

Chronological: Colonel James P. Hagerstrom, USAF (Ret.), 1994-07-15

Senator Daniel K. Inouye Papers

Speeches, Box SP10, Folder 51

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M E M O R A N D U M

To: Senator
From: Mark
Date: July 15, 1994
Subject: Col. James P. Hagerstrom, USAF (Ret.)

I have had some discussions with a Washington attorney by the name of Howard Hills regarding Rongelap Atoll in the Marshal Islands. Prior to going into private law practice and representing the Rongelapese on certain matters, Mr. Hills worked for the Overseas Private Investment Corp. (OPIC) and has spent a great deal of time in the Marshalls and Micronesia.

Mr. Hills recently contacted me on another matter. Specifically, he requested your consideration in including a statement in the Congressional Record about the military and private career of his friend, Colonel James Hagerstrom. Mr. Hills mentioned that he and Colonel Hagerstrom's wife thought that they might contact Senator Johnston on this matter since the Hagerstroms had retired to Louisiana. However, they agreed that because of your own military career and connection to the Pacific, where Hagerstrom spent much of his life, they would be honored to have you include the statement in the record.

I have revised Mr. Hills' first draft of a statement and attached that revised draft for your consideration. In addition, I have attached a letter to you from Mrs. Hagerstrom, and a newspaper article about Colonel Hagerstrom.

OK

July 20, 1994



Statement of Senator Daniel K. Inouye
In Honor of Col. James P. Hagerstrom, USAF (Ret.)

Mr. President, I rise to honor the memory of Colonel James P. Hagerstrom, who passed away on June 25, 1994 at the age of 73. Although born in Iowa and raised in America's heartland, to a great extent, Colonel Hagerstrom's life was played out in the Pacific. I wish to offer a few thoughts on the life and service of this remarkable American who served his country in three wars, piloting hundreds of combat missions and earning the status of "Double Ace" in air-to-air combat victories.

In 1943, at the age of twenty-two, Colonel Hagerstrom was assigned to the Army Air Corps 8th Fighter Squadron, 49th Fighter Group, in the New Guinea theater. He flew 170 combat missions in a P-40 aircraft, was credited with six victories in air-to-air combat, and was ranked as an "Ace."

After the war in the Pacific ended, Colonel Hagerstrom served as an Army Air Force test pilot and, making the transition to jet aircraft, he served in Korea as a Fighter Squadron Commander. Flying over 100 missions in Korea, Colonel Hagerstrom was credited with more than eight victories in air-to-air combat with MIG-15 enemy aircraft and, thereby, became a "Double Ace."

In Vietnam, Colonel Hagerstrom served as Director of Combat Operations for the 7th Air Force, and flew 30 combat missions. He retired from the Air Force in 1968.

During his outstanding military career, Colonel James P. Hagerstrom was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross with five Oak Leaf Clusters, the Air Medal with ten Oak Leaf Clusters, the Air Force Commendation Medal with one Oak Leaf Cluster and seventeen other awards and decorations.

However, that is not where the Hagerstrom story ends. Colonel Hagerstrom also raised eight children with his wife, Virginia Lee Hagerstrom, a World War II WASP pilot. After leaving the military, Jim went to law school and began a second career. In the late 1970s, the Hagerstroms built a boat and sailed throughout the Pacific, spending time in Hawaii, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and Guam.

In Pohnpei, the capital of the FSM, Colonel Hagerstrom practiced law and his wife, Lee, taught at the local college. In Guam and remote places like Kosrae, Colonel Hagerstrom served as an advisor to island leaders and spoke out on issues of local, national and international law and policy.

After spending a significant part of five decades during his military and private life in the Pacific, Colonel Hagerstrom returned to the United States. The Hagerstroms eventually

settled on a farm in Mansfield, Louisiana.

Colonel James P. Hagerstrom will be interred with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery on July 26, 1994. In addition to offering sympathies to Colonel Hagerstrom's wife, family and friends, it is incumbent upon us to recognize and salute this honorable man.

As we approach a new century, Colonel Hagerstrom and those who served with him leave us with a legacy of courage and vigilance in defense of liberty that saw this nation through dangerous times in our history. Because of the way Colonel Hagerstrom, and others like him, lived and served, our children and grandchildren will be blessed with freedom and democracy.

Virginia Lee Hagerstrom
Route 2, Box 50
Mansfield, LA 71052

Senator Daniel K. Inouye
722 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-1102

July 12, 1994

ATTN: Mark Fox

Dear Senator Inouye,

On behalf of the family of Col. James P. Hagerstrom (Ret.), Mr. Howard Hills has been working with Mr. Mark Fox of your staff regarding a statement for the Senate Congressional Record regarding my late husband.

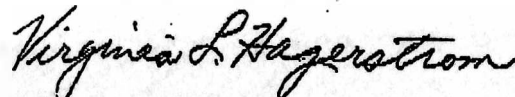
On behalf of our family including our six children, I want to thank you very much for your consideration in this matter.

Jim spent most of his military career in the Pacific region and the time that we spent in Hawaii, Micronesia and Guam were among the happiest years of our lives.

I know, therefore, that recognition by you would be particularly meaningful for Jim's memory.

I want to thank Mark Fox of your staff for his assistance and again to thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,



Virginia Lee Hagerstrom

07/07/94 08:03
JUL-06-1994 12:34 FROM MANSFIELD DRUG STORES TO

MANSFIELD ENTERPRISE

JULY 7, 1994

Double Ace Departs

With the passing of warriors, the nation loses, bit by bit, its collective memory of sacrifice and service. Both the nation and Mansfield became one figure poorer in late June with the death of retired Air Force Col. James P. Hagerstrom. He died June 25 of cancer at the Overton Brooks V.A. Medical Center. He was 73.

Hagerstrom, an Iowa native, was a double ace. He earned six air-to-air victories in World War II, and then eight and a half more in the Korean War. Serving in the Vietnam War, he coordinated in-country bombings.

After his retirement in 1968, he began a second career as a lawyer. He and his wife, Virginia—also a World War II pilot with the WASPs—bought a boat and sailed down the west coast of Mexico with seven of their eight children. Later, the couple built a boat and sailed to the Western Pacific with four of their children.

The Hagerstroms liked the islands and the people of the Western Pacific, and lived eight years in the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia, where he practiced law and his wife taught at the local college. They then spent two years on Guam, he as legal advisor at Legislature, she as president of the hospital auxiliary.

On returning to the U.S. they toured for a year in an RV, and settled in Mansfield after visiting here with Mrs. Hagerstrom's niece, Ann Woods, and her family. The Hagerstrom's eldest daughter, Mitchell Anne, also moved to Mansfield, and is on staff at The Enterprise. "Of all the places we saw, he fell in love with this place instantly," said his widow, who is originally from East Texas.

Col. Hagerstrom's honors include the nation's second-highest medal, the Distinguished Service Cross, two Silver Stars, the Legion of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross with five oak-leaf clusters, the Air Medal with 10 oak-leaf clusters, the Air Force Commendation Medal with one oak-leaf cluster, and the Republic of Vietnam Metal of Honor. He earned 16 other awards and decorations in his military career.

Hagerstrom, who was cremated, will be interred with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery on July 26.