

Good morning Senator Stoltze,

This comes in regards of my testimony March 26, 2015 on a teleconference call before the Senate State Affairs Committee regarding HB 35 entitled Great Alaska Good Friday Earthquake Remembrance Day.

Following is my testimony:

Thank you honorable chairman and honored committee members for allowing me to speak on behalf of House Bill 35.

My name is Chuck Volanti, 1964 former Alaska Air National Guard Flight Dispatcher. I began this quest because of my love of Alaska, its people, my mission with the Alaska Air National Guard, and the tragic loss of my flight crew. Thank you Representative Millett for sponsoring House Bill 35.

This history making, landmark and time honored legislation honors generations of the past, represented by countless thousands of Alaskans, who by their selfless sacrifices in placing others before self today are the people to whom history owes much.

On the evening of March 27th, 1964 I was the Alaska Air National Guard Flight Dispatcher coordinating flight operations at Kulis Air National Guard Base in Anchorage. We were a small unit with 10 C123-J aircraft and enough flight crews to put them in the air at any given time. The guard's mission was to mitigate civil emergencies whenever and where even the mission took us, and very soon we would be severely tested.

Governor William A Egan immediately activated all guard units, within the hour military; members were converging on Kulis Air National Guard Base. Without hesitation we began dispersing troops into neighboring communities to recover casualties, tend to those who were suffering, free those who were trapped in the rubble of their surroundings and to ensure civil order.

A few of us sat around a conference table planning, but communications were difficult and darkness was upon us. Through the night we gathered what vital information we could and began loading supplies, equipment, and putting necessary personal on standby as we awaited first light. When dawn finally came we put our planes in the air.

During those days our administrative flight operations office consisted of a flight crew of 4 personnel. I am the sole surviving member, the others persisted 3 weeks later during a quake related humanitarian mission. When their aircraft tragically crashed on takeoff from the city of Valdez. Also lost in this tragedy was the state of Alaska's first ever appointed Alaska National Guard Adjutant General, Major General Thomas P. Carroll.

As a small unit we operated more like close family than a formal military command. Losing these men was like losing family. They were selfless, dedicated and committed to duty...patriots all.

Scope of this quake is legendary nothing has had more impact on Alaska or its people. All were forever changed. The towns of Valdez, Seward, Portage, Girdwood, and Chenega village virtually destroyed and suffered numerous fatalities.

Anchorage sustained unimaginable devastation the infrastructure was in shambles. The quake destroyed hundreds of dwellings and businesses and created numerous landslides throughout the area.

But as devastating and ravaging as the quake and tsunamis were is not the main focus of this event. The cornerstone remains the Alaskan people of the day and how they rallied together without hesitation. First responders came from all walks of life. They formed the largest humanitarian relief contingent in state history. Beginning with your next door neighbor. They also included fire fighters, police officers, state troopers, army corps of engineers, medics, doctors, nurses, municipal workers, army and air national guard units, and many others too numerous to mention.

All displayed a strong will of resilience, resolve, tenacity and self-sacrifice. Like the Phoenix of old standing shoulder to shoulder they arose from the ashes of death destruction and despair to rebuild their lives, cities, towns, villages, and communities, so that all those to follow would have a better life. History owes much to those people of yesteryear.

What a thriving State of Alaska and its citizens enjoy today is because they stand on the shoulders of those giants of the past.

Their selfless sacrifice paid honor to the future. Now it is up to us, to pay honor to those of the past. We should never forget never take for granted, and always honor them. House Bill 35 accomplishes that.

As a former member of the Alaska Air National Guard, I dedicate my efforts to the memory of all those who perished, suffered great loss, and to those who paid the ultimate sacrifice and always remembering the families they left behind.

Committee members you have my extreme gratitude for listening.

Chuck Volanti

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