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(Photos of the Museum's Avenger are available for download at:

<http://bit.ly/2AGgA28>

Photo credit: Pacific Aviation Museum Pearl Harbor)

Pacific Aviation Museum Pearl Harbor Unveils TBM Avenger At Sold-Out Gala

Honolulu, HI – More than 800 guests who attended Pacific Aviation Museum Pearl Harbor's annual fundraising gala were among the first to see the Museum's newest addition to its WWII aircraft collection -- a Grumman TBM Avenger (Bureau number 9117). Initially put into service by the U.S. Navy in 1942, the Avenger is considered one of the outstanding carrier aircraft of all time, serving the military in numerous battles until the 1960s.

Pacific Aviation Museum officially kicked off a week-long schedule of events hosted by Pearl Harbor Historic Sites partners to commemorate the upcoming 76th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor with this evening's gala. The theme for the fundraiser was "For Love of Country – Building Our Future," and included a veteran tribute, celebrity guests, entertainment, and attendance by WWII veterans including Tuskegee Airman Charles McGee, Triple Ace Air Force Pilot Clarence Emil "Bud" Anderson, and Pearl Harbor survivors Lt. Jim Downing, and Derwood Swanson.

On December 7, 1941, Long Island Grumman factory held a ceremony to roll out what was then, a prototype torpedo aircraft. During the ceremony, news of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor broke. Within a month, the prototype was flight-tested and performed near-flawlessly. The Navy ordered it into immediate production and it was appropriately named, "Avenger."

The TBM Avenger made its debut at the Battle of Midway with six aircraft. Although five of the six Avengers were shot down, the torpedo aircraft proved its worth at the Battle of Santa Cruz Islands that fall. It fought in every carrier-versus-carrier battle of the war, and was used not only by the U.S. Navy and Marines, but Great Britain, New Zealand, Canada and France as well.

"The Avenger the Museum has acquired was not only a key WWII warbird, but she also was used as an important aerial firefighter after the war," said Kenneth DeHoff, executive director of operations at Pacific Aviation Museum Pearl Harbor. "She was part of a class of rugged hero Navy planes modified to carry fire retardant or water and battled wildfires in the U.S. Northwest and Canada, saving homes and businesses from destruction. Thanks to the U.S. Forest Service, the Avenger and other aircraft were modified to become hard working, firefighting, heroes of history."

Ocean carrier Matson played a key role in bringing the Avenger to the Museum, according to DeHoff. "There are fewer than 80 Avengers left intact and we are grateful for Matson's generous support and skillful handling. They are experts at specialized shipments like this."

"Matson is proud to support efforts to preserve and share the history of our region," said Vic Angoco, senior vice president of the Pacific division of Matson. "The Pacific Aviation Museum has done a remarkable job of building and displaying a collection of historic aircraft. Each of these artifacts tells an important story of how America and its allies fought together to protect our freedom. They are stories that need to be shared."

The Avenger will undergo restoration in the Museum's Lt Ted Shealy's Restoration Shop, and when fully restored, the Avenger will be dedicated to President George H.W. Bush, one of the youngest Naval aviators to earn his wings. President Bush flew the Avenger with the 3rd and 5th fleets, flying 58 combat missions during his service.

Pacific Aviation Museum Pearl Harbor is located on Historic Ford Island, where bombs fell during the attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941. Visitors to the Museum can see remnants from that day of infamy, including the 158-foot tall, red and white iconic Ford Island Control Tower, Hangars 37 and 79, and bullet holes in Hangar 79. Through its preservation and restoration of World War II fighter planes and accompanying artifacts in the Museum's historic hangars, Pacific Aviation Museum Pearl Harbor shares the story of the vital role aviation played in the winning of World War II, and its continuing role in maintaining America's freedom.

Pacific Aviation Museum Pearl Harbor is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization. Its mission is to develop and maintain an internationally recognized aviation museum on Historic Ford Island that educates young and old alike, honors aviators and their support personnel who defended freedom in The Pacific Region, and to preserve Pacific aviation history.

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