



2018 remarks for DAV representatives at Memorial Day events

SPEECH

(Acknowledgement of introduction, distinguished guests, officers and members of the DAV and Auxiliary, and others who are present)

Thank you for being here today. I am deeply honored to stand with you, commemorating the sacrifices of those military men and women who have laid down their lives in service to this nation.

I would like to take a moment and acknowledge any who have lost a loved one in the line of duty to this country. It doesn't matter how much time has passed—no words of condolence can even begin to adequately console a survivor's grief. And while grief from loss may change throughout the years—it **never** leaves us.

<PAUSE>

On every last Monday in May, we find ourselves reflecting on these men and women who so bravely risked life and limb in the face of grave danger. We remember those who left the comforts of home to fight for us and our freedom—but **never returned** to one day trade the title of soldier, sailor, airman, Coast Guardsman or Marine for veteran.

We mourned our brothers and sisters in arms the day they left us, and we mourn them now.

The men and women who have given their lives in service to this nation are—indisputably—heroes. When their country called, they answered. Some volunteered and some were volun-told, but no matter how they found their way into the ranks of the military, each took it upon him or herself to serve faithfully and to their fullest.

This is commendable in a nation where so few among our citizens have donned the uniform and accepted the inherent risks. And this alone makes them heroes worthy of remembrance.

For some of our veterans, we are unable to pay our respects at a final resting place. There are still more than 82,000 military personnel missing in action from every conflict since World War II. We will **never** forget them, and we will **never** stop looking to bring them home.

This past August, the ill-fated USS *Indianapolis* was finally discovered, more than 70 years after being torpedoed by a Japanese submarine. On July 30, 1945, the ship sunk in just 12 minutes. Of the 1,195 crew onboard, approximately 300 went down with the cruiser. The remaining sailors and Marines faced exposure, dehydration, saltwater poisoning, delirium and shark attacks while floating in the Philippine Sea with few lifeboats, preservers, food or water.

The Navy didn't learn of the sinking until survivors were spotted four days later by a flight crew on routine patrol. As a result, there were only 316 surviving Marines and sailors.

The families of those lost onboard the USS *Indianapolis* received a small sense of closure last year. But they are still a part of a club that no one asks to join. While service members and their families understand and accept the risks they take by volunteering to serve our great nation, nothing can fully prepare a survivor for that knock on the door. It isn't just war at sea, in the air or with boots on the ground thousands of miles away where we've lost service members.

I think it's important to never forget the profession of arms is a dangerous job. Just last month, three aviation crashes in three different states resulted in seven fatalities: four Marines, two soldiers and an Air Force Thunderbird pilot.

I know that each of you understands that this is more than a passing news headline involving military personnel. This is a tragic loss of life and we honor the following lives cut short in service:

Captain Samuel Schultz;

First Lieutenant Samuel Phillips;

Gunnery Sergeant Richard Holley

Lance Corporal Taylor Conrad;

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Ryan Connolly;

Warrant Officer James Casadona; and

Major Stephen Del Bagno.

<PAUSE>

Those of us here today understand that to recognize their service and sacrifice, we must ensure these individuals are never forgotten, and that their actions stay alive in our memories—and in our hearts. This is important for honoring the heroes of today—and the veterans of years gone by who paved the way for them.

There is a nationwide campaign underway to recognize veterans in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War. DAV has played an active role in honoring veterans who served during this tumultuous time with a humble thank you from a grateful nation and a pin to signify their service.

But there are nearly 60,000 people who will never receive that token of appreciation or that genuine thanks.

As of Memorial Day last year, 58,318 names line the Vietnam Wall in Washington, which remains a striking visual of the cost of war.

One of those names belongs to Lieutenant Colonel Annie Ruth Graham, who served in the Army in World War II, Korea and as the Chief Nurse at the 91st Evacuation Hospital in Vietnam. She was 52 years old when she died after being evacuated to Japan and is buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery.

Private First Class James Anderson, Jr. became the first African-American U.S. Marine recipient of the Medal of Honor in 1967. He received the honor posthumously after intentionally grabbing a grenade and absorbing the blast in order to save his comrades.

Another name on the Wall is Sergeant Robert G. Davison. He joined the Marine Corps at age 14 and had four years of service in the military when he was shipped off to Vietnam. He was killed in action on December 17, 1966—**one day before his 19th birthday.**

Brothers David and Norman Evans were both killed in Vietnam. David was 19 years old when he died on October 24, 1968 and Norman passed away just over two years later on November 24, 1970 at age 23. The brothers,

who both served in the Army, died in separate helicopter crashes. Norman's body was never recovered.

Lastly, I honor a local hero lost too soon. Insert name, age, branch, date and cause of death like previous paragraphs. If you do not have a local hero to honor, you can identify an area Vietnam veteran to commemorate at <http://thewall-usa.com/index.asp#search>.

Of the million-plus men and women who have died in American military service, the vast majority are 'everyday heroes.' They are brothers and sisters who fought alongside us, who have left unfillable holes in families, communities and hearts across this country. Their friendships, their bravery and their commitment to duty will never be lost.

John F. Kennedy, a Navy veteran of World War II and a Purple Heart recipient once said, "As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."

The 35th president of the United States charged us to take our appreciation a step further with action. There is no more relevant time to embrace this quote than on Memorial Day. I would ask as you leave here and go about the rest of your day to keep the fallen in your minds and their families and friends in your heart—for it is their immense collective sacrifices that have helped keep our country safe and free. And as long as we continue to honor

them with our actions and remember their sacrifices, they will never be forgotten.

Thank you.

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