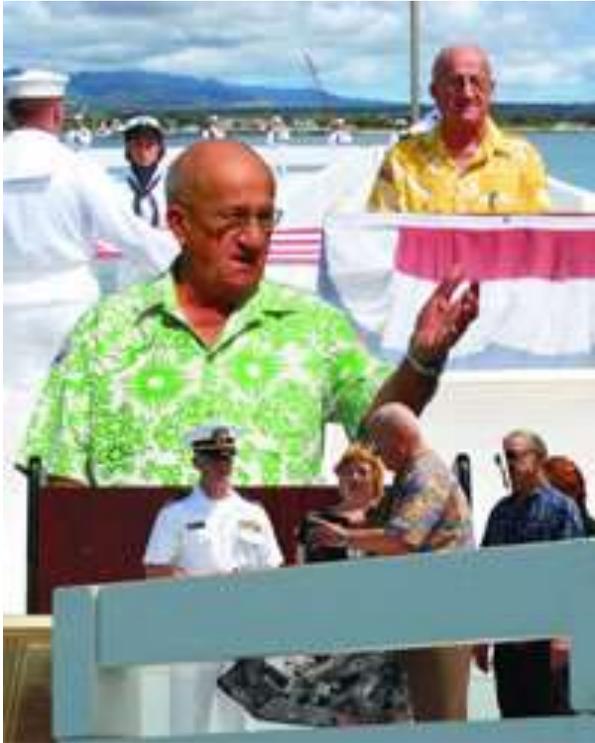


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PAO 'go-to-guy' honors veterans, continues naval service through volunteerism

Story and photo by Blair Martin
Contributing Writer



When you ask Jim Taylor, Pearl Harbor survivor liaison for Navy Region Hawaii Public Affairs Office, exactly what his volunteer position entails, without skipping a beat the former master chief shoots straight from the hip.

"I guess you could call me the 'go-to-guy,'" he replied. "Because I do everything from Pearl Harbor survivor burials and scattering of ashes ceremonies to harbor tours and flying flags. Anything that needs to get done, I am there."

Despite his candor, Taylor is quite the modest man.

For starters, he personally oversees all of the Pearl Harbor survivor and Navy veteran burials, interments and scattering of ashes ceremonies every year, including coordinating all ceremonial details with Navy Region Ceremonial Guard, Pacific Fleet Band and chaplains.

He also makes all the personal arrangements for traveling family members, including providing ground transportation and assisting with lodging reservations.

Since March 2008, Taylor has been carrying out all these duties as a Navy volunteer.

"I came to PAO the Monday following my last day as the assistant officer-in-charge of the Naval Brig," he said. "I knew I still wanted to serve the Navy in some way and I had worked with [Pearl Harbor] Survivors in years prior so I thought I could find something that would let me continue coordinating their burials," he added.

He said he decided to "create this position" at public affairs because he felt compelled to fulfill the final wishes of America's 'Greatest Generation.'

"I cherish having the ability to meet the families of our deserving heroes," Taylor said. "Simply put, those who served this great country set the example to keep our nation's history preserved. We must never forget those who survived the attack on Pearl Harbor and continued to serve in [many ways] violent situations throughout WWII. Their stories deserve to be told and their final wishes to return to their shipmates deserved to be honored," he added.

Over the past decade, Taylor estimates he has personally coordinated more than 220 Pearl Harbor survivor and military veteran burials and scattering of ashes ceremonies.

Thanks to his 33 years of active duty Navy service and 18 years as a civil service employee, Taylor said he relies on his more than 50-year naval experience when working closely with military veterans and family members to honor the dearly departed.

“As a [Navy] veteran, I’m aware of the situations of military life and the plight of the military man and woman,” he explained. “This enables me to provide the best possible services and knowledge to veterans and their families while also giving the right balance of sympathy and strength when needed.”

When asked what is his favorite memory, Taylor is hard-pressed to answer.

“That is a tough one,” he said as he pondered the question. “I have coordinated over 245 scattering of ashes and burial services over the years and every one of them has provided me with many tremendous and happy memories. So I guess you could say I have over 245 ‘favorite memories,’ ” he added.

As for his future, Taylor admitted that although he wouldn’t mind a “paying gig,” he remains completely dedicated to his volunteer position, for both professional and personal reasons.

“I will remain here as long as the Navy wants me and as long as I continue to get the magnificent support from the chain of command,” he offered. “I think it is important to stay involved because I am a firm believer that one who works hard, long hours all of their life will die if they stop. I have served in or for the Navy for over 54 years and find it nearly impossible to leave.”

As Taylor sees it, being a devoted Navy volunteer is not only about wanting to pay tribute to so many of the Navy’s finest as much as it is about paying homage to his unexpected, yet fruitful Navy career.

“I love the Navy and will continue to serve as long as I am mentally and physically able,” he said. “The Navy is keeping me alive, why quit?”
