TOM PUTNAM: Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Tom Putnam, director of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum. And on behalf of John Shattuck, the CEO of the Kennedy Library Foundation, and all my Library colleagues, I welcome you all to this special Memorial Day Forum.

I was joking with Ted Widmer, one of the last times he was here was in January for a session with Ted Sorenson. And I was thanking the audience for braving a snowstorm on that day to make it to the Library. Some of you are probably here. Today, we have the opposite weather pattern. So we thank all of you for foregoing this beautiful spring day and being here to commemorate Memorial Day with us.

Let me begin by acknowledging the sponsors of the Kennedy Library Forums, including our lead sponsor, Bank of America, Boston Capital, the Lowell Institute, the Corcoran Jennison companies, and our media sponsors, *The Boston Globe*, WBUR, and NECN.

It's fitting to hold today's Forum here at the Kennedy Library as our nation celebrates Memorial Day. Outside this theatre, as some of you may have seen on your way in, we have a display of JFK's Purple Heart and his Naval dress uniform. His experience of war and its consequences informed John F. Kennedy's presidency. One understands the reference to the loss of his older brother in the skies over Europe and his two PT-109 crewmates in these words in his Inaugural Address: "Since this country was founded, each generation of Americans has been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty. The graves of young Americans who answered the call of service surround the globe."

The stories of heroism and sacrifice related to the PT-109 and the death of Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr., are well documented. But we are honored today to have with us Max Kennedy, son of Robert F. Kennedy, to share a less well-known episode from the end of World War II, chronicled in his exceptional new book, *Danger's Hour: The Story of the*

USS Bunker Hill and the Kamikaze Pilot Who Crippled Her. Max has an especially strong connection to the Kennedy Library, having conducted extensive research here on his father's papers, which are housed in our archives, for his first book, *Make Gentle the Life of This World: The Vision of Robert Kennedy*, and the words that inspired him. And he was his family's and this Library's connection to an expedition sponsored by National Geographic and lead by the explorer, Robert Ballard, which discovered portions of the wreckage of the PT-109 off the Solomon Islands, and spoke here on a number of occasions about that voyage.

Max is an environmental lawyer and historian, a graduate of Harvard University and the University of Virginia Law School. He served as a prosecutor for three years before teaching environmental studies at Boston College, where he co-founded the Urban Ecology Institute. He's an associate scholar affiliated with the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University. And he lives with his family in Los Angeles.

Danger's Hour juxtaposes the story of a kamikaze pilot, Kiyoshi Ogawa, with the acts of untold heroism of the men aboard his target, the Bunker Hill, detailing how American sailors and airmen risked their own lives to save their ship. Drawing on years of research and firsthand interviews with both American and Japanese survivors, Max draws a gripping portrait of men bravely serving their countries in war in the advent of a terrifying new weapon — suicide bombing — that nearly halted the most powerful nation in the world.

To reconstruct this extraordinary tale, Max conducted more than one hundred interviews with Japanese pilots and their families, countless conversation with Bunker Hill veterans, some of whom may be in the audience today, and did extensive research at the National Archives. The book, which is on sale in our bookstore, was described by Ken Burns as a, "…riveting, thought provoking, superbly written history."

Our moderator this afternoon is Ted Widmer, director of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University, a former speechwriter to President Bill Clinton, and author of numerous books on the presidency. I think he may hold the record for moderating three Kennedy Library Forums in one season, a testament to the wonderful job he does in preparing for these sessions, and bringing out the best of our speakers. His most recent book, *Arkansas of the Liberties*, was described by one reviewer as a, "…sweeping, elegant history of the ideas that shape American foreign policy."

He's both a professional colleague and a close friend to Max, and eagerly accepted our invitation to moderate this afternoon's conversation. So please join me in welcoming Max Kennedy and Ted Widmer for this special Memorial Day Forum to help honor those 393 American servicemen, who, on that fateful day of May 11th, 1945, gave their lives in defense of our nation. As one reviewer concluded, "What emerges in *Danger's Hour* is a most valuable reminder of what this country has endured and the enormous bravery that can be summoned in the fact of a sudden, sinking tragedy." Ted and Max.

TED WIDMER: Thank you, Tom. And thank all of you for coming out on this Memorial Day. And thank you, Max, for writing this beautiful book. And I suppose I should begin with the basic-- I've been talking to you for many years throughout the writing of the book. But I don't think I've ever asked you why, how it started, how you discovered the U.S.S. Bunker Hill. I've spent many years studying American history and did not know this episode. So how did you discover it?

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: Thanks Ted, so much. I just want to let you know that Ted was my professor at Harvard. And he did not give me an A in history. And I've been irritated with him ever since. I really just wrote this book to spite him.

TED WIDMER: Keeping Max irritated is why he keeps asking me to come back for these events. It was a good move on my part.

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: I want to say, too, that that was really-- that was the nicest introduction that I've ever had. I mean, it was really thoughtful, nice because you were so clear about the book and why I wrote it, and what it's really about, which is the extraordinary heroism that Americans produce sort of organically when we work together for a shared cause. And I think we're at the edge of one of those times again now, which I'm really, really excited about.

But just getting back to Ted's question, I heard about the-- This is what really happened. I was working on Senator Kennedy's reelection campaign. And when you're working on a campaign, you meet all sorts of people from-- in strange walks of life that I would never normally meet. And I met these two guys who were developing high tech equipment at MIT. And they had created a camera that could snake through 500 feet of broken cement.

