

The last time I spoke here was my Bar Mitzvah speech in 1974. My preparation for tonight was interesting in many ways. For nostalgia I researched for an interesting local story from the year of my Bar Mitzvah and found Arab interests purchased Kiawah Island for \$17.4 million. I remember being part of a Jewish community protest against this Arab influence here.

38 years later, I am back at this podium. I see now a single house on Kiawah is for sale for more than the entire Island cost then, and *the realtor is Jewish*. Where I protested Arab influence here, ***I*** was decorated *for influencing* Islamic military judges *in Baghdad*.

I was invited to speak about the military for the Sabbath service before Veterans Day. After over 34 years, I retire next week from the Army. Originally I was going to talk about the Soldier I know today, but my preparation led to the Veterans I join this month.

As a child I practically lived at the Jewish Community Center across from my house. One vivid memory is the hallway from the lobby to the gym, filled with the composites of WWII servicemembers. These were the “Veterans” in those days, representing my parent’s generation, with every Jewish surname in the Lowcountry, including my uncles, whose daughters are here tonight. *Today I wonder how few photos we could post for Iraq and Afghanistan.*

This is not a reflection of this community, *but it is a reflection* of America as a whole. In World War II, almost all of the draft age males served. Today less than 1% percent of the US population serves in the Active military, the Reserve and National Guard of all services **combined**. Like our roots in the Revolution, our future military will be dependent on volunteers, not a draft. George Washington warned:

"The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the Veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation."

Washington says our security is proportional to how we treat Veterans.

In my youth, I remember Veterans Day. Our community was flush with Veterans. We were out of school. The day was solemn.

For many, Veterans Day is only noted for banks and government offices being closed. While my son was out of school for two teacher workdays this week, they will not be out of school next week for Veterans Day. Many kids don't know a Veteran, *or even what a Veteran is.*

President Kennedy was the first voice of my parent's generation of Veterans. He said **"A nation reveals itself not only by the men it**

produces, but also by the men it honors, the men it remembers.”

Tonight I can speak for my generation in my childhood community.

In 1983, I was sworn as a military officer at the World War Memorial, directly across from the SC statehouse, where I work today. The War memorial started with donations from South Carolinians to honor its Veterans following the Great War. It is nicer than any World War I memorial in Washington. It is worthy of being on the National Mall, with Limestone exterior and marble interior, a beautiful tribute.

Waiting for my turn to be sworn in outside the 2nd floor Grand Room I read a marble engraving that dedicates the facility as a:

“...shrine of those who gave their lives in war, remember they went not forth to battle for the spoils of conquerors, nor did the scourge of hatred drive them into conflict. Their cause was the restoration of peace to a strife torn world. They died without malice in their hearts.” (*Words still appropriate today.*)

I entered the Grand Room, my footsteps echoing from the marble floor to the high ceiling. Standing before a white marble tomb, and under another marble inscription to South Carolina’s war dead, I took my solemn oath. **This is awe-inspiring for a 22 year old new lieutenant.**

When asked to speak here, I went back to this facility for inspiration. Thought the Memorial building is across from my new

office on the statehouse grounds, I have not been back to it since becoming a war veteran myself. It is no longer even open to the public.

Industrial carpet masks the footsteps on the marble floor

Solemnity is replaced by ringing phones and office noise.

Modern cubicles obstruct the alter of remembrance.

Hidden are the concluding words on the marble epitaph above me as I took my oath, now *unseen* for future generations:

“...God rest your souls and may he help the living be worthy to reap in the fields of honor where you have sown.”

Around the World, November 11th is commonly referred to as “Armistice Day” or “Remembrance Day.” At the 11th hour, on the 11th Day of the 11th month, there is silence throughout Europe and the old British Commonwealth, from Canada to New Zealand.

In America, the 11:00 hour will likely pass without notice.

Veteran’s Day is not even a “day off” for most anymore.

Even Veterans Day sales are overshadowed by Black Friday.

It is certainly not our Nation’s Day of Remembrance.

Less than a week following peaceful, free elections,

While I have subordinates in Afghanistan...

In a magnificent structure built by South Carolina's families as a tribute to veterans of the War to End All Wars, there will more likely be a conversation discussing tomorrow's football game, than a moment of silence, remembrance or even respect.

I leave you with a British poem often attributed to Kipling, but existing 200 years before his birth, still valid today:

In times of war and not before,

God and the soldier we adore.

But in times of peace and all things righted,

God is forgotten and the Soldier slighted."

If the father of our country warned our future is proportionally based on how our society treats its Veterans, **how secure is our future?**

If speaking for my parent's generation, President Kennedy said we reveal ourselves in how we honor those before us, **what does this reveal about us?**

Before we point a finger at Columbia bureaucrats or a school board politicians....

38 hours from now....

...are you more likely to be talking football, than even pause in remembrance at the 11th hour, of the 11th day of the 11th month?