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QUESTIONS WITH ...

# MICHAEL CARR

The Battleship Missouri Memorial chief works to preserve living history, especially on this 75th year marking WWII's end



JAMM AQUINO / JAQUINO@STARADVERTISER.COM

**1** Earlier this year, Battleship Missouri Memorial welcomed aboard the 9-millionth visitor since the ship became a museum in 1999. What's driving the visitor draw?

The Battleship Missouri is one of the U.S. Navy's most famous ships. She was the last battleship ever commissioned by the U.S. and the last battleship to be decommissioned in the world. She was the site of the ceremony which ended World War II. There are so many stories that tell her history through three wars, including the liberation of Kuwait in 1991.

We are continually refreshing and adding displays to help share these stories, including our newly renovated Kamikaze Exhibit. This exhibit tells the story of the attack on April 11, 1945, and the aftermath that ensued. I think people like to return to the Mighty Mo to view the progress we are making as we continue to restore the ship, a top priority of our mission.

**2** After closing in March and facing financial challenges tied to COVID-19, the memorial reopened on June 24. What's the strategy to attract more visitors now and in the next few months, given the loss of tourism?

The loss of revenue over the past three months has been financially devastating — as it has been for all businesses that depend on a healthy visitor industry. Until trans-Pacific travelers begin to return in numbers, our strategy, in concert with other Pearl Harbor Historic Partners, has been to focus on our kamaaina and military families with a Pearl Harbor Kamaaina Pass that includes access to all historic sites.

Our numbers have been small, but we hope to see an increase with the Arizona restarting the boats to its memorial on July 10. However, we do not expect our business to rebound to pre-COVID numbers until at least 2022.

**3** What's in the works for this year's 75th anniversary of the end of WWII?

At this time, our planning to commemorate the end of World War II in the Pacific, currently managed by the Governor's Select Committee, is ongoing as we work to honor our service members, while still ensuring the safety of the citizens of Hawaii. It is import-

## THE BIO FILE

>> **Professional:** Bank of Hawaii 1977-89, left as visitor industry manager; president of Polynesian Adventure Tours, 1989-2004; president of the Battleship Missouri Memorial since 2008.

>> **Personal:** Grew up in Asia; graduated high school from Canadian Academy in Kobe, Japan; visited Hawaii often in the late 1960s. After the Army in 1974, moved to Oahu.

>> **Family:** Wife Connie (42 years), three children, two grandchildren with two more on the way

>> **Education:** Graduated from Claremont-McKenna College; then from Infantry Officers Candidate School at Fort Benning (Ga.) and served two years at Fort Polk (La.); also graduate of Pacific Coast Banking School.

>> **Other community roles:** Among others, Hawaii Convention Park Council (as president), which played key role in legislation that created the Hawaii Convention Center; current president of the Historic Naval Ships Association.

>> **One more thing:** "My passion is reading history, particularly medieval European history."

ant we take the time to honor the men and women from the "Greatest Generation," especially those who are with us today. With that being said, as the (coronavirus) situation changes in Hawaii, we are modifying, postponing, or canceling activities to ensure we are operating responsibly during this time of uncertainty.

Currently, the events scheduled to occur beginning on Aug. 28 include educational forums, a community open house, flyovers and will culminate with the official 75th WWII Commemoration Ceremony on Sept. 2 at the Battleship Missouri.

**4** Beyond the coming "Salute Their Service, Honor Their Hope" anniversary events, what are your top short- and long-term plans?

Over the past five years, we have spent almost \$12 million on ship repairs, including a complete restoration of its forward and aft superstructures. Also, the restoration of the teak deck (all 50,000 square feet) is nearing completion. While these are the visible projects, much more goes on under the water line and in the depths of the interior — that no one ever sees — that are just as vital to the maintenance of structural integrity.

The ship is now in the best condition it has ever been since the USS Missouri Memorial Association took over in 1998. Furthermore, we are now completing our new Education Resource Center, which will preserve thousands of artifacts and documents in a temperature-controlled environment so that they can be used by scholars and students for research purposes.

... Given our financial challenges over the next few years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we will focus on maintenance and preservation of the ship more than big capital projects.

**5** You have been serving as both CEO and president of the association for nearly six years. What do you enjoy most in your work?

