

I do not believe that the future simply *arises* from history, as John F. Kennedy alludes in the essay prompt, but rather that it is *forged by the people of the world through collective decisions*. Nonetheless, I certainly agree that these decisions are affected by history. With this understanding, it follows that people can make better decisions in the present by learning of our ancestors' successes and challenges in addressing similar issues. Indeed, it seems that humans only repeat the same cycles of history when they do not attain the power to break detrimental patterns through better decisions, and that power lies in knowledge. Many aspects of the *USS Emmons'* history and crew offer us insight to the value of learning historical patterns and the need for continual change to meet the needs of the present and create a better future.

The vessel of the *Emmons* served many purposes throughout her life. From her inception in 1941 to 1944, she sailed the Atlantic performing duties including passenger transport and patrolling. In 1944, the *Emmons* was reassigned to the Pacific as a minesweeper and, on April 6, 1945, she and her crew changed purposes in an instant for battle against attacking aircraft. Though these duties differ greatly, they share a common theme of *meeting the needs of the moment with utmost valor*. A valuable lesson to take away from this is that we are all called to different purposes at different stages in our lives, but whether they are big and intimidating or more simple, we should approach each opportunity with the same desire to do our very best.

This theme is also highlighted by the various crews who served aboard the *Emmons*, certainly including my grand-uncle O'Neil Infanto, who made the ultimate sacrifice for his country during the Battle of Okinawa. My late grandmother described Neil to me as a bright-eyed young man with a passion for life. Though I never knew him, he clearly sought out every opportunity to smile, as evidenced by the few pictures our family has of him. He was especially fond of rollercoasters, and in high school could often be found at an amusement park by the lake. When World War II began, Neil was overwhelmingly compelled to serve his country. My grandmother recounted the day when Neil enlisted countless times – he ran to the

enlistment station with his buddies, and they spent the rest of the day at the amusement park to celebrate. A photo of Neil smiling ear-to-ear with his enlistment card shows that he had every intention to bring his passionate personality to his newfound calling. His service aboard the *Emmons* indicates that he achieved this goal. Thus, from experiencing the thrill of a roller coaster to serving with courage aboard the *Emmons*, Neil's story is a testament to the importance of bringing passion to each opportunity one is afforded.

Lastly, my grand-uncle served aboard the *Emmons* alongside crewmen of vastly different creeds, origins, and paths of life. From transport to battle, these men collaborated to see that each of the *Emmons*' assignments were performed effectively. Indeed, the valiant history of the *Emmons* was not forged *in spite of* the differences among the crew, but because of their common passion for performing each duty to the best of their ability. It is thanks to this cooperation that the *Emmons* enjoyed five successful years of service and that the majority of those aboard during her final battle were spared from the ultimate sacrifice.

As I reflect on the history of the *Emmons*, her crew, and my grand-uncle, it is clear that there is value in pursuing each of one's purposes in life with passion. Similarly, this highlights the importance of focusing on the common purposes we share as humans and Americans, as opposed to our differences. As for my purposes, I am a student, international development practitioner, son, fiancé, and brother, among others. I also enjoy electronic music and biking. Bringing a genuine passion to each of these purposes and aiming to fulfill them to my utmost ability is one of the best ways I can take forward the lessons embodied by the *Emmons*. As the United States continues through a period of societal division, I hope that pursuing this principle can inspire others to focus not on our differences, but on our commonalities and the value of effective collaboration. I think my grand-uncle would smile if he heard that this is the impact he and his crew had on their descendants.

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