

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 11, 2015

Lt. Governor Phil Scott: "Ask our veterans to tell us their stories and pass them on."

MONTPELIER, VT - Lt. Governor Scott delivered the following remarks at the Lyndonville Veterans' Day Ceremony on Wednesday, November 11, 2015:

Thank you so much for inviting me to join you this morning.

I realize this is a Veterans Day celebration and it's sometimes obvious, but could those who have served in the military please raise your hands? Thank you all. Now will all the family members please raise your hands? Thank you as well. Your sacrifice, while admittedly different, is just as great. You kept hope alive here at home and selflessly gave your loved ones to our country.

To those who served on the front lines – in the trenches -- in the jungles – in the swamps – on the rivers – thank you. We could not stand here together today without your sacrifices – and the sacrifices of the thousands who paid the ultimate price and never came home.

It is my belief that we need to thank our veterans each and every day – not just on days like today. I've made it a point to do so at every opportunity. At every parade I went to over the last year or two, I had a "Thank A Vet" banner on the side of my truck, regardless of whether it was the Fourth of July, Labor Day or Memorial Day. At most events where I'm asked to speak I start by recognizing and thanking vets, because we are free, as our founders intended, every singly day because of what you did.

I saw a story on the news recently about a group of veterans in New York who visit schools in order to share their stories with students. They do it because people sometimes forget. Without our veterans telling their stories, how is a young child going to know about World War II, or the Korean War, or the Vietnam War, or the Gulf War, or Iraq or Afghanistan? History books aren't enough. They aren't the full story.

The stories are what we have left when our veterans pass away, so it's our duty to continue telling their stories...so I have a few to tell you.

Once there was a young man from Washington, Vt., who was a truck driver by trade. When his country called him up for duty during World War II, he answered the call. Due to his skills as a truck driver he was quickly selected as a tank operator. He was involved in the D-Day Invasion and was severely wounded in France when his tank hit a land mine. Both his legs were amputated above the knee and he spent two years in recovery at Walter Reed Medical Center in Washington, D.C. There are Western Union messages to his mom and dad saying they didn't expect him to survive. Fortunately he did, and returned to Vermont in a wheelchair. He was fiercely independent, and drove himself anywhere he needed to go with the help of a hand control device. He also earned a job with the Vermont State Highway Department, issuing oversize load permits to truckers and contractors all over the state due to the construction of

the new interstate highway system. During that time he decided to build a camp on Lake Elmore and would call in his groceries to the Elmore General Store and drive over to pick them up. This was long before the ADA (Americans With Disabilities Act) and he was unable to get up the stairs to the store, so a young woman who was working at the store and living with her sister while studying at Johnson State College would bring the groceries out to the car. The rest, as they say is history, as they eventually married, had three boys and lived a somewhat normal life in Barre until he passed away due to his war connected injuries on December 2, 1969. Overnight his wife became a single mom at a young age to three boys, ages 8,11 and 12. That woman is my Mom. That man is my Dad. His name is Howard Roy Scott.

There's another young man who was closer to my age. He was the "big brother" type growing up: into motorcycles, a gifted athlete and seemed to get along with everyone. He taught me how to fish, how to hunt and gave me my appreciation for motorcycles. Then he went to Vietnam around the time of my father's death. I used to write to him a lot while he was there, and while he came home safe and seemed somewhat normal, he was different. I think everyone knew something was amiss but nobody talked about it. I do remember one story he told me, about lying overnight in a swamp somewhere in Cambodia or Laos breathing through a reed. He didn't tell me the story to impress me or glorify it. He told me to give me a small glimpse of this entirely different world he witnessed as opposed to the relatively safe haven we are blessed to live in. I only wish I'd asked him more and that he'd opened up and talked more about what he went through. He died far too young from a liver disease. It's my belief the chemicals he was exposed to in Vietnam were partly to blame. That man is my cousin. He grew up in Barre. His name is Greg Chaloux.

In the early 1940s, a young Harvard graduate from Brookline, Mass., enlisted in the Army. He served in the European theatre and toward the end of his service he was told to lead a team out to a compound of some kind. The officers didn't know what it was, and wanted to find out. Riding along in a Jeep, the group saw a line of boxcars stopped on railroad tracks. Then they heard soft noises coming from the cars. This young man got out of the Jeep to go investigate, opened the door and was buried under a pile of bodies. Two men stayed behind with the train while this young man led the rest of the group to the compound, radioing back: "Send us help. We don't know what we have here but it's bad. Send help." When the Jeep drove up to the compound, it turned out to be a huge camp surrounded by barbed wire. This young man, who was Jewish, witnessed many horrific events that day he arrived at Dachau and told this story of the day he helped liberate a concentration camp only once -- to his granddaughter, who is my chief of staff. He passed away a year later. His name is Stuart Finer.

A young man in Puerto Rico wasn't willing to wait for his number to come up, so he enlisted in the Air Force and went to Vietnam. His family didn't want him to go but he wanted to go on his own terms, not someone else's. To this day he has trouble speaking about what he saw there, but maybe that's because too few people have asked. He recently visited Vermont with his wife, and when he was walking their dogs on our State House lawn one morning a woman noticed the hat he was wearing, which said "Vietnam Veteran," and she thanked him for his service. He came into our office to tell us what happened and describe his many emotions. He was shocked,

then surprised, then happy and then somber and reflective. "You know," he said, "nobody ever said 'thank you' to me until five years ago. We came home from Vietnam viewed as enemies by many in our own country...I still can't get used to being appreciated." Later that day, he called my office because he'd been thanked four more times in that one day alone. His name is Luis Antonio.

These stories are just four examples of why we must thank our veterans every day, ask to hear their stories and pass them on. Those who step up to serve our country don't do it for glory or fame or medals. They do it for us. They serve so we don't have to. They protect our liberties so we can enjoy them. The very least we can do is teach our children about these men and women who shaped our history.

Heroes don't ask for praise.

Heroes don't ask for credit.

Heroes stand up because it is the right thing to do.

Thank you to all of the heroes standing with us today, the heroes who never came home and the heroes yet to come. We can never do enough to honor you.

But saying "thank you" is a perfect place to start.

Thank you.

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