



Good morning!

Today, we recognize Veterans Day. As a country, we pause to take time to acknowledge and honor those who have served in the United States Armed Forces.

Men and women who, throughout our history, have embraced sacrifice of self to serve their country and protect our freedoms. There are over 22 million Americans alive today who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces.

On behalf of the veterans and their family members present here today, I want to thank your principal, Mr. Cerqua, the staff, and of course the students of Lincoln Middle School/High School for hosting this Veterans Day event.

I also wish to thank the choir, directed by Mrs. Bowman and the band, directed by Mr. Miller for their special performances on this occasion.

I offer a special thanks to Mr. Cerqua for taking on the additional responsibility of organizing this event.

At this time I would also like to honor the late Mr. Mark Ervin. Although Mr. Ervin did not serve in the military, he had a great respect for all members of the U. S. Armed Forces and was a great patriot.

It was Mr. Ervin who organized many Veterans Day events in the past and asked me to speak today. I now ask for a moment of silence in his memory.

Welcome to this Veterans Day celebration. It is indeed a privilege for me to honor a very special, select group of Americans.

I believe we have WWII veterans here today, along with many who served during the Korean War, Vietnam War, Desert Storm, and in our recent and ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, along with other conflicts and the occasional periods of peacetime.

Many are past graduates of Lincoln High School and there are future veterans in the student body here today which includes one young man who has recently enlisted in the United States Army.

He is currently a senior at Lincoln High School and will be entering basic training upon graduation.

He will join other recent graduates of this school, also future veterans, who are serving in various branches of the military right now.

I believe there are several juniors that plan on enlisting in the Army and Air Force upon graduation from high school.

The call to service in the U.S. Armed Forces comes from a sense of service, of sacrifice, that is part of a longstanding tradition in our country. Many of us were raised with that sense of duty and obligation.

I was born on December 7, 1939 in a small town in Minnesota, exactly two years before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, bringing the United States into a war that had already been raging for four years.

I grew up during that war – WWII – and started High School around the end of the Korean War. I remember how those two wars affected families and the loved ones of those that served during that period of time.

I was raised in an environment that taught me the importance of serving; not only in the military, but of the broader value of serving others.

I grew up in a time of strong patriotism, at a time when if our country needed us, most rose to the occasion, especially those veterans present here today.

The reason they served was to defend the United States of America in the first place, along with their loved ones, which gave them someone to come back home to.

Some served a short period of time, some made a career of the military. In many cases, they came back home and continued to serve in their community.

Behind every person who served in the U.S. Armed Forces is a story, unique to that person. Why did they join? If they were in for a career, why did they stay?

I want to share my story with you, not because it is particularly unique, but because it is important for those of us who have served to share their stories.

Sometimes we may not want to, but history requires it. When we are gone, the sense of service, sacrifice, and honor that we came to know could be forgotten if we do not tell our stories.

After all, the majority of all veterans are over 65 years of age. In telling my story, I hope to encourage others to do the same.

After graduating from High School in 1957, I worked as a Garage Handyman at an auto dealership.

In 1959 after listening to an Air Force recruiter and other people I respected, I decided to enlist in the United States Air Force and subsequently served 20 years of active duty.

I was the first in my family to enter the military.

My two younger brothers followed with tours of duty in the Air Force. All three of us served during the Vietnam conflict. Many years later, my son served in the Navy.

My decision to join the Air Force was seeded years before. I grew up with a love for aviation.

At the age of 14, when I learned a new squadron was being established in my home town of Stillwater, Minnesota, I joined the Civil Air Patrol, an official auxiliary of the United States Air Force.

As one of the first to join, I was assigned the duties of Cadet Commander, achieving the rank of Cadet Captain. I received flight training during that time and qualified for my pilot license at the age of 16.

Around the same time I attended a CAP summer encampment at Whiteman AFB, Missouri and was able to fly the T-33 Jet Trainer.

Early on, the CAP gave me the opportunity to set and achieve high goals, and to succeed.

Because I was serving in the Civil Air Patrol and achieving specific goals, I was nominated to attend the United States Air Force Academy.

Although I qualified academically, I did not meet the stringent physical requirements that commanded near perfection. I wore glasses, but the requirements were to have 20/20 vision without corrective lenses.

Those requirements changed a few years later, but by then, I had enlisted in the regular Air Force.

It seems I was destined to serve as an enlisted man, after all.

After completing basic training, I was assigned to Lowry AFB in Denver, Colorado for my technical training in the avionics / electronics career field.

