

## Speech by John Adame on Memorial Day, 2009

The War department is sorry to inform you that your son has given his life in the performance of his duty.....

.....it is our hope that the passing days will bring you comfort and a consoling pride in your son's unselfish service. His name will be an honored one among all who were privileged to know him.

These are the words that were sent out during WWII and are similar to the ones that are now being sent out to the families of fallen heroes in our current conflict, who have shown their love for our country by sacrificing their lives for us.

General George S. Patton once said: "let the other soldier die for his country, you live for yours." Unfortunately, some must die so others may live. Whether they died during a heroic act or died during a battle does not set one death above another.

The first time I attended a military funeral was when I was 5 or 6 years old. I remember seeing men in uniform and the coffin covered by a flag. As the ceremony went on, I remember hearing a lot of crying. I heard the gun salute and after each volley the crying was even louder. When taps was played, all of a sudden the crying stopped for a few moments.

As a youngster, I recall watching war movies on Saturday afternoons. I noticed that when one of the good guys was killed, there was a short pause in the action. This is what I thought war was really like. When a hero lost his life in battle, everything would stop.

I was called to into service forty-two years ago. I swore allegiance to this country, and in a few months I was fighting in a far off land. I soon learned that what I had learned from the war movies I watched as a child was not what war was really like. I learned death in battle was an all too common event. There was no pause in the action when a soldier fell. It just went on and on until one side or the other broke off the engagement.

I remember hearing the cries for help or for a medic. We would help the wounded as best we could. As a soldier fell to his death, there was no time to grieve. Help was only rendered to those who had a chance of surviving their injuries. As the battle raged on, some of the wounded knew they would not live to see the end of the of the battle, their cries for help turned to cries to their mothers, fathers, wives and children. Their last thoughts were of their family. The family was their protector, their source of life. These heart-wrenching cries still resonate in my mind. I will never forget them. Yes, your sons, brothers, husbands and fathers thought of you while breathing their last breaths on earth. They had done their duty, and had paid the ultimate price for our freedom.

It is hard to put out of your mind that feeling of holding your brother, for in war we become brothers, in your arms and there is nothing you can do to help him. We had shared each other's thoughts and feelings. We knew each other better than our own families knew us. There were some men that you may not have gotten along with while off the battlefield, but in the field of battle we watched out for each other. We attended each other's wounds and comforted each other when we were in pain, being it physical or mental. You feel so helpless and useless when you realize that their end is near.

I was lucky enough to return home from the fields of battle and on my return I was assigned to a stateside post to fulfill my obligation. As part of my duties, I was detailed to a military honor guard. We performed this duty sometimes three times a day. It was a good feeling seeing so many of the fallen soldier's family, and Friends and others who just wanted to pay their final respects to a fallen hero. Again after each volley the crying got louder, and when taps was played the cries of grief momentarily stopped. I was now experiencing what I was not allowed to do on the battlefield, given time to really grieve. This time I was joined in my grief with the family he had cried out for with his last breaths. Though I did not know the fallen soldier they were lowering into the ground, he was my brother and he was dead.

I am speaking to you and anyone in this country and places around the world where our war dead are buried or memorialized who at this time are attending a memorial services such as this. I ask you not just to honor them on this day. They are the ones who have given us the freedom to enjoy what we now have.

When you walk away from this service, give this beautiful memorial one last look. Whether your loved ones name is there or not and gave them a simple thank you. I feel that's all they really want.

This is a holiday weekend, and many are out enjoying vacation spots around the nation. Some not even remembering what this day is all about. Not even taking a moment to remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Even now when we have men and women engaged in battle and some paying the supreme price, we must step up our efforts to remind this nation what this day is all about. I will now offer a simple means to remember and honor their sacrifice. Any time you pass or see an America flag just take a moment to say thank you. I'm sure they will hear it.

Remember that the flag that they unselfishly defended draped their caskets before they were lowered into the ground. That flag gave them the right to be declared true American heroes.

A hero is defined as one who commits an act of remarkable bravery and who has great courage. Who can stand up and say they do not fit this definition?

The following tribute is written on a plaque on the island of Corregidor in the Philippines and is a fitting tribute to those who have given their lives in Battle.

Sleep my sons, your duty done,  
For Freedom's light has come.  
Sleep in your hallowed bed of sod  
Or in the silent depths of the sea.  
Until at dawn you hear the clear  
Low reveille of God.

The author is unknown

So in conclusion I say to you who have lost brothers in battle and to you who lost loved ones in the cause of freedom, do not let their sacrifice be forgotten.