

Honoring the American Veteran

This year marks the fifth anniversary of a tragic rampage that gripped the heart of our nation. We cannot – and should not – erase memories of the events of Thursday, July 16, 2015, when a 24-year-old gunman went on a rampage in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He sprayed bullets into a recruiting center on Lee Highway, then headed to the Navy and Marine Reserve Center on Amnicola Highway.

When at last the terrorist was shot and killed by police, four Marines and a sailor were slain. The sacrifices of these Armed Forces personnel are reasons for us to give somber reflection to this solemn date on our calendar.

This is Veterans Day 2020, and there would be no ceremony or celebration, like many that will be held across our nation, were it not for the brave men and women – such as these in Chattanooga – who have shed their blood and offered their lives to preserve our freedoms.

The Marine motto, *semper fidelis* (always faithful or always loyal), describes their commitment to duty and honor. So, on this Veterans Day, we single out in particular Randall Smith, petty officer 2nd class and a logistics specialist in the U.S. Navy; Lance Cpl. Squire (Skip) Wells, who dreamed of becoming a drill sergeant; Gunnery Sgt. Thomas Sullivan, who served two tours of duty in Iraq; Sgt. Carson Holmquist, an automotive maintenance technician who completed two deployments as part of Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan); and Staff. Sgt. David Wyatt, deployed three times, including twice in Iraq.

But Veterans Day honors all people, living and dead, who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces. It is particularly appropriate for Life Care and Century Park to esteem our veterans, for we see in some of the residents we serve the effects of their sacrifices through wounds received on the battlefield or health compromised by the harsh environment in which they fought. And despite the price they paid, their patriotic fervor still spills over in their words and actions.

It is important to remember their heroism, for they are heroes, indeed, and to thank them for their contributions to the cause of liberty. As part of our meditation on this day and its meaning, here are a few quotes from famous people:

- “It is easy to take liberty for granted, when you have never had it taken from you.” – Dick Cheney
- “This nation will remain the land of the free only so long as it is the home of the brave.” – Elmer Davis
- “I think there is one higher office than president and I would call that patriot.” – Gary Hart

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- “When our perils are past, shall our gratitude sleep?” – George Canning
- “As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.” – John Fitzgerald Kennedy
- “In the beginning of a change, the patriot is a scarce man, and brave, and hated and scorned. When his cause succeeds, the timid join him, for then it costs nothing to be a patriot.” – Mark Twain
- “My heroes are those who risk their lives every day to protect our world and make it a better place – police, firefighters, and members of our Armed Forces.” –Sidney Sheldon
- “Courage is contagious. When a brave man takes a stand, the spines of others are often stiffened.” – Billy Graham

Thank God for the American veteran. And if you are a veteran, you have earned our respect and admiration.

– Beecher Hunter

