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ADDRESS
BY
REAR ADMIRAL C.H. WOODWARD, U.S.N., RETIRED,
OCCASION OF THE LAUNCHING OF THE
U.S.S. THE SULLIVANS
AT
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA - APRIL 4, 1943.

We are assembled here today to mark the launching of another fighting ship of the United States Navy.

No other word in the Naval vocabulary is as important as the word "ship." To every man aboard her, the ship is both a home and a battle station. On her every man pins his hopes and his dreams. In her security lies his own security. For her, he will cheerfully give everything he has, including the sacrifice of his own life to protect her life. It is not without reason that a ship is known always as "she." There is nothing else a Navy man holds so dear.

The ships of our Navy are built with sweat and toil, launched with anticipation and pride, fought with coolness and with courage, and when lost--as must befall ships of all Navies--ours go down with honor and with glory.

So perished the cruiser JUNEAU last November during the battle of Guadalcanal. Even as she met her death the JUNEAU had the final satisfaction that can come to any fighting ship, the knowledge that in her last battle the damage to the enemy far exceeded that suffered by her comrades. This spirit is in keeping with the high tradition of the Navy that "the fleet comes first," a tradition in which the unselfish devotion of every man to the welfare of his ship is matched by that of every ship for the welfare of the fleet.

Among the crew who manned the JUNEAU were five brothers --George Thomas Sullivan, Francis Henry Sullivan, Joseph Eugene Sullivan, Madison Abel Sullivan, and Albert Leo Sullivan. It was by their own special request to the Navy that these five brothers sailed together on the same ship, knowing full well the risk they ran, the danger that if one were lost, all might be lost.

But the five Sullivans had grown up together, enjoyed life together back in Waterloo, Iowa, and when the time came, were resolved that they would fight together too. So they enlisted together on January 3, 1942, trained together at Great Lakes, reported together aboard the JUNEAU, fought together against their common enemy, and when their ship was lost, they were together at the end.

When the loss of the five Sullivan brothers became public, the whole country mourned the greatest single blow to an American family in our history. President Roosevelt wrote to the grieving parents, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Sullivan--

quote,

"As Commander in Chief of our Army and Navy, I want you to know the entire nation shares your sorrow. I offer you the condolence and gratitude of our country. We who remain to carry on the fight must maintain the spirit in the knowledge that such sacrifice is not in vain."

And the Sullivans themselves were the first to carry on that spirit. Those same parents who had given so much to their country, who had suffered so much for their country, were eager to do still more. They came to Washington to seek a way in which they might carry on the fight.

So it was that Pa and Ma Sullivan, later joined by Genevieve, the boy's sister, set forth on a nationwide tour of the shipyards and war plants which are producing vital materials for the Navy. There praising the workers, they also inspired them to further efforts--quote:

"Whatever your jobs are, do them a little bit better and a little bit faster than ever, because you are the people who can bring the end of the war closer to us. And each day that you cut the war short means that many more sons will come safely home to their parents." End quote.

Does a gesture like that make you want to cheer? Does it make you proud to be an American? It should. Because it is a supreme example of real Americanism. If our free institutions, our love of liberty, can develop Americans with such high patriotism and unswerving devotion to our cause, then we may feel sure that all the forces of evil on earth can never defeat us.

Today as we launch the destroyer, U.S.S. THE SULLIVANS, it becomes the first vessel in the United States Navy ever to bear a plural name. The parents of the five Sullivan boys are here to share this tribute to their sons, even as they shared their fighting spirit. Sharing it too is Genevieve Sullivan, herself soon to enter the Naval service as a WAVE.

The launching of the U.S.S. THE SULLIVANS takes place in a year that will see the greatest number of new ships added to the Navy in all its history. Other ships may take to the sea with greater tonnage or bigger guns, but as this ship slides down the ways, it carries a special armor all its own--a flaming and undaunted spirit, the heritage of its name.

The five Sullivan boys are gone. But the U.S.S. THE SULLIVANS carries on. May God bless and protect this ship. May her destiny be as glorious as the name she bears.

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