

LEST WE FORGET



U.S. Asiatic Fleet

Recognized by many awards for Valor, Meritorious Service, and Achievement—relegated to history, remembered by those who served—forgotten in contemporary history.

In 1995 a committee was formed to organize a once-in-a-lifetime reunion of all former Asiatic Fleet sailors, and to obtain a Presidential proclamation for a Memorial Day on March 1st to give long overdue recognition to the Asiatic Fleet. It consisted of LT Walter Ashe, USN (Ret), **USS ASHEVILLE**; CAPT John "Jack" Slaughter, USN (Ret), **USS JOHN D. FORD**; Clarence Wills, **USS TRINITY**; Charles Ankerberg, **USS JOHN PAUL JONES**; and Bernie Ibex, 4th Marines.

They embarked on a tremendous letter writing and telephoning campaign.

In 1997, U.S. Navy Asiatic Fleet Combined Forces reunion was celebrated at Arlington, Va.

Senator John Warner (Va.) and Senator Jesse Helms (N.C.) took up the torch and introduced in the Senate provisions in a Bill commemorating the Navy and Marine Corps personnel serving in the Asiatic Fleet and honor those who gave their lives. Senator Strom Thurmond (S.C.) introduced the bill in the Senate. Congressmen Walter Jones (N.C.), Charles Taylor (N.C.), and Sherrod Brown (Ohio) were co-sponsors from the House.

The Congress, by Public Law 105-261, on October 17, 1998, authorized and requested the President to issue a Proclamation in commemoration of the United States Navy Asiatic Fleet.

In February 2000, with knowledge of a draft prepared in the Department of Defense, a special Combined Forces reunion was arranged in San Diego, Calif. The Navy Liaison Office advised they did not feel that the "Asiatic Fleet was deserving of a proclamation." Accordingly, in lieu of a Proclamation, the White House chose to issue a "Greeting" for the planned commemoration day of March 1, 2000.

A renewed extensive writing and telephone campaign to the newly elected administration resulted in Speaker of the House, Dennis Hastert, Congressman (Ill.), Senator Jesse Helms (N.C.), and others imploring the new President to issue the authorized proclamation. These pleas were acknowledged.

On June 7, 2001. President George W. Bush signed the Proclamation that designated March 1, 2002 as the Asiatic Fleet Memorial Day and called upon all Americans to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs. The U.S. Navy Asiatic Fleet Combined Forces reunion was celebrated February 26 to March 3, 2002, at Houston, Tex.

Speaker of the House, Dennis Hastert, represented the President at the memorial service aboard **USS TEXAS** (BB-35), a National Historic Landmark.

The original signed Proclamation was presented to the United States Navy Memorial by CAPT John S. Slaughter, USN (Ret.), president U.S. Navy Asiatic Fleet Combined Forces reunion, and CWO-4 Ray D. Kester, USN (Ret.), president South China, Yangtze Patrols reunion. It is displayed in the Asiatic Fleet Room in the Navy Memorial's Naval Heritage Center. The Asiatic Fleet Room, funded by CAPT John P. Bracken, USNR (Ret.) (Signal Officer, Assistant Communications Officer and Ships Secretary aboard **USS MARBLEHEAD** 1941-1942), was dedicated as part of the 1997 U.S. Navy Asiatic Fleet Combined Forces reunion.