

NEWS RELEASE

Pearl Harbor 80th Anniversary

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The celebration began Thursday, Dec. 2, when a group of 63 World War II veterans were honored with a special event at the Westin DFW Airport Hotel, featuring a red carpet walk, world-class meal curated by Chef Robert Irvine and entertainment from 1940s era dancers and musicians.

On Dec. 3, the veterans traveled to Dallas Fort Worth International Airport with an escort provided by local police and Patriot Guard Riders. They received a hero's welcome at the airport where more than 100 American Airlines team members volunteered to participate in a parade through Terminal D. Following a gate celebration, the group departed on a Boeing 787 charter flight to Honolulu.

"At American, our commitment to our nation's military servicemembers and veterans runs deep," said David Seymour, Chief Operating Officer at American. "It's a critical part of our airline's DNA. And that's because each of us at American — including the thousands of veterans and those still serving in the National Guard or Reserve component who work at American — are acutely aware of and grateful for the sacrifice so many have made to ensure our freedom. That's why we're proud to support the Best Defense Foundation and its mission to honor members of the Greatest Generation."

The Chicago-based First Officer Nancy Wudtke of the flight was in the flight deck for the flight, which gave her the unique honor of transporting her father, an Army Air Corps veteran of World War II. "My dad is really the reason I'm a pilot today," Wudtke said. "I grew up around airplanes thanks to his service in the Army Air Corps, so it's very exciting to be a part of this. I'm honored to take these heroes to Hawaii."

Following their arrival in Honolulu, the veterans made several additional appearances at commemoration sites and military installations, including Schofield Barracks, Wheeler Army Airfield, Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam, Ford Island, the USS Arizona Memorial, the Battleship Missouri Memorial & Pearl Harbor Aviation Museum, Marine Corps Base Hawaii and the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific.

"It is an incredible honor to join with our most celebrated war heroes, especially when there are so few left," said Donnie Edwards, founder of the Best Defense Foundation. "It's hard to believe 80 years have passed since that fateful day when Pearl Harbor was so senselessly attacked, but we're forever grateful to these heroic men and women who so selflessly gave everything they had to defend our American freedom."

The group will return from Hawaii Dec. 9 aboard an American Airlines charter flight.

"We're tremendously privileged to provide this charter flight and honor these World War II heroes," said Randy Stillinger, Manager of Military and Veterans Initiatives at American. "The youngest of the veterans is 93 years old, and it was incredibly moving to hear their stories and the sacrifices made to protect our nation. It's critical that we do our part as an airline, but also as citizens of the country that they helped keep free."

Photo courtesy of Best Defense Foundation

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