I have been president now for over 12 years and have enjoyed this role more than any I have ever had. When I was first hired, the charge given to me by the board of directors was to make the association a successful business, which I believe we have achieved. Our board is engaged and very supportive. We have a remarkable and dedicated crew who work here because of their love for the ship and what she stands for.

Aside from leading our crew through many achievements, the most enjoyable part has been meeting and interacting with many incredible individuals, including Bill and Melinda Gates, Chief Justice John Roberts, Gen. Colin Powell, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, and the list goes on. The Mighty Mo has been featured in numerous movies and TV shows, and interacting with stars and directors has also been fun.

## Maybe Trump shouldn't save Dem-run cities under siege



MARC A. THIESSEN

As protests continue to spin out of control in Portland, Ore., President Donald Trump said this week that Democrat-run cities have become "like war zones" and that his administration will soon announce measures to restore order. For those alarmed at this prospect, the alternative is to let the cities burn.

Trump is right when he says that as "far-left mayors are escalating the anti-cop crusade ... violent crime is spiraling in their cities." In New York City, shootings during one week in June were up 358% over the previous year, while the number of police retirements has skyrocketed 411% — a vote of no confidence in the city's left-wing leadership. In Atlanta, murders are up 86%. In Minneapolis, shootings are up 47%. In Philadelphia, shootings involving children are up 43%, and 96% of the victims are black. In Chicago, 106 people were shot during a single weekend in June, 14 of them fatally, while this past weekend, 64 people were shot, and 11 died. All these cities are run by Democrats.

Then there is the spineless response of these local Democratic leaders to violent protests in their cities. Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan called the Capitol Hill Occupied Protest, which took over several city blocks and a park, a "block party" and compared it to the "summer of love" — only to see multiple assaults and two murders take place in the police-free zone she permitted to exist for nearly a month.

In Portland, Ore. — a hotbed of antifa violence — mayhem has raged for nearly two months as violent protesters have set more than 100 fires, looted business and done millions of dollars in property damage to local businesses. Rioters have attacked police with rocks, glass bottles, soup cans, frozen water bottles, bricks and fireworks, according to court documents filed by police.

The mayor seems unable or unwilling to quell the violence.

Trump declared that enough is enough and that he and Attorney General William Barr will soon unveil a

plan to "to straighten things out." But maybe he shouldn't. The genius of our federal system is that states and localities serve as what the late Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis called laboratories of democracy that can "try novel social and economic experiments without risk to the rest of the country." Right now, many of America's cities are conducting social experiments in lawlessness, showing the rest of the country what happens when local leaders join calls to "defund the police" and cower in the face of violence.

There is an argument for just letting those experiments play out. After all, we are told elections have consequences. Well, the people in those cities voted for weak Democratic mayors and city council members. Maybe if they experience the consequences of incompetent Democratic leadership, they'll do what New Yorkers did in the 1990s and vote in tough-on-crime Republicans to restore law and order.

Or they can move. As Milton Friedman explained in "Capitalism and Freedom," the beauty of our system of dispersed power is that, "if I do not like what my local community does ... I can move to another local community.... If I do not like what my state does, I can move to another. [But] if I do not like what Washington imposes, I have few alternatives in this world of jealous nations." In recent years, growing numbers of Americans quit high-tax blue states such as California for low-tax red states like Texas. If disastrous fiscal policies can spark this kind of migration, maybe disastrous policing policies will do the same.

Of course, the counterargument is: What about the people in Portland, Seattle and other cities where violence is out of hand who did not vote for feckless Democrats? Why should they be subjected to violence? Moreover, although wealthier residents may be able to pick up and leave, the poorer citizens of these cities who depend on social assistance and public housing don't have the resources to do so. And what about small business owners who have poured their life savings into enterprises that have been looted and vandalized? If they pick up and leave, they lose everything.

It's unfair to leave these Americans defenseless. And it's arguably the president's responsibility to do something about it.

Marc A. Thiessen is a columnist for *The Washington Post*.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Seattle's Capitol Hill Occupied Protest (CHOP) is shown here on June 22.

Asked by Maureen O'Connell, Star-Advertiser

Prickly City >> By Scott Stantis



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