

To all;

Wake Island is probably the most ignored place in the world and where it played arguably the most significant battles in American history of WWII, largely unknown.

Wake Island is a special place for many of us. In my case, it is my hometown. I grew up there in the early sixties through the seventies. As a young boy, I “explored” the wreckage left by the battles. The history of Wake Island was literally all around me. My father, an ex-Seabee and assistant station manager of FMC, the contractor responsible for the civilian end of the military operation, made sure of that.

It was normal to see the wreckage of planes and explore the bunkers and gun emplacements. All of us were on a first-name basis with EOD (Explosives Ordnance Disposal), finding anything from 50-caliber bullets and hand grenades to bombs.

We all had read so much about the island, even the “Japanese Diary”, a translation of the diary of a Japanese soldier who starved to death just before the surrender of Wake Island to US forces, as his superiors ate better.

We all walked the trench lines and found Saki bottles, Rice pots, etc.

Some of us were there before the Japanese did the major Salvage in the 60’s, so the plane wreckage was still there. I drove past the Suwa Maru on the reef daily there for the first few years. I saw the Seaplane wreckage off Flipper Point on Peale and swam under the causeway. I was also there during the Marine Memorial's dedication and the Japanese Memorial's moving. I was there when the Japanese chemical gas canisters broke loose and “Gassed” certain parts of the lagoon and island.

In the last few reunions, we decided to open what was once the Wake Island Reunion for everyone who lived there. And since the original Wake Island Defenders Reunion had shut down, open it up to the Defenders Families also. That is even more important now that the last defender has passed. Before the big lockdown, we were fortunate to have Mr. Patrick Aki, attend, which was a treat. Also, the many families of the Wake Island Defenders shared family memories.

And now they are all gone. So this makes this reunion even more special. Since we opened the reunion, many defenders' families have attended and tremendously contributed to it. For someone such as myself, being able to share my memories and intimate first-hand knowledge of the island. And I am just one of many like that. For example, few know that besides the first battles of Wake Island and victories, Wake was significant in other ways. It was used as a role model for justifying the formation of the Navy Seabees, probably one of the first Special Forces units of WWII, and a major unit in WWII from Normandy and the Atlantic, to the Pacific, building the runways and infrastructure on the road to Tokyo,

Few realize that just Caucasian contractors did not man Wake Island. The Camaros from Guam played a part; Chinese, Hawaiian, and many other ethnicities were there. And involved in the battle.

We have, at the Wake Island Spirit Facebook page (And now website), attempted more than any other group to keep the memories of Wake Island, its defenders, residents, etc., informed of past and present history. We have amassed probably the greatest library of the history of Wake Island from the 1800s to the present than anywhere else. We want to share that with you; hopefully, you can contribute more.

We will be sharing a treasure trove of information about the history and memories of Wake Island. Some families were trying to connect certain places on Wilkes or Peale with the stories they were told from the Defenders, and we could connect them.

For those of us doing this reunion, it is not only preserving the history of the Wake Island Battle, but also the significance it has played in the history of our country and the significance it continues to be.

So please consider joining Eugene, Suzette, and me as we do this reunion for all of you. This reunion is not about just the History of Wake Island. It is about the Wake Island family. Your attachment to Wake Island, for whatever reason, makes you a part of this very special family.

Thank You
Ron Skates