



*Office of Public Affairs  
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**EMBASSY HONORS EXCEPTIONAL LADY**

When Paraparaumu resident Joan Ellis flies to the United States on Sunday to be the guest of honor at the Second Marine Division reunion, she will take a very special gift that the U.S. Embassy is giving her to mark the occasion.

Joan (now in her early eighties) spent nearly a decade collecting the stories of both U.S. Marines who were in New Zealand during WWII and the New Zealand women who remember them being here.

The veterans will meet Joan's accommodation expenses, and the U.S. Embassy, in addition to contributing to her travel expenses, wanted to find a special way to honor Joan.

"When the Marine veterans who were in New Zealand all those years ago sent a letter asking for this lovely lady to fly to the United States to be their guest of honor, we wanted to find a way to demonstrate just how much her work has meant to so many people," said the embassy's Acting Marine Detachment Commander, Philip Damrongtham.

"Joan called her book *A String of Pearls* because each memory she has captured is a gem. We share her belief that these stories are treasures worth preserving and like a string of pearls should be passed on to the next generation to appreciate," said U.S. Ambassador Bill McCormick. "We could think of no more appropriate gift to show Joan how grateful we are to her, than a string of pearls."

Explaining the title of her book, Joan, who was a young girl during the war, says, "The bombing of Pearl Harbor at 8am on 7th December 1941 was the reason thousands of American servicemen were in New Zealand during WWII. Pearls are found in the islands and oceans those young men fought in and for which many gave their lives. The stories the marines have told improve with age just like pearls. I have strung the marine's stories together like a string of pearls and I treasure them as such."

While Joan is in the United States, New Zealand's Ambassador to Washington, Roy Ferguson, will host a commemorative event for her and the marine veterans.