

SGT. KYLE WHITE-HALL OF HEROES INDUCTION CEREMONY UNDER SECRETARY BRAD R. CARSON'S REMARKS, MAY 14, 2014

Families of the fallen. Deputy Secretary of Defense, Mr. Work, the Army Chief of Staff Gen. Odierno, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense McCord, and other distinguished visitors. Gen. Paxton, the members of Chosen Company.

Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning.

We are here to induct Sgt. White into the Hall of Heroes. Now the word induction means the installation of someone into a position of responsibility, but it also means to introduce new ideas, new knowledge, new beliefs. And so we are here, as an institution, as an Army, as the Defense Department, perhaps to learn from Sgt. White and also from his predecessors, the Medal of Honor recipients past, whose names we also honor today, if only in silence.

So what do we learn from Sgt. White? One has only to look out into the audience to see the obvious answer as the Chief pointed out because of Sgt. White's decision to remain with the wounded, to never accept defeat, to never quit, to never leave a fallen comrade - Mr. Kain Schilling lives today.

But Sgt. White's fortitude under fire teaches us many other things, things more intangible perhaps that speak directly to our Army's institutional values. For in his life, in his heroic example, he teaches us what soldiers mean when they do raise that right hand and recite the creed.

For much of what soldiers profess - selfless service, honor, loyalty, duty; Sgt. White made manifest during the battle of nine November, enduring some of the most trying circumstances fate could see fit to contrive.

This is not to mention that he also, on that day, performed an exquisite exhibition of soldierly skills - stabilizing injured soldiers, reestablishing communication, and rising to the challenge of suddenly taking charge in a terrifying situation.

And while we know where Sgt. White's soldierly skills came from, we must ask the more interesting question- from where did Sgt. White learn these values and what brings our Soldiers, all of them, whether their names are inscribed in the Hall of Heroes or whether their names are instead largely forgotten to history, what brings them to perform so valiantly?

Since the six survivors of the Mitchell Raid were awarded the first Medals of Honor in 1863, citizens – from presidents to privates - have received the medal.

The stories of the medal's recipients come from every imaginable background, and from every station in life that this great land maintains. I think when I'm in the Hall of Heroes and I see that long list of names I think of Sergeant Desmond Doss, who, who was drafted in World War II, was drawn by religious conviction – he was a 7th Day Adventist - to petition as a conscientious objector, but he still wanted to serve nonetheless. As a medic, he exposed himself repeatedly to

enemy fire in order to carry back the wounded over the Urasoe-Mura Escarpment of Okinawa. When he himself was wounded, he threw himself from the litter carrying him off the battlefield so that a soldier with still greater wounds might be removed from peril.

And I think of the story of another soldier, from World War I this time, whose battlefield prowess would result in the single handedly led to the surrender of an entrenched machine gun nest and the capture of 132 enemy soldiers. His name you, it was Sergeant Alvin York. With the history of Vernon Baker, an African American, who, trained in army camps during World War II in the stifling racism of the south, rose above all of that to earn the nation's highest honor - leading his men, outnumbered and outgunned, on the rugged hills of Italy.

Or perhaps another name on that wall of Sadao Munemori, a Japanese American, he was awarded the medal posthumously after diving onto a grenade to save the lives of his fellow Soldiers in the same series of actions as Vernon Baker was recognized for.

Sadao's parents received notice of his death while they were living in the same internment camp from which he had volunteered for duty in the United States Army.

So Why, why to use a phrase of Oliver Wendell Holmes, offered in remembrance of the Civil War heroes he had personally known, why were all of these hearts so "touched by fire?"

And where do we find such people?

Perhaps it is President Reagan who noted best in his radio address on Armed Forces Day in 1982, when asked that very question, he replied "We find them where we've always found them. They are the product of the freest society man has ever known. They make a commitment to the military—make it freely, because the birthright we share as Americans is worth defending."

I believe that President Reagan is correct, but I also believe that we can look a bit more close to home for some of Sgt. White's values and the sources of his character.

In the audience we have Sgt. White's father, Mr. Curt White, who perhaps taught him a little of that humility that Sgt. White is already so famous for.

Mr. White, if you could please stand, we talked a little bit earlier and eight years United States Army from 1972-1980 and 31 years at the Boeing corporation. Please join me in congratulating him. Thank you. Like all the veterans from that conflict we owe him an inestimable debt.

And Mrs. White, Cheryl White, Sgt. White's mother, if you might stand as well and be recognized.

[*addressing Ms. White*] You know it is a truism, a bromide, that "[one's] character shapes [one's] fate." That is no doubt quite right, that character shapes fate, but I would say one's mother shapes one's character. Please give a round of applause.

Curt and Cheryl thank you – and a job well done.

UNDER SECRETARY BRAD R. CARSON'S REMARKS

I do wish to convey gratitude, not just to you and your son, but to all the soldiers of Chosen Company – for the service and sacrifice of all of them.

Your work, their work inspires us, and for those of Chosen Company who have made the ultimate sacrifice – the names that the chief has already read, but worth repeating again: Cpt. Ferrara, Sgt. Mersman, Cpl. Roque, Cpl. Langevin, Spc. Lancour, and from the Marine Corps, Sgt. Bocks.

President Lincoln’s words serve best - There is little that we can do to commemorate their sacrifice. “[rather] it is for us the living to be dedicated here to the unfinished work” that lies ahead. And the work of the Army continues – to empower our soldiers abroad, to care for, with dignity, those soldiers wounded, to honor our obligations to soldiers whose service is now honorably completed, to remember those soldiers who paid the ultimate sacrifice, and to ready future soldiers for when the nation calls again – for the nation will call again.

Shaped by our nation’s values, and forged by the values of the Army so present today – we will be ready.

May God bless you, may God bless Sgt. White and his family, and may God bless all of those who choose a life of service to this country, and who, in the poet’s words, have left the vivid air signed with their honor.

Thank you.