

Salem Rotary
Tribute to Veterans
11-1-16
Keynote Speech
Tim Ready

Good Afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am delighted and privileged to be with you patriots who have asked me in this noble endeavor to pause and pay tribute to the men and women who so unselfishly left their homes, families and friends to serve their country.

I honor you for remembering our Veterans.

On November 11th children will be out of school. Stores will be open for holiday sales and families will be lined up at the movies; most with hardly a thought as to how fortunate they are to live in this land of such liberty unknown anywhere else on planet Earth.

How did these unique blessings of liberty come to be? They were certainly not provided by the media, by the educators or the clergy.

They were provided by men and women with stout hearts, strong beliefs and stiffer spines, who stood tall and strong together to nurture the ideals of liberty and to defend the heritage that we teach our children and cherish today.

It was the soldier who brought us these gifts...those patriots who served our country, who obtained for us such enormous blessings unknown previously in human history. And it was the soldier who protected these freedoms so often at such great personal sacrifice.

They swore an oath to protect and defend our constitution and this country, with their very life if necessary.

I am reminded of the bumper sticker that states freedom is not free but don't worry the US Army has paid your share.

Our monuments and memorials reflect the costs of such a promise and the sacrifice made in keeping it.

These men and women left homes, families, children, jobs, opportunities and travelled to foreign shores, serving in numerous crisis areas of the world, away from those who loved them, frequently in miserable conditions and often in grave danger.

They were and are America's fathers and mothers, sons, daughters, nieces, nephews, brothers and sisters and... your veterans!

People ask why did they serve, and the answer is as simple for men and women today as it was in George Washington's Continental Army...To serve their country.

An unselfish act repeated over and over since the founding of this great nation and repeated today by extraordinary young men and women.

The question stands why?? And the answer will always be the same, because they love their country and are not afraid to say so...

There was a time when every neighborhood knew a boy or girl who served...friends, neighbors, churches, scouts, little leagues and Rotary Clubs...sent them cookies, woolen socks, a sweater, brownies, at Christmas or for their birthday...but never forgot their service.

Times and customs have changed and now we have an all-volunteer service and too many Americans don't recognize or appreciate the sacrifices of these men and women and their families, who give or have given so much.

America has heard far too much of Justin Bieber, the Kardashians, Kanye West and other celebrities.

Their trivial antics command extensive TV time, interviews, talk show appearances and unlimited exposure. They get more publicity than the moon landing.

- But how many of us know Chief Petty Officer Jason Finan
- Sgt. Matthew Thompson
- Sgt. Douglas Rainey

These are American's sons and they died for their country and your freedom last month in Iraq and Afghanistan.

They left behind grieving wives, little children, loving families with hardly a public notice in the news cycles.

Please tell me who else sacrificed their very lives and future for your families and their freedom this month...?

Today regrettably we have horrific examples of America's careless forgetfulness of their heroes.

They endure long fruitless investigations by Washington committees who wrangle over obscure questions and have little interest in truth, but every desire to warm their seats for the next election.

These Veterans are our men and women, sons and daughters and ... they deserve more.

It is these men and women who have given us freedom of the press, not the reporter or editorialist. It is the soldier not the news anchor who gives us freedom of speech. It's the soldier who protects for us the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Who speaks for these people?

They have no union, the press and media ignores and insults them; and far too many Americans will enjoy the holiday with little understanding of what it represents.

Who speaks for America's sons and daughters and these Veterans?

You do!

I look out in the community and I see young men and women and old timers who have been places and done unimaginable things to secure blessings our children enjoy. I know beneath those worn and grizzled exteriors beat the hearts of lions!

I also see young men and women ready and eager to serve and know our country will be all right in the future because of their commitments.

And I see an audience of caring Americans like you who know what true heroes are, and where they are found.

This is your country; you earned a place for everyone.

Your dues were paid...and by that payment they have secured for us a gift that can never be repaid, only treasured.

This is your country and what you do, how you do it and how you live your life matters.

It's what we pass on to our children and the next generation.

So please, never forget to speak for those who sacrifice so much. Stand up for them. Go out of your way to recognize them and pray for their safety and that of our country.

These Veterans, both with us and long past, all have a faith and trust that they will not be forgotten, that they will always be remembered.

Ladies and Gentlemen, please join me. I want to recognize all the Veterans here today and ask them to please stand up.

They never forgot.

They did their duty.

And we are blessed to have them home with us today.

I would ask all to stand and join me as I render them a formal salute on behalf of every man and woman who ever wore a uniform in service to this country.

Thank you for your services. May God bless and keep you.

Remember that without the United States military, there would be no United States of America.

It is the soldier that salutes the flag, who serves beneath it, and whose coffin is draped by it.

Do not forget these men and women. You will always remember; you'll never forget.

So in conclusion, if I may leave you with a soldier's prayer and a term so enduring to this city...

Peace!

May God bless you all; may God bless America; and may he shine his face on all who sleep in peace here.

Thank you.