



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Rick Perry

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Text of Gov. Rick Perry's Remarks

Address to the Doolittle Raiders at the Cavanaugh Flight Museum
April 18 2008
Addison, TX

(NOTE: Gov. Perry frequently deviates from prepared text.)

Thank you, Doug [Jeanes, Director – Cavanaugh Flight Museum] for that kind introduction, and congratulations on the progress you've made in this remarkable facility. This museum was great when I visited in 2002 and it has only gotten better. You and your team are clearly pouring your hearts into this place and should be proud of what you've accomplished.

Speaking of accomplishments, there are a lot of people in this world who have made a contribution to society, but the Doolittle Raiders literally changed the course of history. As the son of a World War II aviator and a former Air Force pilot myself, it is a real honor to be in the same room with a group of bona fide heroes.

Along with the people in this room, I have read my share of history, but it makes my heart beat faster to meet people who made history. I grew up reading and listening to stories of men like you from my dad's generation, tales of daylight raids, enemy fighters swarming like angry bees, and comrades far-too-young lost to hostile fire.

As a young man, I was inspired by the examples of courage and bravery in these accounts. However, life has taught me that these stories matter most because they portray the selfless devotion to service that motivated these patriots. It takes a special kind of person to serve their country in combat. And those people don't just fall off the back of a turnip truck. Heroes are molded.

The story of your heroism didn't begin 66 years ago today when pilots slammed the throttles forward and watched the white stripes on the Hornet's deck hurtle by. It didn't begin as your ordnance whistled toward enemy soil or your engines sputtered and died, out of gas over China or Russia, and left you running out of airspeed and ideas.

I believe the story began as you grew up in homes with parents who worked hard and expected the same of you. It continued as your character was shaped by the challenges of living through the Great Depression and emerging tougher as a result. It was accelerated by the news that our country had been attacked with unexpected ferocity on a sleepy Sunday morning. And it took focus when you realized you had a job to do.

When you stepped into the breach and volunteered to take part in this daring operation, you set aside concerns for your own safety and got ready to do something that had never been done before. But you did it because your country called you to it and your personal sense of honor and duty allowed for no other response but a crisp salute and a business-like "yes, sir."

Because you accepted that challenge, trusted your leaders, and pushed yourself to the limit, you struck a blow that got the attention of an enemy that had come to consider itself invincible. With your mates in the

17th Bomber Group, you bloodied the nose of a bully, and let the rest of the world know that there was hope in the face of what they thought were overwhelming odds.

Your actions energized our nation and forced our enemy to rethink their strategy. Ultimately, the changes they made led to their defeat at Midway and accelerated our progress toward victory. That victory led to the America I grew up in, a place where I could attend the school of my choice, go into business with my dad, and marry my high school sweetheart, all encompassed by the sweet smell of freedom.

That victory preserved democracy around the world and made it possible for a skinny kid from a dot-of-a-place on a map of West Texas to become governor of the greatest state in the nation. Your heroic story has inspired our nation and the world for these 66 years. I hope that it will endure and inspire for hundreds more.

Places like the Cavanaugh Air Museum and events like this honor and preserve the memory of troubled times and the heroes that they test. I hope that we will all support this museum and others like it, so that succeeding generations will appreciate the sacrifices necessary to preserve freedom, so that we will never drift into the indifference of ignorance, so that our great nation will never fall under the iron grip of tyranny.

As a benefactor of your sacrifice, as a son of your generation, as a veteran aviator, and a proud Texan, I thank you for your enduring legacy, I commend you for your contribution to freedom, and I wish God's best for you and your families in the days and years to come.

Through you, God has blessed our nation. I pray that He will bless you and continue to bless the great state of Texas. Thank you.

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