

MEMORIAL SERVICE
CLASS OF 1973
SEPTEMBER 01, 2018

Good morning to my esteemed shipmates, their wives, and friends. We have gathered to **remember** the lives of our classmates who have gone before us. Ironically, as we host this Memorial Service, another one is being conducted, at the same time, at the Washington National Cathedral, to **remember** a fellow Naval Academy graduate, Senator John McCain!

Memory is an amazing gift from God.

Isn't it interesting how there are some people and events from our lives that we can **remember** and others that we forget? Scientist tell us that everything that our brain has processed is stored somewhere within our minds; the key is retrieving it!

I can **remember** my phone number from when I was an infant! Least you become too impressed with me, I should tell you that my Mom lived in the same home that she and my Dad built in 1950, until her death this past June, at 95 years of age!

I **remember** the day that I met Linda, my wife! September 20, 1970

It was the day *after* the Navy vs. Penn State football game in Pennsylvania. I was able to travel with the team to State College and witnessed our 55-7 loss at the hands of future NFL greats such as: Lydell Mitchell, Franco Harris, and Jack Ham. The one Navy touchdown was scored by our own classmate, Andy Pease!

Everyone in this room, I am sure, can **remember** the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, as well as that horrific day, that we call 9/11. Psychologist call those **memories**, flashbulb memories!

Think of all the people who have passed through your life . . . names, faces, **memories** of good times and bad. "It's hard to forget someone who gave you so much to **remember**."

The Apostle Paul wrote: "I am always thankful to my God, as I **remember** you in my prayers" (Philemon 1:4, *TPT*). And again, in Philippians: "I thank my God every time I **remember** you" (Philippians 1:3, *NIV*).

"When someone you love becomes a **memory**, that **memory** becomes a treasure!"

Senator John McCain **remembered** someone from his POW years in Vietnam. The name he never knew; however, he never forgot that individual, whom he nicknamed the "Good Samaritan."

McCain was put into solitary confinement overnight, where he was tightly bound with ropes in a painful position. In the evening a prison guard came into his cell and loosened his ropes. He would then return in the morning and tighten them before the change of watch. He did this night after night. When Senator McCain was released from solitary, he would look for the guard and occasionally saw him. However, the guard would never make eye contact with him. Then, the following happened one Christmas morning:

“I was briefly allowed out of my cell to stand alone in the outdoors and look up at the clear, blue sky. As I was looking at the heavens, I became aware of him as he walked near me and then, for a moment, stood very close to me. He did not speak or smile or look at me. He just stared at the ground in front of us, and then, very casually, he used his foot to draw a cross in the dirt. We both stood looking at his work for a minute until he rubbed it out and walked away.”

“For just that moment I forgot all my hatred for my enemies, and all the hatred most of them felt for me. I forgot about the Jerk, and the interrogators who persecuted my friends and me. I forgot about the war, and the terrible things that war does to you. I was just one Christian venerating the cross with a fellow Christian on a Christmas morning.”

“I saw him again occasionally. But he never looked at me or attempted to speak to me. We never worshiped together again. But I have **never forgotten him** [emphasis, mine] or the kindness he showed me as a testament to the faith we shared. That experience helped to form my lasting appreciation for my own religious faith, and it took the faith of an enemy to reveal it to me, the faith that unites and never divides, the faith that bridges unbridgeable divisions in humanity, the faith that we are all, sinners and saints alike, children of God. I became a better man, a stronger man, a more faithful man, who, for at least a moment, could love his enemies” (Excerpt from *Character Is Destiny*, John McCain & Mark Salter).

Memorials are erected to those whose **memory** we want to keep alive: Not far from here are the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials, as well as a newer, magnificent memorial to the **memory** of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Memorial stones to the **memory** of great men and women who have served in our armed forces are seen in the Arlington National Cemetery. Senator McCain’s father’s and grandfather’s graves are there.

However, tomorrow, Senator John McCain will be buried at the Naval Academy Cemetery, next to Admiral Chuck Larson. The Admiral **remembered** his classmate and lifelong friend by making special arrangements for them, and their wives, to be buried next to one another. A tombstone will be erected in McCain’s **memory**, and etched on it will be the words that he wanted to be **remembered** with: “He Served His Country.”