So on the evening of September 11th, they called me up and they had completed construction of 40 of these cameras. And they gave me their entire inventory and I drove down with a friend to New York. And there was a big sign on 684 that said, "New York City closed. Turn around." And it was just-- You know, it was such an emotional and shocking, shocking day. And we continued to drive.

I had completely illegally gotten a badge from a police officer. And I had a blue suburban so it looked like a police car. And we pulled into a line of police and firemen going into the city. And we drove across the Triboro Bridge in the wrong lanes, and then in the closed one-way lanes going up on the FDR Drive. And then we picked up a group of about a dozen firemen. And they rode on the sides of the car. And they escorted us through. And we went to the edge of the Trade Center, next to the Fire Department's mobile headquarters.

And, you know, these guys had just lost half of their best friends. And there was a building lying on its side next to us, probably a 35-story building. And there was fires coming up, just all around. And there'd never been a disaster like this where there weren't survivors. And so when we showed up with the camera, these guys were so excited. And we trained them how to use them. And they would go in. The batteries lasted about 42 minutes. And they would come back 42 minutes later absolutely exhausted and dejected, because we all began to realize that no one was alive.

And I could not get it out of my head that morning how an organization (and we didn't know anything about it at the time) could convince a large group of men to kill themselves. And it's one thing to say, "Okay, you've got to kill yourself," you know, "We're going to do that right now." But to say, "This is going to happen in a year," and live each day knowing that you're one day closer to that-- You know, this is the most powerful impulse that we have, is the impulse for self-preservation. And I wanted to try to figure out how they did that. Because obviously knowing how to do it would, in some way, help to stop it from happening again.

And the only incident or time that I could think of that this had ever happened before was during World War II when the Japanese trained thousands of kamikazes, you know, to do virtually the same thing, drive aircraft, you know, and crash them to hurt Americans, and trained for months in advance to do it. And so I was talking with a friend, and he told me that the most devastating kamikaze attack had never been written about, and that the ship had left from Boston and had a big crew from Boston aboard.

And so I started-- You know, I read-- On this day, eight or ten years ago, I started reading the articles. And there was an interview with a fellow who'd been aboard the Bunker Hill. And they gave his town and so I called 4-1-1. And I said, "Do you mind if I come out and talk with you about what happened?" His name was George Lyons. And I thought for sure this guy can't remember what really happened. Because what he told me

was the most extraordinary tale that I had heard. And so I called someone else, and they told me the same thing. And I began to realize that this story just absolutely had to be told.

And I was in a unique position, because we are surrounded in Massachusetts by veterans of World War II. We volunteered-- In this state, these men volunteered in huge, huge numbers after Pearl Harbor. And each one of them has a story that needs to be told and needs to be handed along to our children. Jack Walsh was here-- Is he here now? Is Jack here? No? --with his son or his grandson, you know, who's just learning these stories.

That was a long answer. I'll try to make them a lot shorter.

TED WIDMER: So that's a very good explanation. But then the difficulty I can't even imagine of finding out who, if anyone, was alive on the Japanese side. And how did you-- I mean, what's remarkable about this book is it tells the story from both points of view. And it gets very deeply into the culture of the Japanese pilots, who, as Max said, were training with full knowledge of the final result, but never wavered. And it's quite moving on that side as well. How did you find out where they were in Japan? And how did you handle the language gap and what was that like?

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: You know, it's funny because everyone said, "There's no way you'll find any of these guys," because they had been sort of shamed out of existence in Japan. Japan was very-- was ashamed that they had sent a whole group of people to kill themselves, and had really kind of pushed aside this fact. And it's not in any of the Japanese history books of World War II.

But of course men who fight in wars are very similar all around the world. And the guys from the Bunker Hill get together every May 11th, and they have an organization. And the Japanese do too. So it took me a long time to find that organization. And then once I

found it, they wouldn't let me come to their meetings. But there was one guy who said, "Tell these guys to go to hell. I'm just gonna bring you in ...(inaudible)." And so I went in there. And there was a bunch of people who were offended as hell. But I explained what I was trying to do.

And one or two spoke with me. And as they realized that I was open to their side of the story, they began to open up more and more. It's very, very difficult to get Japanese, especially of that generation, to display emotion and to explain something beyond just the facts of a situation. And so I did something which I felt incredibly guilty about, but I thought it was worth it in the end, because the story was so important.

And so they're incredibly, incredibly polite. It's the most polite group of people you've ever seen. And so I realized that if I didn't say the meeting was over, they wouldn't. And so I would ask them the same question for twelve hours. And finally they would say, "Why do you care what size the paper is? We were all about to die." And they would start to talk about how it felt emotionally to receive that order. You know, that was painful, but I think really valuable.

TED WIDMER: It's remarkable how much you found out about those final days and hours leading up to the attack. And the poems are one of the most moving parts of the book, but objects that they were giving each other, jewelry, Kiyoshi's watch. You have bits on everything that was happening in the final-- I mean, it's very good documentary reporting. Is that mainly from these conversations with the Japanese veterans?

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: You know, honestly what it's from is, when I was a kid-- First of all, my dad saved items from the major incidents in his life. So on his desk, he had this-- not on his desk, but on a shelf, he had this helmet that was in our house when I was a kid that was worn by a U.S. marshal that was hit by a brick, and

dented. And, you know, that helmet was-- We would wear it when we were kids in the basement, running around.

