

Hawaii Urged Not to Forget 9/11 Victims

By Will Hoover
September 12, 2007

If one thing emerged from yesterday's 9/11 memorial service at Tamarind Square it was a shared sense of the need to never forget what happened that day six years ago.

One person who said he will remember was Honolulu police officer Karl Steininger, who was wearing a blue NYPD ball cap. On the day the twin World Trade Center towers came down Steininger was working at the 104th Precinct in Queens. The importance of the tragic events of that day are indelibly etched into his mind, he said.

To Steininger, to forget would only compound the tragedy.

"If you listened to CNN today they were talking about maybe we're going overboard with the 9/11 memorials," said Steininger. "I say no. We should never forget 9/11. We need to remember those who were lost. What good were their lives if we don't remember? I mean, we remember Secretaries Day and Groundhog Day — and then we aren't going to remember this?"

Honolulu Fire Chief Kenneth Silva, who saw the same television coverage, agreed.

"People were saying, 'You know, it's been six years — we should just let it go.' "said Silva. "And that disturbed me, because we as a people should never forget the tragedies that have happened and the challenges we face — not just in Hawai'i — but as a country. When we forget, that's when we invite those things to happen to us again."

Those sentiments were echoed by U.S. Rep. Neil Abercrombie, who was unable to attend but who sent along his thoughts in a letter that was read to the throng lining the park, as well as dozens of uniformed police, fire and safety first responders who stood at attention along the park's grassy knoll.

"It is important that we remember it," wrote Abercrombie. "But just as importantly is how we remember it. Let us mourn the loss of the 3,000 victims who died six years ago today ... in New York City, Washington, D.C., and a field in Pennsylvania.

"And let us honor the many acts of heroism that helped us to survive that tragic day and to rise from the rubble of tragedy to rebuild our lives and spirit."

The events of 9/11, concluded Abercrombie, have "strengthened our resolve as a nation to work for peace and united us as a people to find a better way."

Honolulu Mayor Mufi Hannemann told the crowd that 9/11 should be remembered as a day to honor those who, during moments of crisis and emergency, "will run toward danger as we run from danger to seek refuge for ourselves and our families."

Hannemann acknowledged "what I consider to be the best first responders in the nation, bar none. And that is the Honolulu Police Department, the Honolulu Fire Department, the Department of Emergency Medical Services and now our Department of Emergency Management, comprised of our civil defense personnel and volunteers."

The mayor also acknowledged members of the military forces, including those "who continue to do what they can to keep our nation free." And he remembered "the five among the 3,000 with Hawai'i ties who lost their lives that day" six years ago.

He asked the gathering to remember in their thoughts and prayers the families of those victims: Georgine Rose Corrigan, Maile Hale, Heather Ho, Richard Y.C. Lee and Christine Snyder.

"Two of them were on Flight 93 near Shanksville, Pa.," he said, and "three in the World Trade Center buildings."

The half-hour ceremony concluded at noon, with Col. Jeffrey Guild, Air Force chaplain, calling for a moment of silence and giving a closing prayer, followed by taps.