

National Vietnam War Veterans Day Ceremony

Johns Creek Veterans Memorial Park, Johns Creek, GA

6:00 PM, Wednesday, 28 March 2018

Host: Johns Creek Veterans Association

Master of Ceremonies: Mike Roman

Speaker: Richard H. White, Colonel, US Army (Retired)

Thank you for inviting me this evening to say a few words about the meaning of the event called, National Vietnam War Veterans Day.

Tomorrow, will mark 45 years ago when the last combat units withdrew from South Vietnam on 29 March 1973.

One year ago today, President Trump signed into law the “Vietnam War Veterans Recognition Act of 2017”, designating 29 March as National Vietnam War Veterans Day.

The language of this law creates both a day of recognition and encourages our citizens to fly our flag in honor of all Vietnam Veterans, both living and deceased.

The Vietnam War for the United States lasted from 1 November 1955 to 30 April 1975, a period of over 19 years.

During that time, approximately 2,800,000 Americans served on the ground in Vietnam with an additional approximately 700,000 of our naval and air forces that served off-shore and in neighboring countries.

Of those almost three and half million that served there, over 300,000 were wounded, 58,315 were killed and, as Abraham Lincoln said at Gettysburg, *“Gave their last full measure of devotion”*.

Truly, these fallen warriors paid the ultimate price with their sacrifice and clearly demonstrated that, *“Freedom is not Free”*.

When I think of Vietnam Veterans, two passages from the Bible come to mind.

The first passage, from the Old Testament, asks two questions and then provides an immediate answer to those questions.

The other passage, from the New Testament, describes what the Veteran does or, if necessary, is willing to do.

The two questions from the first passage is found in Isaiah 6:8 with the two questions being, *“Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?”*

And then the answer quickly comes, *“Here am I. Send me!”*

The second passage is John 15:13

“Greater Love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for a friend”.

In combat, in Vietnam, I first-hand witnessed the real-life action carried out of these two verses.

When our nation needed warriors and asked who will go for us, young Americans all across our land raised their hand and said, in essence, *“Here am I, send me.”*

Their *“send me”* response also demonstrated the willingness of their selfless service of the second verse, for when these young Americans raised their right hand and took that serious, life-changing, and selfless oath of enlistment or commissioning, they were then saying, in essence, *“I love my country, our freedoms, and our people so much that I am willing to lay down my life for them.”*

And when a small, far-away country called Vietnam asked for help to fight-off an evil ideology and over-whelming force called communism, America responded, just as it had done, many times before.

Most Vietnam Veterans that fought in the jungles and rice paddies were young Americans that were born in the forties or early fifties. Our grandfather’s generations had fought in WWI, our father’s generation had fought in WWII, while some of our big brothers and cousins had fought in Korea.

It was our growing-up experience that all of these Veterans were the quiet, stoic heroes that we all looked-up to and tried to be found worthy of their sacrifices.

Also, for these same young, soon to be Soldiers, the inauguration words of John F. Kennedy were ringing in our ears and on our minds ...

“Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty.”

Soon followed by those words that we all know ...

“Ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country.”

So, when our call-to-arms was Vietnam ... we raised our right hand ... and we went.

However, the difference in our return home compared to previous wars was shameful in its action and was extremely confusing to these young Patriots who had selflessly donned their Nation’s cloth as “Defenders of Freedom”.

Anger and resentment soon followed but, pride, never waned.

Then, as it is today, my Vietnam Veterans Brothers never have to provide lame and lengthy excuses about why they chose not to serve.

As an Australian Army friend once said,
“Why aren’t those protesters back in the States or those that have run-off to Canada not here in Vietnam with their mates?”

I had no answer.

I, like you, am so proud of my service for freedom and for the sacrifice for a people and a county that needed help and we said ... ***“Here am I, send me.”***

God bless the USA, God bless Freedom, and may God continue to bless those that were willing to ***“Lay down their life for their friends”*** ... Vietnam Veterans.

Thank You.