But having that tactile sense of history was-- I think, like, gave me an understanding that's impossible without touching or being able to hold or see an icon of a time. And then a group of people, when I was about eight years-old, came in and they walked through our house. And they just started picking up this stuff and bringing it up to Boston. And you can see, you know, three-quarters of it in this Library. And, you know, that's why this place is so amazing, was because when you see the things, when you see that coconut, it brings you right back to that situation, you know?

When I held the paper in my hand of this poem that Kiyoshi Ogawa folded into his pocket moments before he got into the aircraft and-- You know, it's still spattered with his blood. And the poem is quite beautiful. And I found the poet who trained with him. And he was dying. He was literally on his deathbed. And he read me the poem in this kind of very stilted Japanese that's difficult for people to understand now. It brought me right into that base at that moment where, gathered together was a group of people like this, in a room, in the falling light. And they were told, for the first time, that the Japanese navy had been entirely sunk.

Imagine being told that the American Navy had been lost in World War II, and that all of our aircraft had been destroyed, and we had only a handful left, and that this army from Asia was coming across the Pacific and was going to take over these cities. They'd burned Boston. They'd burned New York. They'd burned Providence. And they were coming here now. And we have left a dozen 747s. Will you get into one of these? If you crash into their ship, you will stop them and you will save this country.

This is what they were told. And they all stood up and said, "Yes, I'll do it." There was actually one guy who said no. One guy out of 250 said no. And I met him. And I said,

"So what happened?" He said, "They made me do it anyway." That's the air force. Anyway.

TED WIDMER: Speaking of things of history, one thing I learned about was what an amazing place an Essex class aircraft carrier was. I mean, I just remember the game Battleship, and everything kind of looked the same. But this was like a floating city, I mean, an incredible, sophisticated weapon, postal system of its own, thousands of people onboard. Can you recreate the world of the Bunker Hill?

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: This was the most remarkable weapon that had ever been created in the history of the world. The Essex class carriers, a number of which were built right over in Quincy, were-- Literally, there was not a single country in the world that could build one of these. And we built 23 during the course of World War II. President Roosevelt realized that the war in the Pacific would be won by aircraft carriers. And he put the entire U.S. economy at the disposal of these shipbuilders.

And, you know, these incredible designers thought of this in their head. It had never been done before. When they began construction in Quincy of this ship, they had no idea how they were going to stop the planes. Right? But they knew that Americans would figure it out. So they just started building the ship, you know? And we figured out-- When the guy who commanded the ship landed on carriers, the way they stopped them was, they took pulleys and they hung sandbags off the side of the ship. And he had a rope that he lowered a hook from. And they would grab the hook, and the sandbags would come up. And they hoped like hell they'd put enough weight in the sandbags.

And so, you know, it's an amazing technological leap, 3,400 men on a single ship that becomes almost instantly the most busy airport in the world. They're landing and taking off, 24 hours a day. They're so crowded in there. There was a guy, Tom Martin. I wish he was here right now. He's from Cambridge. And they had to add all these bunks. So he

was squished in on the ceiling, about this far below the flight deck. And the aircraft would smash into the flight deck 24 hours a day. And it's only four inches thick. Can you imagine? And sometimes, you know, the pilot would screw up and a propeller would come tearing through the flight deck.

I mean, this is just one tiny little story of the extraordinary hell that these men went through. And so many of them from Massachusetts-- You know, they went to high school here. Pearl Harbor happened. They signed up out of Revere High School. They left the day after graduation, went down to Newport, and got trained in those Quonset huts, and then came up here, slept for a month in the Fargo Building, and then walked across and got in that ship and left.

And three years later-- If you have a sixty-day deployment in the Gulf now, that's a hell of a long deployment. These guys are out for three and a half years, and then they're back. And many of them never left Revere again. You know? And they also really, for the most part, hadn't spoken about what happened since then, you know, despite the fact that this was one of the most important events in their lives.

In order to get people to really tell what happened, I would have to ask their whole family to leave the room. And so often, the wife or the children, you know, I would notice were sneaking back and hanging around the corner, because they were desperate to know what had really happened to their dad or their husband.

TED WIDMER: I think I remember reading a hundred thousand pieces of mail going off the Bunker Hill every month. Is that right?

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: Incredible. I mean, when you look at it-- This ship had a cobbler shop. They had a full-- They had three dentists aboard. They had a full hospital that would be bigger and better than almost any outside of Boston, you

know, in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. They had, you know, stores, sundry shops. They had an ice cream machine in the flight deck-- not in the flight deck, in the hangar deck. They had a cobbler shop, tailors. And, you know, just the post office, to say this post office handled a hundred thousand pieces of mail a month, you know, that would make it busier than, you know, all but the largest in the United States.

What they figured out is that if you build a ship this size and strength, that you have four and a half acres of sovereign territory. When you step on that ship anywhere in the world, you are in the United States of America. And we can take these bases, which are essentially air bases, and put them anywhere there's a problem. And that idea has driven American foreign policy for fifty years. You know?

When you see the Ronald Reagan and these gigantic carriers, they're built to last for fifty years. And there is basically nothing anyone can do to stop them. And there's no force in the history of the world that has been created, you know, not to extend power, but to extend democracy and peace, you know, and the values that particularly founded this state.

