formal Instrument of Surrender ending World War II was signed.

The USS Missouri received three World War 11 Battle Stars, five for Korea, and served in Operation Desert Storm.

Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman, General Douglas MacArthur, General Jonathan Wainwright, and Commodore Matthew Pent were all Freemasons. Grand Master Samuel Hawthorne made General MacArthur a Mason at Sight in the Grand Lodge of the Philippines on January 17, 1936. The three degrees were conferred on MacArthur in the presence of several hundred Master Masons. He subsequently became a member of Manila Lodge No. 1. Douglas MacArthur and his father Arthur -MacArthur, who was also a Freemason, are the only father and son recipients of the Medal of Honor.

World War II began for the Americans here at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and formally ended in Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945, aboard the USS Missouri.

My brethren, ladies and guests, you are seated where two of the most memorable and significant events in American History actually took place .... I urge you to think about it.