Upon completion of my technical training, I was assigned to Biggs AFB in El Paso, Texas. My career field consisted of maintaining the Defensive Fire Control Systems on B-52 bombers in the Strategic Air Command.

That involved maintaining search and track radars, hydraulic and pneumatic systems, computer systems, closed circuit television and optical systems, plus 20mm canons, 50 caliber machine guns, and a 20mm Gatling gun system.

After six years, I was transferred to Ellsworth AFB in Rapid City, South Dakota. During that time, I was deployed to Thailand and Guam several times throughout the Vietnam conflict.

In 1973, when that conflict was ending, I was assigned to Andersen AFB in Guam, along with my family, to help establish a peacetime operation there.

By that time, I had achieved the rank of Master Sergeant and was assigned duties of Shop Chief for the Defensive Fire Control Section and later as Branch Chief for the Flight Control / Instruments Branch.

During my assignment at Guam, I had the opportunity to enjoy a lot of scuba diving off beautiful coral reefs and capturing underwater scenes with a movie camera.

I achieved the rating of "Senior Advanced Open Water Diver" through the Professional Association of Dive Instructors and had the opportunity to use that rating at a later time in support of National Aeronautics and Space Administration operations.

But that is a story for a later time.

After completion of my two year assignment to Guam, my family and I returned to Ellsworth AFB in South Dakota, where I remained in support of the B-52 program as an Avionics Weapon Systems Superintendant, until my retirement from active duty in 1979.

During my 20 years of active duty, I met many exciting challenges, benefited from many educational opportunities, achieved high goals, and was recognized and rewarded for my accomplishments.

After my retirement, I was asked to join the B-1 bomber program at Ellsworth AFB, working for civilian aerospace companies.

I supported the B-1 program as a senior electronic / computer technician in the Flight & Maintenance Training Simulation program and eventually became the B-1 Training Systems Site Manager, responsible for part of a multi-million dollar military contract.

The sites under my management were located at six different Air Force bases in as many states. I often traveled to Washington, D.C. in order to brief Air Force Officers and civilians on budgeting and status reports concerning the B-1 Training Systems Program.

When I retired from the aerospace industry in 2006, my wife Mary and I moved to Cambridge City to support our daughter and grandchildren.

Because of my service in the Air Force, I saw the world, forged friendships, was able to develop a rewarding career, and had the opportunity to raise a family.

My experiences in the Air Force and subsequent employment with aerospace contractors also taught me many valuable skills and lessons, but one of the most important lessons learned was the importance of serving our country and those in our community.

That is why, when invited, I joined the Cambridge City Evening Kiwanis. It gives me the opportunity to continue serving in our community, whether it is in our fundraising to support youth programs or in mentoring in the Middle School and High School.

Recognizing someone as a veteran recognizes their service in the military. Whether at home or abroad, veterans served their country.

Many of us have translated that service to serving our communities where needed, and supporting our families.

On Veteran's Day we recognize that service, but also friendship and bonds that are forged during that service, and devotion to something bigger than yourself.

Undoubtedly, you students in the audience today will choose to serve our society in many ways.

Many of you are serving society at Lincoln right now in the various clubs and organizations available to you in school, which serve the school and each other, and in some cases serve the community.

You can serve by expanding your education after high school and returning home to your community as a professional or by attending a trade school and coming back skilled in one of the many various crafts.

Each of you will find which path is best for you.

And along the way, some of you will choose to serve your country by joining one of the U.S. Armed Forces. And some day, years down the road, you may find yourself back at this very school, being recognized and honored for your service to this country.

At this time, I ask the veterans in the room to please stand, and that everyone else please give loud applause to these veterans and their families who are present here today.

In closing, I ask that God bless all of our veterans, God Bless their families and friends, and may God Bless America on this Veterans Day.

Thank you very much.



- Air Force Commendation **Medal** w/1 Oak Leaf Cluster
- Air Force Outstanding Unit Award w/2 Oak Leaf Clusters
- Air Force Good Conduct **Medal** w/4 Oak Leaf Clusters
- Army Good Conduct **Medal**
- National Defense Service **Medal**
- Vietnam Service **Medal** w/3 Bronze Stars
- Air Force Longevity Service Ribbon w/4 Oak Leaf Clusters
- Air Force NCO Professional Military Education Graduate Ribbon
- Small Arms Expert Marksmanship Ribbon
- Republic of Vietnam Campaign **Medal**