TED WIDMER: One of the great tensions in your book is the realization that even though this strategy of kamikaze suicide was insane by many measures of sanity, it was pretty effective militarily. And the Bunker Hill was not sunk technically, but she was removed from the war, and by two flimsy Japanese Zeroes. From a military point of view, the kamikaze strikes were actually pretty effective. Is that fair to say?

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: I was shocked by how effective they were, you know? Almost every history follows the Navy line that these were really-- this was a fluke at the end of the war, you know? You read constantly that they didn't sink a single Essex class carrier, not one.

But then when you start looking at the statistics, these carriers would be-- You know, they would get hit. They'd go back to The United States for repairs. So they're out of the war for 90 or 120 or 150 days. They come back, many of them came back, and four or five days later, they'd get hit again and have to come back to Eulithe(?) or to Pearl, or all the way back to America. And a heck of a lot of them never were able to fight in the war again, or were able to fight for only a few days.

Now, there was no question by then that The United States had won the war. That is true. But it is also true that we had a special vulnerability to suicide. If our enemy is willing to kill themselves to hurt us, we do become vulnerable. And that's a lesson that the Navy really did learn at the time, and then was sort of forgotten by policymakers.

TED WIDMER: So can you take us back to the moment of impact? The book has this incredible photograph on the cover, which some of you may have seen. It's a widely reproduced photograph that was the cover *The Victory At Sea* album and books of naval photographs. And it's right after the moment of impact. Is that right?

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: Yeah, that's about sixty seconds after the moment of impact. And it was taken by a fellow who had climbed out of a porthole in the Bunker Hill and then run up this deck. And these cameras, these were these huge Kodak cameras that shot five-inch negatives. And it's a big box. And the photographer left it to go get more film, and essentially this sailor jumped behind it to protect himself, and then continued clicking.

And then he developed the pictures himself, and he was, like, "Wow, that one's really good." He's a great guy, really a great guy. There's another photograph in here which I think is extraordinary, which was taken, I think, from the Randolph, another Essex carrier. And you can see the blur of Kiyoshi's aircraft, maybe four hundred yards above the Bunker Hill, you know? He has less than one second to live at that point. And there

are fifty or sixty pilots who are below who also have, you know, less than one second to live.

I'll tell you, because there's not children in here. I want to tell you a little bit about what happened to these men when the Bunker Hill was hit. The first aircraft slid across the deck. There were 34 planes, many of them with their propellers spinning, many of them loaded with napalm on the deck. He clipped the wing of the first aircraft, then hit the next one across the engine, and then hit a third and probably a fourth, and dragged those over the side, over a gun emplacement. The pilot in one of those planes was pulled overboard. He jumped out of his aircraft into a pool of flaming napalm. He was supposed to be the most handsome pilot on the Bunker Hill. And everybody said he was one of the most handsome guys that they'd ever seen in their lives. And half of his face was melted away. And his hand fused into just a big, kind of a glove.

But he swam underwater and he survived. And he became an attorney. And they say he was extraordinarily effective. I never got to interview him, but I got a letter from someone who had worked in his law firm and confirmed the story. As those fires spread across the deck, the second aircraft pilot by Kiyoshi Ogawa came over the stern of the ship and did a wingover. And at that point, one of the greatest pilots of World War II had seen them and was banking in this way. But he couldn't hold the bank. It was Jim Swett who won the Medal of Honor...(inaudible).

Swett was in this air-fight. And it was his first mission. And he came around the tip of an island in New Guinea. And he was leading a group of three other planes. I mean, we had so few planes that they sent four of them out together. And there were fifty Japanese aircraft coming in below him. And the other three guys, who had been there for awhile, said, "We've got to get back and warn everyone." And Swett was, like, "Form up. We're going in." And these four guys attacked fifty Japanese planes. And he shot down seven on his first run.

But anyway, Kiyoshi Ogawa's bomb passed through the flight deck and then through a mezzanine deck that was suspended beneath the flight deck, and then exploded as it hit the hangar deck, which was a steel deck and bomb protected. And it immediately ignited aircraft that were in the hangar deck. It blew a piece of the mezzanine desk about the size of this ceiling straight up and squished it into the flight deck, which also shattered. So all of the men in that area were killed instantly.

On the sides in both directions of that mezzanine deck were the pilots' ready rooms. And we had a lot of discussions about why they were there. But in the end, they had to keep the pilots as close as possible to the flight decks when they were in those ready rooms and they were getting ready for a mission. So they were there. The rooms were full. And so a number of the pilots were killed by the bomb blast.

And what happens then is the concussion of the bomb is actually a wave of superheated air. And it's as thin as anything could ever get, you know? It's invisibly thin and it passes through the human body, and it very rapidly compresses and then decompresses every cell. And you have what's essentially a nosebleed, but throughout every organ in your body.

These guys were seated. And their friends came in later, and they were all still in their seats, and they just had a little-- some of them a little trickle of blood out their ears and their nose. And that was the only sign of trauma.

In the next rooms, the men survived that blast. They died in some of the most horrible ways that a human can perish. First of all, they suffered from air hunger, which probably many of you have experienced for a split second if you have ever got something caught in your throat like the husk of a peanut, and for a moment, you can't breathe. It's the fastest way to excite the flight or fight response in a human being. It very quickly changes your

brain so that you cannot think straight. You can only think about survival. It's what happens when someone is waterboarded. It's been used as torture for thousands of years.

