

## **New York City Fleet Week Memorial Day Speech**

**30 May, 2011**

**ADM John C. Harvey, Jr,**

**Commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command**

ON 5 MAY 1868, GENERAL JOHN A. LOGAN, OF THE GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC, ONE OF OUR NATION'S EARLIEST VETERAN'S ORGANIZATIONS, ISSUED GENERAL ORDER #11. IN IT LOGAN DECLARED, "THE 30<sup>TH</sup> OF MAY, 1868, IS DESIGNATED FOR THE PURPOSE OF STREWING WITH FLOWERS, OR OTHERWISE DECORATING THE GRAVES OF COMRADES WHO DIED IN DEFENSE OF THEIR COUNTRY DURING THE LATE REBELLION, AND WHOSE BODIES NOW LIE IN ALMOST EVERY CITY, VILLAGE AND HAMLET CHURCHYARD IN THE LAND. IN THIS OBSERVANCE NO FORM OF CEREMONY IS PRESCRIBED, BUT POSTS AND COMRADES WILL IN THEIR OWN WAY ARRANGE SUCH FITTING SERVICES AND TESTIMONIALS OF RESPECT AS CIRCUMSTANCES MAY PERMIT."

THIS OBSERVANCE, THAT TOOK PLACE ON 30 MAY 1868, BECAME OUR MEMORIAL DAY, A NATIONAL HOLIDAY NOW CELEBRATED ON THE LAST MONDAY IN MAY. AND SO WE HAVE GATHERED TOGETHER TODAY, TRUE TO THE GUIDANCE GIVEN BY GENERAL LOGAN, AT THIS MARVELOUS MUSEUM THAT HAS BECOME ONE OF THE MOST UNIQUE ATTRACTIONS IN NEW YORK CITY, A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK, AT THE END OF ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL FLEET WEEK, ON BOARD ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL AND STORIED SHIPS IN OUR NAVY'S PROUD HISTORY.

WE GATHER TOGETHER AND ARRANGE "SUCH FITTING SERVICES AND TESTIMONIALS OF RESPECT AS CIRCUMSTANCES MAY PERMIT."

COULD GENERAL LOGAN BE WITH US TODAY, I AM SURE HE WOULD LOOK UPON THIS SERVICE, ARRANGED BY THE INTREPID MUSEUM AND SUPPORTED BY THE INTREPID FAMILY OF FOUNDATIONS, WITH GREAT PRIDE. THE INTREPID TEAM HAS GOT IT EXACTLY RIGHT.

IT IS A GREAT HONOR TO BE WITH YOU TODAY AND HAVE A PART TO PLAY IN THESE CEREMONIES WHERE WE PAY TRIBUTE AND SHOW OUR RESPECT TO THOSE WHO SERVED THEIR NATION IN UNIFORM AND SACRIFICED ALL TO ENSURE WE REMAIN A FREE PEOPLE – FREE FROM FEAR, FREE TO LIVE OUR LIVES, FREE TO SPEAK OUR MINDS AND FREE TO WORSHIP AS WE BELIEVE.

TODAY, WE RECOGNIZE THE EXTRAORDINARY PRICE OTHERS HAVE PAID FOR OUR FREEDOMS, OUR WAY OF LIFE.

ON THIS DAY IT IS OUR SOLEMN DUTY TO REMEMBER THOSE WHO WENT BEFORE US AND DIED FOR US;

THE ONES WHO DIED RIGHT HERE IN NEW YORK CITY,

THE ONES WHO DIED SO VERY FAR AWAY,

THE ONES WHO DIED IN THE “GOOD” WARS (AS IF ANY WAR COULD BE GOOD)

THE ONES WHO DIED IN THE “BAD” WARS (AS IF ALL WARS AREN’T BAD)

AND ALL THE WARS IN BETWEEN THAT HISTORY HASN’T JUDGED YET TO BE GOOD OR BAD.

SUFFICE IT TO SAY, SIMPLY, THEY DIED FOR US.

AND, AS WE REMEMBER AND REFLECT, SO MUST WE REMEMBER TO ACT.

WE MUST ACT AS CITIZENS IN WAYS THAT GIVE LIFE TO HOW WE REMEMBER AND HONOR THOSE WHO DIED. WE MUST ACT AND GIVE MEANING TO OUR MEMORIES BECAUSE IT IS ALL TOO CLEAR HOW EASILY WE CAN FORGET WHAT THIS DAY IS TRULY ALL ABOUT.

