

Director's Talk at HRSC-NE Memorial Day Ceremony
May 23, 2001



A character in Cormack McCarthy's book *Blood Meridian* stands with an acquaintance at a bar in a saloon in the old West and points to the lost souls who are drinking there. He says that their complaint, that life is too hard, is really a mask for the true cause of their disillusionment, which is that other men simply will not do what they wish them to do. It's an interesting point. Perhaps in each of us there exists a small instinctive psychological need to control what everyone else does. Certainly, if such a desire exists and is left unchecked, it can become pathological. Perhaps such feelings can infect whole nations which would explain why totalitarian regimes arise, and grow, and threaten us all.

It is at those times in our history that we have turned to our protectors, the men and women who make up our armed forces, and the security they provide is something that we can never take for granted. At the HRSC-NE we use our annual Memorial Day gathering to reflect upon the great debt we owe our friends in the military. We reflect upon those who have defended us from the fascist threats of the late 30's and early 40's, from the continued threats of Communism during the second half of the last century, and from the current threats from unfriendly nations in the Middle and Far East. In providing this security many of those folks have given their lives, but all of them, either directly or indirectly, have been or remain today in harm's way. It was, after all only a little over a month ago that 24 of the Navy's young men and women were released by an unfriendly government after almost losing their lives in a deliberately staged airplane encounter over China.

We must of course be not only grateful but also proud that in our organization we have the opportunity to support these folks in the execution of their critical mission. It is a mission that never seems to change. Admiral Arleigh Burke spoke of this mission 43 years ago and his views are still current, " Our national destiny", he said, " lies in the oceans which surround us and which extend our frontiers to the ends of the earth. The United States influence reaches to all critical areas by means of the sea and if we do not have strength on the seas our influence will wane."

He is right, of course, and so we meet today proud to have the opportunity to provide our support to this great responsibility and grateful to those who directly execute it in the remote corners of the world.

I think it appropriate on this day, before we begin our ceremony, that each of you stand and join me in the Pledge of Allegiance.
