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20 YEARS LATER, A VISION FULFILLED FOR “MIGHTY MO”

USS Missouri Memorial Association Celebrates 20th Anniversary with Special Mahalo Admission Rates for Hawaii Residents and Military Members, March 15-31

Pearl Harbor, HI – (March 13, 2014) – This Sunday, March 16, the USS Missouri Memorial Association, the nonprofit organization responsible for bringing the retired USS *Missouri* to Pearl Harbor and establishing the Battleship Missouri Memorial, celebrates its 20th anniversary.

In honor of the Association’s anniversary, the Battleship Missouri Memorial is offering special *mahalo* admission rates to Hawaii residents and military members from March 15 through March 31. Two general admission tickets can be purchased for \$20 total, and child admission tickets for \$5 each (ages 4-12), a savings of 50 percent. Showing a Hawaii or military ID upon purchase is required.

It was March 16, 1994, when the Association was founded with the objective of having the USS *Missouri*, the battleship where World War II ended, berthed bow-to-bow to the sunken USS *Arizona*, the battleship signifying the war’s onset for the U.S. Twenty years and nearly six million visitors later, the vision of the original board members, Chairman Edwin Carter, the late Harold Estes, ADM Ronald Hays USN (Ret.), Fred Hemmings, and Captain Michael Lilly USN (Ret.), has been fulfilled and continues to grow.

“We are indebted to the Association’s founding board members for how they devoted their energies to carry out a mission combining the greatness of the USS *Missouri* with the honor of being in Pearl Harbor to create this world-class historical attraction,” said Michael A. Carr, President and COO of the Battleship Missouri Memorial. “Millions of people worldwide have a far greater appreciation about the commitment to duty by our Armed Forces members because of the Battleship Missouri Memorial. We are proud to carry that tradition forward.”

The transformation of the “Mighty Mo” over the past two decades has been remarkable and inspiring.

Twenty years ago, the decommissioned USS *Missouri* was rusting, badly in need of repairs, and seen by relatively few people while stored at the Naval Inactive Ship Facility in Bremerton, WA. Instilled with the conviction that Pearl Harbor was the nation’s most appropriate final home for the *Missouri* and that a permanent memorial could be created honoring America’s Armed Forces, the Association’s board of directors set out to make their vision a reality. With the support of the late-Senator Daniel Inouye and a “Who’s Who” list of Hawaii’s business leaders, the Association put their plan into action.

From 1994-1998, the Association went to work to bring the USS *Missouri* to Hawaii, a monumental task considering the gigantic battleship stretches three football fields long, stands 20 stories tall from keel to mast, and weighs 45,000 tons. A detailed proposal of the Association’s plans was presented to the Secretary of the Navy. A \$5.5-million line of credit was secured from a consortium of Hawaii banks, led by Bank of Hawaii, to fund the battleship’s relocation until the planned memorial could begin generating revenue.

Roy Yee was retained as President and performed a stellar job at keeping the entire project on track, while making the most of limited resources. A skeleton crew of employees, each with a specific skill set needed to complete the *Missouri*’s relocation and establish a self-sustaining historical attraction, were hired. Hundreds of volunteers were recruited to help with repairs and ongoing maintenance.

On May 4, 1998, the U.S. Navy made it official, donating the USS *Missouri* to the care of the USS Missouri Memorial Association. Seven weeks later, on June 22, 1998, the Mighty Mo was towed into Pearl Harbor and moored at Pier Foxtrot Five, the 1,000-foot pier that has been her home ever since.

On January 29, 1999, seven months after its arrival and 55 years to the day of its launch, America's last and most famous battleship opened to the public as the Battleship Missouri Memorial.

Where the Association at the outset had a handful of staff working in makeshift offices, today there are 153 employees and countless volunteers caring for the Mighty Mo and creating memorable tour experiences and exhibits for the public's education and enjoyment. Four of the Association's "founding" employees who started before the *Missouri* opened to the public are still serving the Memorial today: Tom Manuel as Vice President and Chief Financial Officer; Les Lancaster as Director of Ship Operations; Ralph Schmidt as Chief Machinist, and; Mike Weidenbach as Curator.

Today, thousands of visitors from around the world experience the Mighty Mo each week as they tour the main and upper decks and throughout the interior to see historical exhibits and get a first-hand glimpse as to how crewmembers lived and worked while at sea. The most popular site is the famed Surrender Deck where General Douglas MacArthur, Admiral Chester Nimitz and the Allied Forces accepted Imperial Japan's surrender to end World War II and restore peace on September 2, 1945.

In 2013, the Battleship Missouri Memorial enjoyed its most successful year to date with more than 580,000 paid visitors, a record total. In addition, the Mighty Mo hosted more than 1,000 special events and ceremonies, including re-enlistment, promotion and retirement ceremonies for Armed Forces members. Just as the Association's founding board members envisioned, everyone who tours the USS *Missouri* is moved by how it stands watch over the USS *Arizona*, a lasting bond of sacrifice and service in Pearl Harbor.

Battleship Missouri Memorial

The Battleship Missouri Memorial is open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. General admission, which includes choice of an optional tour, is \$25 per adult and \$13 per child (4-12). Military, *kama'aina* (local resident) and school group pricing is available. For information or reservations, call (toll-free) 1-877-644-4896 or visit USSMissouri.org.

The Battleship Missouri Memorial, located a mere ship's length from the USS Arizona Memorial, completes a historical visitor experience that begins with the "day of infamy" and the sinking of the USS Arizona in Pearl Harbor and ends with Imperial Japan's surrender aboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay.

Following an astounding career that spans five decades and three wars, from World War II to the Korean conflict to the Liberation of Kuwait, the "Mighty Mo" was decommissioned and donated to the USS Missouri Memorial Association, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, which operates the battleship as a historic attraction and memorial.

The Association oversees her care and preservation with the support of visitors, memberships, grants and the generosity of donors.

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Please credit images to Battleship Missouri Memorial



Link to image: <http://i.imgur.com/zU1LGyE.jpg>

Caption: The retired USS *Missouri* is berthed at Pier Fox Trot-5 in Pearl Harbor and open to the public as the Battleship Missouri Memorial.



Link to image: <http://i.imgur.com/halKIMH.jpg>

Caption: The USS *Missouri* is berthed bow-to-bow to the sunken USS *Arizona* in Pearl Harbor.

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