

Good Morning Honorable Members of the Alaska State House of Representatives and Senate.

My name is Chuck Volanti. I am a former Alaska Air National Guard Member, who was on duty as the Guard's flight dispatcher that Good Friday Evening of March 27, 1964. This letter comes in reference to HB 35 and represents my humble plea for your continued support.

During the last session, Alaska State House of Representative and Senate Members voted total support in favor of HJR 23, "Proclaiming March 27, 2014, as Good Friday Earthquake Remembrance Day." Representative Charisse Millett was the sponsor of that legislation. That resolution was prompted by my request, intended to honor Alaska State History and the 50th Anniversary of the most tragic event in the state's infancy; being barely five years old.

During the early course of the 28th legislative hearings for HJR 23, it was discovered that the resolution, by nature, lacked the force of "law" and therefore would not constitute ongoing "yearly" recognition for March 27. And in order to make that a reality, a "bill" would be necessary. Long story short, Representative Millett, agreed to request a bill for consideration during this 29th Legislative session. I extend my profound thanks to Representative Millett for her compassion, commitment, and dedication in pursuing legislation that will honor Alaskan State History and generations of Alaskans representing countless thousands of citizens.

What I am about to write here will undoubtedly be redundant for many of you, but not all. I will begin by saying that my original request for legislation was and remains my love of Alaska, its people, the beauty of its nature, but mostly inspired by my association with the Alaska Air National Guard, and emotionally driven by the loss of my flight crew who perished in a crash off the waters of the City of Valdez, during a quake related humanitarian relief mission. Also lost on that flight was the State of Alaska's first ever appointed Alaska National Guard Adjutant General, Major General Thomas P Carroll.

In those days Kulis Alaska Air National Guard Base was located adjacent to Anchorage International Airport. We were a small group with 10 aircraft and enough flight crews to man every C123-J aircraft which sat on our tarmac. Our mission was to protect and serve all citizens of Alaska, where ever that would take us. From the most updated air fields to the most primitive. Being a somewhat small unit we operated more like a family, than a formal military command. Losing the crew was like losing family. I am the last surviving member of that flight operations office and could speak volumes about the men I had the privilege to stand shoulder to shoulder with, but this writing will not allow. So I move on.

Good Friday, March 27th, 1964 at 5:36 pm, this massive quake registered 9.2 on the Richter scale, lasted over four minutes, and caused the deaths of over 130 people, while tearing apart 50,000 square miles of South Central Alaska. That evening Governor William Egan activated all military guard units and we sprang into action immediately to recover the dead, rescue the injured, and to free those who may have still been trapped in the rubble of their surroundings. The air guard facility at Kulis set up a temporary morgue, 100 cots to accommodate some of the local residents who were displaced, and I began coordinating flight crews to be dispatched at first light to those hard hit areas like Valdez, Seward, Kenai and other areas.

But, we were not the only first responders. First responders came from all walks of life, beginning with your next door neighbor, Firefighters, police officers, Alaska State Troopers, Army Corp of Engineers, medics, doctors, nurses, municipal workers, and many others selflessly served their fellow Alaskans;

putting others before self, oftentimes at the risk of their own safety. Tragically some would pay the ultimate sacrifice.

History was being made. On that day, in the bond of human compassion we stood shoulder to shoulder with thousands of Alaskan first responders; it was unlike anything ever seen before. As devastating and ravaging as the earthquake and tsunamis were, is not the main focus of the event. The cornerstone to this day remains the Alaskan people of the day. They displayed a strong will of resilience, resolve, tenacity, and unabated sacrifice. Like the Phoenix of old they arose from the ashes of death, destruction and despair to rebuild their lives, cities, town, and communities. So those who would follow would have a better life. When the going got tough they didn't fold their tents and flee; they dug in. What Alaskans of today enjoy is because they stand on the shoulders of those giants of the past. That is their legacy and it remains intact. That is what we should never forget, never take for granted, and always remember.

I know from past conversations that several of you seated there today endured this tragic experience. And have stories of your own to share. I hope you will at some point take the opportunity to share those experiences with others.

I close by saying that nothing like this event and the coming together of its citizens had ever been seen before in Alaska State History. That is the main reason I see to the importance of HB 35. That is why I plea for your support. In so doing you will show the compassion of a caring state. You will honor generations, and countless thousands of Alaskans. And finally you will honor Alaska State history that is more than deserving of that recognition.

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