

The sense of unity has been strong throughout our history. From the early beginnings of our country, to the ongoing discussions of today, the need to find unity among our citizens continues to be emphasized by our leaders. It is important to understand that unity doesn't mean that we all agree with each other, but rather we take the opportunity to find a common purpose, a sense of humility, and have leaders that work diligently to bring that unity to a community.

A common purpose among a broad group of people is a strong unifying motivator. Whether it is a natural disaster, a pandemic such as that in 1918, or war, people have an amazing ability to put differences aside to achieve something that is in everyone's best interest. For the USS EMMONS, her ability to perform many different duties showed the versatility not just of the ship, but of her crew. The fact that the EMMONS and her crew supported many different types of missions, from antisubmarine patrol, escorts, mail boat, ice patrol, and at one point as a garbage scow, underscores this unity of purpose. The purpose of the war was to halt and defeat the aggressive actions of the Axis powers, and every crewman accepted a role within that overall purpose. This purpose bound the men in a way that they would perform at the highest levels when it was necessary.

Purpose is important, but it takes a strong leader to bring definition to that purpose. The different commanding officers took ownership of the purpose of their actions, but defined it through a sense of servant leadership. As an Eagle Scout, I've learned a lot about servant leadership. A servant leader puts others ahead, and recognizes that the whole organization improves if each individual is treated fairly and respectfully. There are times that orders are given and must be followed without the knowledge of the why, but if a leader treats their team, or crew, fairly and respectfully, they develop trust during the less stressful times. This trust in their leader allows them to follow orders knowing that their commanding officer would not do something rash.

On April 6, 1945, the EMMONS was sweeping mines near Okinawa. Her fellow ship, the RODMAN, was attacked by a kamikaze and was on fire. In a selfless act, the EMMONS rushed to their assistance, and circled the boat to provide anti-aircraft protection. In the process, she was hit by five different kamikazes and subsequently sank. The EMMONS had previously provided screen support to other ships. This selfless act of the crew showed that unity was not just within the EMMONS, but it was

a shared purpose that pulled all of these men together to protect each other, support each other, and to defend the world against the evil that was spreading.

The United States of today is a country that seems to be looking for a purpose. We aren't fighting world wars, or acting against communism - we don't have a common, clear enemy. So we've chosen our purposes based on our politics. Members of the greatest generation knew that our country was greater than themselves. They didn't speak of the war, but saw it as their duty to defend America; to defend our way of life. It is important that Americans today unify in a way that we find a greater purpose. That purpose may not be an external enemy, but rather a more intangible challenge. Poverty, hunger, racism, education, and other social issues tend to divide us, but if we show a high level of humility, put others before ourselves, we can begin to have true conversations around these issues to unite us so when the next war, or pandemic, hits us, we don't point fingers, but rise to the occasion.

It is my generation that now has the opportunity to affect change in our communities. We need to find a sense of service to others, compassion, and move to act. I personally am seeking a Navy career, and believe that I will be a great leader to help define the next purpose that we are confronted with, and tie it to the history of our great country. My goal of working for NASA and going into space, I believe, meets the needs of the community through exploration and scientific progress. I believe through education and open communication we can break down some barriers and begin to trust each other once again. Winston Churchill once said "When there is no enemy within, the enemies outside cannot hurt you." This stands true today as well, and is why we need to heal our divisions.