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Pensacola Navy commands remember the Battle of Midway

PENSACOLA, Fla. -- Area Navy commands and the local community remembered the Battle of Midway during a ceremony held at the National Museum of Naval Aviation on board Naval Air Station (NAS) Pensacola June 4.

Hosted by the Center for Naval Aviation Technical Training (CNATT), the commemoration ceremony honored the service of those who fought in the decisive World War II battle 73 years ago.

Capt. Katherine Erb, CNATT commanding officer welcomed the guests and noted that observances like the Battle of Midway commemoration play an important part in highlighting the Navy's history.

"Part of our mission as naval professionals is to preserve and celebrate our rich naval history and heritage," said Erb. "Understanding our past is key to developing strategies to handle the challenges of the future, and is fundamental to building and operating the Navy and Marine Corps forces our nation requires."

Considered by many military historians to be the turning point of World War II in the Pacific theater, the Battle of Midway was fought in the vicinity of Midway Island June 4-7, 1942. As a response to their sending planes to attack the U.S. base at Midway, Imperial Japanese Navy aircraft carriers

were fatally damaged by dive bombers from USS Enterprise (CV 6) and USS Yorktown (CV 5). Four Japanese carriers were sunk, and 3,057 Japanese personnel were killed in the conflict, at the cost of the Yorktown and 307 American personnel. Compelled by their losses, the Japanese were forced to abandon their plans to capture Midway and retired westward. This decisive win for the U.S brought an end to Japanese naval superiority in the Pacific.

Col. Eric Buer, commanding officer of Marine Aviation Training Support Group 21, was the guest speaker for the Battle of Midway commemoration and focused his remarks on how America's young men and their machines were able to triumph over a seemingly unsurmountable force and invincible foe. He addressed the standing-room-only crowd that included several surviving veterans of Midway.

"We are here today not only to remember the great importance of the Battle of Midway, but to remember those who suffered and sacrificed, and those like our shipmates here in the front row who continue to sacrifice," said Buer. "The story of Midway is about courage, about hope, about conviction and about leadership."

During the ceremony, a wreath was placed to honor the memories of those who lost their lives during the battle. Midway veteran guests at the event included Chief Aviation Structural Mechanic Gordon Pierce, Aviation Ordnanceman 1st Class Wiley Bartlett, Radioman 1st Class James Stofer, Petty Officer Leon Resmondo and Barbara Wheeler, wife of the late Chief Aviation Ordnanceman Charles Wheeler.

For Pierce, attending the ceremony was bittersweet. It brought back memories of his shipmates, many of whom have passed away in recent years. "When I think back to previous years' ceremonies, it saddens me to

think of how many of my fellow Sailors are gone now and cannot be here," he said.

CNATT is the largest learning center under the Naval Education and Training Command and is accredited by the Council on Education. Its mission is to develop, deliver, and support the aviation technical training necessary to meet validated fleet requirements through a continuum of professional and personal growth for Sailors and Marines. In the CNATT enterprise, there are 17 subordinate commands across 27 locations around the world.

For more information on CNATT, visit

<http://www.netc.navy.mil/centers/cnatt/> or follow CNATT on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/CNATT>.

For more news and information about the Naval Education and Training Command, visit <https://www.netc.navy.mil>.

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Story by Ed Barker, Naval Education and Training Command Public Affairs

Photo captions:

White/Pierce: PENSACOLA, Fla. (June 4, 2015) Rear Adm. Mike White, commander of the Naval Education and Training Command shakes the hand of Chief Aviation Structural Mechanic Gordon Pierce following the Battle of Midway commemoration ceremony at the National Museum of Naval Aviation June 4. Pierce was a 19-year-old Sailor on the USS Yorktown (CV 5) at Midway. The ceremony honored the decisive battle 73 years ago, considered

by many military historians to be the turning point of World War II in the Pacific theater. (U.S. Navy Photo by Ed Barker, Released)

Midway Ceremony: PENSACOLA, Fla. (June 4, 2015) A standing-room-only crowd participated in the Battle of Midway commemoration ceremony at the National Museum of Naval Aviation June 4. The ceremony honored the decisive battle 73 years ago, considered by many military historians to be the turning point of World War II in the Pacific theater. (U.S. Navy Photo by Ed Barker, Released)
