

I would like to welcome you to the kick-off reception for our kick-off campaign.

Actually, the first event was really this morning when we did a series of interviews with NBC -- The Today Show and Nightly News.

You never know how these things will turn out, but at least this one started a little better than my last Pearl Harbor interview in New York City.

- ✓ Call this a Sea Story
- ✓ Early Show on CBS—December 7<sup>th</sup> 2001 live
- ✓ Makeup—News—7:07 on the air
- ✓ Anchor Jane Clayson—Billboards “What was it like being at Pearl Harbor?”

But in preparing for the interview this morning, it gives you a chance to think a little about why we are doing this.

- That’s what the reporter wanted to know. Kevin Tribble—Dateline.

Since this is the group principally responsible for making all this happen—Probably a fair question for us all.

So first question he asked is “Why is this important?” My answer is something like this--For over 60 years, the attack on Pearl Harbor has been central to our concept of a national tragedy and our national conviction. In many ways, it touched nearly everyone in the country.

As you all know well, on USS Arizona, hundreds were killed in barely more than an instant. All told, hundreds more would die soon after. And the individual stories of loss were almost greater than anyone could imagine in 20<sup>th</sup> Century America.

We all know there were 36 sets of brothers assigned to the USS Arizona alone. Of those 75 men, 61 perished in the attack and only a single set survived. I told the NBC reporter when he looked at the wall—look for those names.

He asked me what was it that stirred me when I visited the Memorial. I would guess I have set foot on the Memorial some 25 times. When you step onto the Memorial and walk amidst the pattern of shadows and sunlight, where the only sounds are whispered words and the snapping of our flag above. It really is a place of visuals vice vocals, so to speak. It is impossible to not feel the impact of those names carved in the cold stone of the memorial shrine room.

And I told him that nothing is more striking to me personally than the new names you find on the lower left of the Memorial's wall. Many of the Arizona survivors have returned to be entombed with their shipmates, and in some cases family.

He asked why? And I told him that in the Navy, nothing is stronger than your sense of your crew—your shipmates. So despite the separation of decades, it is there that many find their final resting place. It is an undying testament to esprit de corps and to the unbreakable bonds that unite all those who served on Arizona or were in Pearl Harbor on that tragic day.

And finally, he wanted to know whether this was part of America growing up? The dreadful events of that long ago December morning united this Nation in a common goal. In one stroke, the attack silenced the debate between isolation and engagement and launched us whole-heartedly into the war with the Axis powers and Japan. But such was the confidence in the strength of purpose of this American generation that victory was a foregone conclusion and freedom the clear prize.

What I didn't get a chance to say was that young Americans, from all walks of life, born in the small towns and rural farms of our Nation, or raised in cities that maybe you grew up in, were thrust together in the flashpoint that was Pearl Harbor.

On the waters of the Pacific, in the air, under the sea, on untold islands, and eventually across the globe, that generation signed up and moved out. They surrendered their lives and committed their futures to a cause greater than any individual. As my mother, a Navy nurse in the Pacific during the war used to tell me, you saw it everywhere—in fact you never saw a man on the street between the age of 18 and 40 that wasn't in uniform or a woman that wasn't contributing in some fashion.

The result was astounding. For over sixty years, America has been strong, peaceful, and prosperous because of the sacrifice of a generation of men and women who were willing to fight for their country. This is the story needs to be told, and I think it is up to the group in this room to make sure the next generation of Americans hear it.

Should be a great week...Thanks for all of your help.

