

## FOREWORD

*Senator Ted Stevens and Senator Daniel K. Inouye*

We share more than a common connection with the men and women whose stories fill the pages of this book. We share a history and a bond as comrades in the deepest sense of the word.

These accounts, from members of the Reserve Officers Association who served in World War II, cover terrain with names inseparable from the historic events which occurred there: Pearl Harbor, Bataan, Midway, Guadalcanal, Algeria, Normandy, Burma, Ardennes, Iwo Jima, Dachau, Tokyo Bay. Terrain personally familiar to us is recalled in accounts from northern Italy and China.

Here, too, are events from lesser-known territories that proved this conflict to be a *world* war: Greenland, Fiji, Ascension Island, Iceland, Iran, Chad, Australia, Aruba. Indeed, of particular interest to us, this book has extensive accounts of “the Forgotten War” in the Aleutian Islands, where Japanese troops occupied Alaskan territory, and it shows Hawaii to be a vital player in the Pacific campaigns after the devastating attack on Pearl Harbor.

You’ll recognize the famous generals many of these soldiers encounter: Patton, MacArthur, Eisenhower. You’ll witness profound events, including the liberation of concentration camps. And you’ll find an account of the D-Day invasion from our late colleague Senator Strom Thurmond, then a young Army paratrooper.

But, more than putting the reader into a well-known time and place in history, these veterans’ accounts share the personal, singular experiences of going to war. This book covers the breadth of “combat.” You’ll feel what it was like to pilot through flak-filled skies while fending off enemy fighters and mechanical failure, to save your merchant marine ship after it was hit by a Kamikaze, to fight hedgerow to hedgerow and house to house through Normandy, and to pilot a glider into a chaotic landing zone behind enemy lines.

You’ll also experience equally important but much less glamorous missions—a reserve unit that created an airstrip on an isolated volcanic island, finance officers getting soldiers’ pay ashore after D-Day, combat engineers building a bridge over the Rhine, and a Jewish chaplain who conducted, in sequence, a Catholic, a Protestant, and a Jewish service for troops on the eve of battle.

In times of war, personal discomfort is often as great a concern as the actions of the enemy. This book features harrowing accounts of battle, but we also empathize with those beleaguered by sand-clogged engines in North Africa, nagging

mosquitoes in the South Pacific, and government bureaucracy upon returning home. Food is another common theme in this book. We now take our access to this most basic of necessities for granted, but in the following pages, you'll read how isolated soldiers treated K-rations as gourmet food, and how prisoners of war were delighted to receive fresh lemons one day.

While we share many of the experiences and feelings our fellow veterans relate in this book, there are also pages here describing a heroism we have never known: that of POWs, from the Bataan Death March to the Stalags of Germany. These pages contain accounts of successful escapes, near escapes, and prisoners merely surviving to see the next day in the face of starvation, forced labor, and torture.

Years after the end of World War II, President Ronald Reagan would observe, "Perhaps you and I have lived with this miracle too long to be properly appreciative. Freedom is a fragile thing and is never more than one generation from extinction. It is not ours by inheritance; it must be fought for and defended constantly by each generation, for it comes only once to a people."

These are the stories of a generation which risked everything to defend our freedom. In *Voices of My Comrades*, we are reminded of the heroism and dedication to duty which carried American men and women to victory in World War II. And we remember also our current generation of Reservists, who today carry these same attributes into battle all across the globe as they continue to protect this nation.

*Senator Daniel K. Inouye of Hawaii served in the U.S. Army's 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the legendary "Go for Broke" regiment of Japanese-American soldiers. He was wounded in combat in North Italy, and was awarded the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest award for military valor, for his actions there.*

*Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska was stationed in the China–Burma–India Theater, where he flew C-46s and C-47s for the Army Air Corps in support of General Claire Chennault's 14th Air Force Flying Tigers. He received two Distinguished Flying Crosses, two Air Medals, and the Republic of China's Yuan Hai medal for his service.*