And that moment of terror went on and on and on. And, you know, we read about people in fires sleeping through the fire. But a domestic fire is very different from a military fire, so. In order to figure out what happened, I called a doctor in Mobile, Alabama who dealt with cases of oil platform fires where there's a great deal of heat and particulate matter in the air.

So, you know, when you breathe in someone's cigarette smoke and you start to cough, that is what was happening at the same time to these men. And had they been autopsied, you would have found a cast of soot filing their entire tracheal bronchial tree.

Finally, well, they would have the confusion of breathing in carbon monoxide. You know? The blood carries air around that's breathed in. And it's very good at binding to air, to oxygen. It'll bind to oxygen five times as well as it binds to nitrogen. Air is mostly nitrogen. But it binds 120-to-1 with carbon monoxide. So if there's just a little in the air, you begin to get that confusion that people feel with carbon monoxide poisoning.

So on top of all of these other things happening, they can't think straight. And then-- You know, you've been touched by a match. And you know how much that hurts. So that pain is magnified a thousand fold in burns all over their bodies. And, you know, I was criticized a lot for describing that aspect of the fight in great detail. And for the year that I was working on this, I was incredibly emotional. And the veterans of the Bunker Hill have universally said thank you for this, before they all say that the point of their story is that we never-- we do everything we can to avoid going to war again. We go, we've got to win. But we do everything we can to avoid it, because this is the absolute worst thing that can happen, not just to them, but to their families. That pain lasts through generations.

TED WIDMER: One of the things I found moving about your book-- and this is worth noting on Memorial Day-- is that a lot of war is fought by the guys in the engine room. And you know a lot about the pilots on both sides, but it seems like you have a special fondness for the guys who were just down there keeping the engines going. And they perished in great numbers right after impact. Another historian might have skipped over that. It's way below the deck. But you didn't.

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: I mean, can you imagine anything worse than being in the engine room of an aircraft carrier for three years? I mean, this place-- It's 118 degrees every day, all day long. And it's the loudest thing that you could ever imagine. And they never saw the light of day. And by the end of the war, they just stopped going on-deck, because the sun hurt their eyes so much, and they became sunburned instantly.

You know, if you've been into an engine room on even a small boat, you know, or had a caterpillar tractor backing up towards you and you hear that noise, these are the nosiest things. They literally sound like they're going to explode at any moment, which they're pretty much in danger of. They're 24 feet below the surface of the sea. So again, you're in a room. The ocean is above that ceiling. And all of a sudden, you feel this impact. And nobody tells you what's happening, you know?

And then the commander, who is an amazing man-- He was three stories above the ocean. And as soon as this hit occurred, he ran down five ladders, came into-- He could have left. No one would criticize him. On other carriers, the engineers all got up and left. And he came in there and he said, "I want to make this absolutely clear. None of us are leaving." Because he knew that if the engineers left, the engines would stop running. They wouldn't have power to power the pumps to fight the fires, and they wouldn't have an ability to run the motors to get out of harm's way.

And he knew also that there was a flaw in the ship's design and that the worst of the smoke would come pouring into that room within a minute or two, and that his men would begin dying. And he knew every name of every single 512 men in his unit. He had been onboard the ship since before commissioning. And he lost half his men. And they died around him. And they would say to him, "Commander, if we stay another few moments, we're going to die. Can we please go up?" And he would look them in the eye and say, "No, you can't."

And it takes a special bravery to send men you know to death. And I believe that this man saved the lives of almost three thousand Americans, but sacrificed a hell of a lot. And his name is Joseph Carmichael. And he describes in great detail how that happened, and how it came to be. And, you know, the people who won World War II were the guys who were in the engine room. And they were the guys who built the ship here, and the coal miners in Pennsylvania, and the steel workers.

And, you know, the Japanese did not have a chance against this communal effort that we made. And, you know, more people died in industrial accidents during World War II than were killed on the frontlines. And that is a story that has not been sufficiently told.

TED WIDMER: I think there are a number of World War II veterans in the audience today. Might we ask for a show of hands? [applause] Any veterans of the Bunker Hill? Right here.

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: All right. Thank you. Thank you. [applause]

TED WIDMER: I think in a minute or so, we should throw open the questions to the audience.

[housekeeping remarks]

TED WIDMER: Can you tell us how the veterans have responded to the book since it came out?

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: You know, I think we could hear from the veterans since they're here. But they've been really grateful that the story was finally told and incredibly generous with their lack of criticism for all of the facts that I would get mixed up. But, you know, the fact is, when you write a military history, when something happens like this, everyone has a different version, even guys who were standing right next to each other.

And so for instance, I would say that half of the crew said that this pilot was flying an airplane called a Judy, which looks a lot like a Zero, but is a fundamentally different aircraft. And all of the official histories say that it was a Judy. Even the secret documents say that it was a Judy.

But the Japanese pilots told me this guy didn't know how to fly a Judy. And so I went through all of the accounts again. And it turned out that the only people who said it was a Zero were gunners. And these guys know how to pick a plane. Right? And so finally I found a picture of the wreckage, and I brought it to a Japanese expert. And he had the construction documents of the Zero and the Judy. And the only way to tell the difference from what was there was really the location of the push rods. And they proved that it was a Japanese Zero. And they showed the particular factory that it was built in.

