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Navy aviators honored at Makapu'u

 By [Suzanne Roig](#)
 Advertiser East Honolulu Writer

On the cliffs above Makapu'u yesterday, a bell tolled for each of the nine Navy aviators killed when their plane crashed along this rocky coastline 64 years ago.

Yesterday, after decades of obscurity, their deaths were honored in a public ceremony.

The men were aboard the PB5Y-5A "Catalina" on April 5, 1942, after flying for 12 hours and 20 minutes in heavy rain, wind and zero visibility. Their plane crashed that evening about 200 feet from where military officers, active and retired, yesterday stood at attention to pay tribute to the price paid for American freedom, said Colin Perry, Hawai'i Aviation Preservation Society historian.

"It's the least we can do to honor these young men who gave the greatest gift to their country," Perry said.

A group of children on a field trip from Holy Nativity School in 'Aina Haina got a quick World War II history lesson as they sat in on the ceremony. The fourth-grade class paid rapt attention.

"I thought it was sad that all those men were trying to save their country and they died," said Miranda Tafoya, 10. "When we came up, I didn't really notice the marker."

Education
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The crew was on its second long-range patrol that day. Because of the blackout rules in force, just four months after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, they flew without navigational aids and mistook the Makapu'u Lighthouse for Barbers Point.

"Patrol flights in early 1942 were a deadly serious matter, as the U.S. Navy and U.S. Army Air Corps daily launched long-range patrols to search for Japanese forces," said Navy Cmdr. Don Hinton. "Ensign Howe's crew died in defense of their country. You are not forgotten."

Because the preservation society wants to recognize the men's heroic efforts, they have worked for months on planning and communicating with the state Department of Land and Natural Resources to place a granite monument listing the men's names and ranks. The monument marker was installed last year.

Next, the society plans to work on obtaining permission from the state to mark the spot where a second plane went down on the Pali on April 5, 1942, Perry said.

On that night, the Army plane crash on the Pali killed all 10 aboard. The preservation society plans to place a granite marker at that site this year. The small group that makes up the Hawai'i Aviation Preservation Society is responsible for other such markers along the 'Aiea Loop Trail, the Pali Lookout and the Honouliuli Contour Trail and at the former Barbers Point Naval Air Station.

Reach Suzanne Roig at sroig@honoluluadvertiser.com.

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