How do you wish to be **remembered**?

Memories are the key to the future. Corrie ten Boom once said: “Today I know that such **memories** are the key not to the past, but to the future. I know that the experiences of our lives, when we let God use them, become the mysterious and perfect preparation for the work that He will give us to do.”

Once again, quoting the Apostle Paul, he writes in 2 Timothy 4:7 “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.” That’s how he (Paul) wanted to be **remembered**!

More than a ½ century ago, there was a man who literally finished a race. His name was Jesse Owens, the winner of four gold medals in the 1936 Olympics, held in Berlin, Germany! However, in the preliminaries for the long jump, his best event, he had fouled twice. A third foul, and he would be out of the competition!

The German long jumper, Carl Ludwig (Luz) Long, came alongside Jesse and suggested that he somehow mark the ground about a foot before the board. Owens was such a good jumper that he could easily make the qualifying distance; however, this way, he wouldn’t foul. Owens followed his advice, and not only qualified, but eventually won the gold medal. Luz earned the silver medal, and the two of them forged a life-long friendship!

Luz returned to Germany and went to law school. Later, as WWII began, he was drafted into the German Army. He wrote the following letter to Jesse from Northern Africa:

I am here, Jesse, where it seems there is only the dry sand and the wet blood. I do not fear so much for myself, my friend Jesse, I fear for my woman who is home, and my young son Karl, who has never really known his father.

My heart tells me, if I be honest with you, that this is the last letter I shall ever write. If it is so, I ask you something. It is a something so very important to me. It is you go to Germany when this war done, someday find my Karl, and tell him about his father. Tell him, Jesse, what times were like when we not separated by war. I am saying—tell him how things can be between men on this earth.

If you do this something for me, this thing that I need the most to know will be done, I do something for you, now. I tell you something I know you want to hear. And it is true. That hour in Berlin when I first spoke to you, when you had your knee upon the ground, I knew that you were in prayer.

Then I not know how I know. Now I do. I know it is never by chance that we come together. I come to you that hour in 1936 for purpose more than der Berliner Olympiad.

And you, I believe, will read this letter, while it should not be possible to reach you ever, for purpose more even than our friendship. I believe this shall come about because I think now that God will make it come about. This is what I must tell you, Jesse.

I think I might believe in God.

And I pray to Him that, even while it should not be possible for this to reach you ever, these words I write will still be read by you.

Your brother,

Luz

Luz died in Sicily in 1943. However, Jesse did **remember** him and his promise to him. He visited his son, Karl, in Germany in 1951 [he would have been ten years old]. They developed a friendship and when Karl was engaged to be married, he asked Jesse to be the best man in his wedding!

The philosopher, Horace Kallen, once wrote: "There are persons who shape their lives by the fear of death, and persons who shape their lives by the joy and satisfaction of life. The former live dying; and the latter die living."

How will your race end?

How do you wish to be **remembered**?

The Dash

Linda Ellis, copyright 1996

I read of a man who stood to speak
at the funeral of a friend.

He referred to the dates on her tombstone,
from the beginning...to the end.

He noted that first came the date of her birth
and spoke of the following date with tears,
but he said what mattered most of all
was the **dash** between those years.

For that **dash** represents all the time
that she spent alive on earth.
And now only those who loved her
know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own,
the cars...the house...the cash.
What matters is how we live and love
and how we spend our **dash**.

So, think about this long and hard.
Are there things you'd like to change?
For you never know how much time is left
that can still be rearranged.

If we could just slow down enough
to consider what's true and real
and always try to understand
the way other people feel.

And be less quick to anger
and show appreciation more
and love the people in our lives
like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect
and more often wear a smile,
remembering that this special **dash**
might only last a little while.

Across the street from this hotel [the Annapolis Westin] there is a cemetery filled with tombstones, **remembering** lives of men and women, both young and old who once lived.

However, there is a tomb in Jerusalem where no tombstone is erected. That is the tomb of Jesus Christ, because that tomb is *empty*. Jesus left us with these words: "I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. . ." (John 11:25-26a, *NIV*).

Let us pray . . .

Randy Reinhardt, '73