TED WIDMER: How about on the Japanese side, any--

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: I have to say also, though, a lot of the family of the veterans did not like the book so much that is the most interesting thing I've ever

seen. I've always wondered what happened with those guys and how they did it. And then the pilots almost universally said, "Japanese government should, right now, give that kid the biggest medal they have. He did to us what I tried to do to them every single day."

[housekeeping remarks]

QUESTION: Yes, I enjoyed your book very much [simultaneous conversation] Worchester, Massachusetts. I was a ...(inaudible) gunner in dive bombing squadron seventeen. I was not aboard when it was hit by kamikaze. I'd been discharged on a medical discharge before that incident happened. But I certainly enjoyed today's program. Makes me understand more about-- Because I was one of the lucky ones who was up in the sunshine all the time and never down to bear the burden.

And when I think of the teamwork to get us launched and to get us-- We had to launch our retriever plane into thirty seconds or less because we were the first carrier to be able to operate with 91 planes...(inaudible) folding wings. But I certainly enjoyed and learned a lot about the Bunker Hill that I didn't know in the months our dive bombing squad was aboard. Thank you.

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: Thank you so much. Thank you so much. [applause] I don't think, universally from speaking with the pilots and the crews, that there was anything more terrifying than trying to land on a carrier with an SB-2C, any of the dive bombers. But thank you.

QUESTION: ...(inaudible) excellent pilot...(inaudible). [laughter]

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: You're supposed to get there first. Thank you.

QUESTION: Max, one of the most interesting things about your book seems to be all the conversations you've had with the various pilots and their families. Can you talk a little more, maybe a couple more instances of stories that really affected you at a personal level, things that you personally will take away from this experience of writing this book, and going through the research and things that will always be in your memory?

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: Well, that's a good question. It's funny. I'm almost as good at avoiding personal questions as the Japanese. Jack Walsh is here, which-- We spoke about you a little bit earlier. He's in the blue shirt there with his granddaughter, protected President Kennedy for a long time. I'm grateful to see you here, and thank you. [applause]

And my cousin, Steve Smith is right over there [applause] without whose help this book could never have been written. So thank you. So [pause]-- Well first of all, you know, there were so many people who grew up without a father as the result of this day. And so that was one of the, you know, sort of difficult things, was sort of trying to separate my own experience with that from theirs and continue the work without becoming emotionally involved with the challenges that they faced.

There was this amazing man, Roma Dussault, whom I wish were here today, whose story really moved me quite a bit. But the story that most moved me personally is really not in the book. And it should be an entire book. This fellow was a pilot. And when they went to attack the Yumato(?), one of the doors in his aircraft wouldn't close. And so he was told to come back, because the Yumato was at the end of their maximum distance. There was a real chance he wouldn't have fuel to make it back.

He dropped his torpedo. He struck the Yumato. He came back. He's made a turn after the Yumato, and he didn't make a single turn more until he landed straight onto the flight deck of the Bunker Hill. And he lined it up perfectly. And when his plane grabbed the

arresting wire, the engine conked out. And the way back, he fired every bullet that he had to try to lighten the load. And then he went through and he broke all the radios and he threw them overboard. And he peeled everything he could out of that plane.

And, you know, he was a really, really smart guy. And he was funny as hell. Daily, he just risked everything. At one point, he got called in to see the admiral because he had a piece of his own bomb in the bottom of his plane. Because-- He thought he was in trouble, but it's because he was flying so low to try to get it in the right place, that when it exploded, it went back up into [laughter obscures remarks].

And he had a huge beard, which is unusual. And I said, "What's the story with your beard?" And he said, "I never grew a beard in my life." You know, "I grew up in a disciplined household. And when Nixon bombed Cambodia, I grew this beard, and I haven't shaved it since." And he was a man of extraordinary principle and really kind of summed up the whole story of World War II in America. You know, as a result of his service, he got to go on the G.I. Bill. And he became an editor of *The Christian Science Monitor*. And he sent his kid to school in Japan. Kid graduated from Harvard, he went over to Japan, and he ended up (this guy didn't know it) at the exact same college that the kamikaze pilot went to.

You know? And so it brings together the whole story of our alliance now with Japan. And I can't get that guy out of my head, so. There you go.

TED WIDMER: I love your story about the very surprising final result of the Bunker Hill, when she was sent across the Pacific. Can you tell us--

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: Yeah. If you have driven a Subaru that was made between 1973 and 1978, in all likelihood, you have driven in a part of the Bunker Hill. So she was-- Really, there's four Essex class carriers left. But none of them are in the

configuration that they were in World War II. I wish that this country had spent the money that it would take to preserve one of those, you know? I think to bring my children through one and your children would be an amazing tactile experience of history. And I hope very much that the National Archives becomes much better funded, you know, under this new Administration. This Library needs the money. They need the money in College Park. It's extremely difficult still to find documents.

You know, if you're not at a Presidential Library, if you're at the normal archives, it's a hell of a thing to try to find, because they just don't have the money to catalogue. So I wish we made a bigger commitment to history.

The thickest parts of the Bunker Hill were too heavy. And there's nothing you can really do with them, with the special treatment steel that was bomb-proof. And that is at Lawrence Livermore--

TED WIDMER: Really?

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: Yeah, absorbing nuclear particles, so.

TED WIDMER: Are there other questions here?