IN MY HOMETOWN OF BALTIMORE, MARYLAND, THE CITIZENS BUILT A STADIUM – MEMORIAL STADIUM – TO HONOR THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR OUR FREEDOM IN BOTH WORLD WARS. ENGRAVED ON THE WALL OUTSIDE OF THE STADIUM BEHIND HOME PLATE WAS A TRIBUTE TO THOSE BRAVE MEN AND WOMEN.

WHEN I ENTERED THE STADIUM IN MY EARLY YEARS, I NEVER PAID MUCH ATTENTION TO THE WORDS THAT WERE INSCRIBED ON THE MEMORIAL WALL, BUT THEY’RE ENGRAVED IN MY HEART NOW: “AS A MEMORIAL TO ALL WHO SO VALIANTLY FOUGHT AND SERVED IN THE WORLD WARS WITH ETERNAL GRATITUDE TO THOSE WHO MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE TO PRESERVE EQUALITY AND FREEDOM THROUGHOUT THE WORLD – TIME WILL NOT DIM THE GLORY OF THEIR DEEDS.”

NOW, I KNOW THAT I WILL NEVER FORGET THOSE WORDS, BUT PERHAPS RELYING SOLELY UPON OUR MEMORIES, BE THEY DEEPLY PERSONAL OR MORE INSTITUTIONAL IN NATURE, JUST ISN’T ENOUGH. FOR, JUST AS THE CITIZENS OF BALTIMORE PROUDLY BUILT AND DEDICATED MEMORIAL STADIUM IN 1954, PROCLAIMING THEIR “ETERNAL GRATITUDE” THEY TORE IT DOWN IN 2001 AND THE WORDS WERE TURNED TO RUBBLE.

TIME MAY NOT HAVE DIMMED THE GLORY OF THEIR DEEDS, BUT TIME HAS CERTAINLY AFFECTED OUR ABILITY TO REMEMBER THOSE WHO DIED FOR US, AND TIME HAS CERTAINLY AFFECTED OUR ABILITY TO REMEMBER WHAT THOSE DEATHS MEANT TO US.

WE’VE SHOWN THAT JUST AS WE CAN BUILD A MEMORIAL, WE CAN TEAR IT DOWN. WE’VE SHOWN THAT JUST AS WE CAN COME TOGETHER AND REMEMBER ON ONE PARTICULAR DAY OF THE YEAR, WE CAN DRIFT APART AND FORGET JUST WHAT ALL THIS MEANS FOR THE REST OF THE YEAR.

SO JUST WHAT IS IT THAT WE, WE THE PEOPLE, SHOULD DO TO ENSURE THAT EVERY DAY WE REMEMBER AND HONOR THOSE WHO ANSWERED OUR COUNTRY'S CALL,

THOSE WHO WENT WHERE WE SENT THEM,

THOSE WHO FOUGHT ON OUR BEHALF,

THOSE WHO DIED FOR US?

WHAT IS IT THAT WE, WE THE PEOPLE, SHOULD DO?

PERHAPS WE SHOULD FIRST LISTEN TO THE SILENCE OF OUR DEAD,

THE SILENCE OF THOSE WHO ARE, IN OUR HEARTS, FOREVER YOUNG.

PERHAPS WE SHOULD LISTEN TO THE SILENCE OF OUR DEAD,

THE SILENCE OF THOSE WHO, AS LINCOLN TOLD US AT GETTYSBURG, GAVE US THE LAST FULL MEASURE OF THEIR DEVOTION.

PERHAPS WE SHOULD LISTEN TO THE SILENCE OF OUR DEAD AND TRY, AS BEST WE CAN, TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THEIR SILENCE TELLS US.

THE POET ARCHIBALD MACLEISH, LISTENED TO THE SILENCE OF OUR DEAD, AND HERE IS WHAT HE HEARD; FROM THE POEM, THE YOUNG DEAD SOLDIERS DO NOT SPEAK.