QUESTION: If one wants to read the history of the Bunker Hill...(inaudible) where do you find sort of a war diary of the Bunker Hill from beginning to end?

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: Well, there actually is a war diary, which is in the National Archives. It was a top secret document. So I had to do a FOIA request. And then they declassified it. You know, it's sixty years-old. So there's a war diary. There are battle damage reports. There's the ship's log. And there are the logs of the air groups, which survive. Almost all of those things, other than the ship's log and the war diary,

were destroyed, you know, for the last deployment. So those 120 days are largely missing or they were written afterwards. So they may not be as accurate, many of them.

Unfortunately, these documents would just write a line or two, you know? There'd be a line or two each day of the major things that happened, the times that-- But if you read, for instance, the war diary for the day of this attack, it would say, "10:02 AM, struck by kamikaze. 10:02:30 AM, struck by second kamikaze. Damage to interior of ship and casualties." Next page, "Sailing toward Eulithe." So the only way I found to get an idea of what happened was to speak with veterans.

QUESTION: No other books have been written about that earlier era?

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: No, they haven't. You know, I spent a lot of time doing the research on this. And there definitely deserves to be a book of the entire history of the Bunker Hill. And it was one of my big regrets that I was not able to include more. Tactically, she achieved a great deal more in her first and second deployments than she did in the one that I concentrated on. And that story has not been written. There's a small book that was put together by the crew, which is privately published. And then there's an amazing book on the first deployment of the Bunker Hill which was put together by the skipper of the Bunker Hill, who'd become this very powerful admiral.

They had so many people in the Navy at that point. They went from something like 80,000 to four million. And they had some of the finest writers. And this thing is so well written. You can't believe it.

And another thing that's actually really, really interesting, which would be a cool thing to write about is the-- I read a lot of manuals. And for the first time ever, The United States, a country made this huge effort to explain how to use every thing. And they got all of the best writers in the Navy, you know, all of these English majors at the best colleges

throughout the country to write these manuals. And they're so extraordinarily clear and well written. I mean, I'm not good at reading directions, but these were amazing.

QUESTION: ...(inaudible) like that. And I'm wondering if you could elaborate a little bit more on how they chose and trained, if you know, those kamikaze pilots.

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: Yes. I think I do know the answer to that, because I've spent a lot of time with them. In the navy, they chose the best and the brightest. So in Japan, they had very few universities. And after the United States took Saipan, we were able to build this very humungous runway to send these B-29 bombers roundtrip over Japan.

And these, you know, they were so powerful that they weren't camouflaged, you know? And they would go over and-- At that point, Japan had given draft deferments to every kid in college. And when that happened, they drafted every single college student in the country in one day. And these guys were great athletes. They were really smart. And the navy was the place to be. And so they joined. The best and brightest of them joined the navy. And then they took this test. And if you've got the highest grades on the test, you got to be a pilot, which is what everybody wanted. You know?

Ninety-nine percent of Japanese had never seen the inside of a plane. And so if you're a kid growing up in the country and you get to be a pilot of a plane, can you imagine? And then they took those kids and they ordered them to do these flights. And they did make those promises. And they made the promises that, you know, you will go to essentially the Valhalla, you know? You'll be enshrined as one of the great warriors of Japan and people will study you and pray for you forever. And you'll live in this afterworld paradise.

So, you know, I have all the documents showing this. And I would go through it with them. And they would go, "Are you kidding me?" You know, "They told us to get into a plane and kill ourselves, you know? I was in college. Nobody believed that." I said, "Well, what about the Emperor? They said the Emperor was god and you're dying for god." And they were, like, "The Emperor is a human," you know? "He has body odor like the rest of us." And they said, "None of us believed that. None of us believed that."

And so I don't know, because I haven't spoken with the guys in the Middle East who are doing this. But I believe that it's likely that those kinds of reports are exaggerated. I think that, you know, the guys who were on the aircraft on September 11th probably thought that kind of thing. But I find it hard to believe.

You have to be a psychotic fanatic to do something like that, I mean, absolutely psychotic. These are attacks on civilians. They're attacks on, you know, women and children. And it's very hard to imagine that there are thousands upon thousands of psychotics in Iraq who-- and that there's an organization that can identify them, go and find them, and bring them and train them.

And so, you know, I think General Petraeus is right when he said that there's a whole group of these suiciders that we can change their minds, you know? And when you look now, when I go and interview these Japanese guys, they were all ready to kill themselves to hurt us. And they now love America. And there's a story that sums it all up of this kamikaze pilot who was shot down. We sent a boat out to rescue him. We brought him onboard a carrier. He and his partner were immediately examined by a physician. And his partner threw up all over the physician when he was doing the-- you know, listening to his heart.

And so at that moment, you know what happened? An orderly wiped off the physician's chest, and the examination continued. If a Japanese sailor had thrown up on a Japanese

doctor, he would have been beaten. And they said-- This guy said, "At that moment he realized everything he had been told about America was a lie." And I've been over to the Middle East, and if you read those newspapers, you would not believe the things that are said about us on the front pages every single day, what are said about Jews, what are said about Israel, and what's said about the United States, the most heinous disgusting lies that you've ever seen. And these guys are raised with it their entire lives. So I have hope for that.

QUESTION: Tell me, what made the Japanese think that they could sell their lives as a way of inflicting damage on their enemies, whether it's the Americans, the British, or the Australians or anyone else-- you know?-- in other words, having their-- using kamikazes, and having the pilots kill themselves and inflicting damage on their enemies at the same time, and their military opponents at the same time, like the Americans and the British and the Australians at the same time?

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: The question is how they-- ?

QUESTION: What made them come up with that idea in the first place, of having their men, their guys commit suicide while inflicting damage on their enemies at the same time?

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: Well, you know, it's an interesting question. So one of the big questions for me was trying to figure out the first guy who committed suicide to hurt the United States. And it appears quite likely that the first person to do it was actually an American. And there are numerous cases where Americans were shot, American pilots were shot, and thought they wouldn't make it home, or if they did, they wouldn't survive. And they turned and crashed their aircraft into Japanese ships.

And at the same time, the Japanese began doing this. And that happened sort of more and more often. And it happened at the lowest levels, from the pilots. And at the same time, the kind of intellectuals in the Japanese military were thinking, "If we do this more and more often, we could turn the tide and win this war."

QUESTION: ...(inaudible)

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: From my experience in speaking with them, that was not really the case and it was much more Patton's idea of, kill the other guy before he kills you.

QUESTION: First of all, thank you very much. Excellent program. I'm a fellow here at the Library. I want to second your support for the National Archives. The people here do a great job on whatever staff they have. But I've heard from D.C. that what you said is true, so. Maybe we can write our congressmen and see if we can get more money there.

The third question was, what's your next project in writing?

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: In writing? Never again. [laughter] That's the end of that. I don't plan to write another book. You know? I'm trying to figure out what to do next. And in the meantime, I've been working on building a little small museum in Anacostia, which is the poorest neighborhood in Washington, D.C. If you are born in Anacostia, you're much more likely to be killed before you're 25 than you would be if you joined the Army and served in Baghdad two years ago. This is one of the most violent and difficult places to live in the world.

One of my best friends has been running a program there. He has about fifteen kids each year in the program. And in the last eight years, fourteen have been killed. So we're building this museum. This amazing thing happening, which is right near there, 77

African-Americans organized by the Underground Railroad and Harriet Tubman, escaped. It was the great escape. It's the largest escape of slaves in American history. And nobody knows about it. So we're making a little memorial to their search for freedom.

TED WIDMER: It sounds like a book.

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: It's not a book, definitely not a book. [laughter]

QUESTION: What about running for office?

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: I'm never, ever going to run for office.

QUESTION: Just like your father?

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: My dad was Robert F. Kennedy. And my brother is Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., so. And Senator Kennedy, Edward Kennedy, is my uncle, just to-- And I really hope that we see him run for office again.

[applause]

QUESTION: I have your book at home. My husband has read it. I haven't. But after today, I have enjoyed you so much, it's on my must-read list.

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: Thank you. Thank you. You don't have to read it, as long as you buy it. Thank you.

TED WIDMER: Well, I hate to admit it, but I think you achieved an A with this performance, Max, so.

[applause]

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: Too late to change the grade. Thank you.

TED WIDMER: Are you willing to sign copies?

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: Yeah, of course. Of course I will.

QUESTION: ...(inaudible)

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: Yes, there was. I should have mentioned this when I was talking about the technological achievement of building a carrier. The Japanese built this humongous carrier at the end of the war. It was supposed to be unsinkable. I think they had eighteen inches of steel plate. And it was sunk in seventeen days, you know?

And just also, you know, the Russians were not able to build a single carrier during the course of the Cold War, not one. You know? It's a very, very difficult thing to do. They finally finished construction of one. And they sent it out for, like, 35 or 40 days and brought it back. It's never sailed again. You know, if the JFK comes back in here, go aboard. You will not believe it.

QUESTION: Has anyone ever run up to you, asked you if they could get some free oil?

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: Yes. And you can. You can. Call 800-JOE-4-OIL.

QUESTION: Max, thank you very much for coming down, sharing your Memorial Day with us. I served in the Navy. I could tell you many stories as well. My beard is from Elmo Zumwalt, the admiral that allowed us to grow them in 1970. It hasn't been shaved. I served one day on a carrier, but many, many years on a destroyer. But my day on the carrier was very eventful. I watched the jets take off and land.

Down below decks, I was very amazed. You just look down one hallway, just the perspective right down to a pinpoint through all the hatchways, that was impressive, as well as the takeoffs and landings. One final question on terrorism — do you feel the kamikaze mission and the 9/11 mission were similar as to destroy equipment or destroy individuals, or both?

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: You know, they were similar in the sense that these guys were committing-- The kamikazes were committing suicide. They were using aircraft as weapons. They struck-- The U.S.S. Bunker Hill was almost exactly the same size as the-- size, shape, width as the Chrysler Building. So if you lay that on its side, it's the same.

But they're also fundamentally different. They were attacking a military target. They were in uniform. You know, those are two very, very important differences. But for the first time in the history of the world, a government was sending as national policy men on missions whose success necessitated the death of that person. And that's a fundamental shift which is really important for us to understand.

[applause]

MAXWELL TAYLOR KENNEDY: Thank you so much for coming here on the most beautiful Memorial Day we've had in so long. I'm really grateful to you, thank you.

TOM PUTNAM: So as we said, the book is on sale in the bookstore. Max will just stay here to sign your copies. Thank you all so much for coming, but most of all, thanks to Ted Widmer and to Max Kennedy.

[applause]

END