*"THE YOUNG DEAD SOLDIERS DO NOT SPEAK.*

*NEVERTHELESS, THEY ARE HEARD IN THE STILL HOUSES;*

*WHO HAS NOT HEARD THEM?*

*THEY HAVE A SILENCE THAT SPEAKS FOR THEM AT NIGHT AND WHEN THE CLOCK COUNTS.*

*THEY SAY: WE WERE YOUNG. WE HAVE DIED. REMEMBER US.*

*THEY SAY: WE HAVE DONE WHAT WE COULD BUT, UNTIL IT IS FINISHED, IT IS NOT DONE.*

*THEY SAY: WE HAVE GIVEN OUR LIVES BUT, UNTIL IT IS FINISHED, NO ONE CAN KNOW WHAT OUR LIVES GAVE.*

*THEY SAY: OUR DEATHS ARE NOT OURS: THEY ARE YOURS, THEY WILL MEAN WHAT YOU MAKE THEM.*

*THEY SAY: WHETHER OUR LIVES AND OUR DEATHS WERE FOR PEACE AND A NEW HOPE, OR FOR NOTHING, WE CANNOT SAY; IT IS YOU WHO MUST SAY THIS.*

*WE LEAVE YOU OUR DEATHS. GIVE THEM THEIR MEANING.*

*WE WERE YOUNG, THEY SAY. WE HAVE DIED; REMEMBER US."*

AND SO, THERE IT IS.

IT IS FOR US, WE THE PEOPLE, IN WHAT WE DO AND HOW WE LIVE, TO GIVE MEANING TO THEIR DEATHS, THE DEATHS OF THOSE WHO ARE NOW FOREVER YOUNG, FOREVER SILENT. THE DEATHS OF THOSE WE REMEMBER TODAY.

WE MUST HEAR THEIR SILENCE, A SILENCE THAT ECHOES TO US THROUGH THE AGES, FROM VALLEY FORGE TO GETTYSBURG, FROM BELLEAU WOOD TO MIDWAY AND IWO JIMA, FROM THE CHOSIN RESERVOIR TO KHE SANH, FROM FALLUJAH TO HELMAND PROVINCE.

AND WHEN WE HEAR THESE ECHOES, THE SILENCE OF SO MANY WHO GAVE SO MUCH; IT IS FOR US, THE LIVING, TO GIVE LIFE AND MEANING TO THE WORDS PRESIDENT LINCOLN GAVE US AT GETTYSBURG; WORDS WRITTEN WHEN HE LISTENED TO THE TERRIBLE SILENCE OF THE UNION DEAD, OF THAT MOST TERRIBLE OF ALL OUR WARS:

“IT IS RATHER FOR US TO BE HERE DEDICATED TO THE GREAT TASK REMAINING BEFORE US – THAT FROM THESE HONORED DEAD WE TAKE INCREASED DEVOTION TO THAT CAUSE FOR WHICH THEY GAVE THE LAST FULL MEASURE OF DEVOTION – THAT WE HERE HIGHLY RESOLVE THAT THESE DEAD SHALL NOT HAVE DIED IN VAIN...”

THAT WE HERE HIGHLY RESOLVE THAT THESE DEAD SHALL NOT HAVE DIED IN VAIN...

NO, TIME WILL NOT DIM THE GLORY OF THEIR DEEDS, BUT ONLY TIME WILL TELL IF THE LIVES WE LIVE PROVE US WORTHY OF THEIR DEEDS AND OF THEIR DEATHS.

WE WILL GIVE THEIR DEATHS MEANING BY WHAT WE DO WITH THE GREAT GIFT THEY HAVE GIVEN US, THE GIFT OF FREEDOM.

WE WILL GIVE THEIR DEATHS MEANING BY HOW WE UPHOLD AND HONOR THE LEGACY THEY HAVE LEFT US, A LEGACY OF SERVICE AND SACRIFICE, OF DUTY AND DEDICATION, OF LOVE AND LOSS.

IT IS UP TO US, WE THE PEOPLE.

MAY GOD BESTOW HIS MERCIFUL AND ETERNAL BLESSINGS ON THOSE WHO DIED FOR US, ON THOSE WHO GAVE US OUR FREEDOM.

MAY GOD GIVE US THE WISDOM, STRENGTH AND GRACE TO LIVE LIVES WORTHY OF THOSE WHO DIED, THOSE WHO DIED FOR US.

MAY GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS THE PEOPLE OF THIS GREAT CITY, OUR NATION, AND ALL OF US HERE TODAY.

THANK YOU.