

GOOD MORNING AND THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE TODAY. I WANT TO THANK OUR HOST, THE DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE RAPID CAPABILITIES OFFICE, FOR ALLOWING US TO CONDUCT THE CEREMONY THIS MORNING, AND MR RIOS IN PARTICULAR FOR PROVIDING THOSE WORDS. I'D ALSO LIKE TO THANK MR. LEE CHAMBERS AND THE EAGLE CHAPTER FOR THEIR YEARS OF OUTSTANDING SUPPORT TO DEFENDERS, BOTH PAST AND PRESENT, AND FOR ENSURING WE CONTINUE TO HONOR THE LEGACY OF CAPT REGINALD V. MAISEY, JR.

CAPT MAISEY WAS MANY THINGS – A DEFENDER, A WARRIOR, A HERO – AND IT WOULD BE EASY TO SPEND MY TIME RECALLING HIS BRAVERY THAT FATEFUL DAY AT BIEN HOA WHEN THE TET OFFENSIVE WAS UNLEASHED. HOWEVER, IF YOU WILL PERMIT, I'D LIKE TO FOCUS RATHER ON WHAT HE HAS GIVEN EACH US GATHERED TODAY TO LAY A WREATH IN HIS HONOR.

THE FIRST GIFT IS HERITAGE. CAPT MAISEY'S STORY IS AN EARLY CHAPTER IN THE LEGACY OF VALOR EACH DEFENDER BEARS THROUGH THE SYMBOLS OF OUR CAREER FIELD. THE BADGE AND BERET ARE STEEPED IN A TRADITION OF GRIT, COURAGE, AND SACRIFICE, VISIBLE REMINDERS OF WHERE WE HAVE BEEN AS A COMMUNITY AND EVER-PRESENT LODESTARS ENSURING WE CARRY OUR VALUES WITH US INTO AN UNCERTAIN AND COMPLEX FUTURE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT. FOR THOSE WHO HAVE DONE LAND NAV A FEW TOO MANY TIMES WE KNOW THAT WHEN DETERMINING AN AZIMUTH IT IS HELPFUL TO KNOW WHERE YOU ARE AND WHERE YOU'VE BEEN...THAT TO MOVE FORWARD IN THE CORRECT DIRECTION YOU MUST FIRST LOOK BACK. DEFENDERS LIKE CAPT MAISEY HELP KEEP US ON TRACK BY REMINDING US ALL OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE OATHS WE TOOK TO SUPPORT AND DEFEND THE CONSTITUTION. I AM FOREVER GRATEFUL FOR AIRMEN LIKE CAPT RV MAISEY, JR.

THE SECOND GIFT BESTOWED UPON US IS THAT OF CONNECTION. CONNECTEDNESS IS A POWERFUL MEDIATOR OF INDIVIDUAL WELL-BEING AND A FORCE MULTIPLIER IN HIGH-PERFORMING TEAMS. BY

PROVIDING THE OCCASION FOR US TO GATHER TODAY, CAPT MAISEY HAS FOSTERED A COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE AND LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING THAT EACH OF US NOW SHARE.

IN AN ALL-VOLUNTEER MILITARY, THAT COLLECTIVE UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IT MEANS TO HAVE SERVED, WHETHER IN COMBAT OR NOT, HAS ELUDED SO MANY VETERANS AND SERVICE MEMBERS ALIKE. AND IT HAS DONE SO TO THE DETRIMENT OF THEIR PSYCHOLOGICAL, EMOTIONAL, AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING. IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT I SAY THIS IN AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE SUPPORT FOR THE MILITARY IS AT AN ALL-TIME HIGH, BECAUSE IT WAS NOT ALWAYS SO AS OUR VIETNAM VETERANS LIKE MSGT SQUIRES AND OTHERS HERE CAN ATTEST. IN FACT, MSGT SQUIRES, JUST IN CASE NO ONE HAS EVER SAID THIS TO YOU, WELCOME HOME.

NO, FOR THE SERVICE MEMBER TODAY, THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SCAR TISSUE OF THE VIETNAM ERA RESULTED IN A RITUALIZED CULTURAL PERFORMANCE MOST HAVE EXPERIENCED AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER: THE REFLEXIVE “THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE.” AND WHILE THIS IS A GOOD PROBLEM TO HAVE, UPON EXAMINATION THE UNDERLYING CAUSE IS A BIT TROUBLING. WHAT WE ARE EXPERIENCING IS THE EMERGENCE OF A WARRIOR CASTE IN OUR SOCIETY, WHERE LESS THAN 1% HAVE ENGAGED IN MILITARY SERVICE AND OF THOSE WHO HAVE, A LARGE NUMBER ARE RELATED. THE MILITARY HAS, TO A GREAT EXTENT, BECOME A FAMILY BUSINESS. FAR LESS NOTICEABLE BUT PERHAPS MORE PROBLEMATIC IS THE COLLECTIVE FAILURE OF IMAGINATION OF THE VERY SOCIETY THOSE IN THE MILITARY SERVE—AN INABILITY OF THE AVERAGE CITIZEN TO GRASP WHAT MILITARY SERVICE MIGHT ENTAIL.

THE RAMIFICATIONS OF THIS FAILURE OF IMAGINATION—OFTEN MANIFESTED IN PHRASES LIKE “I CAN’T IMAGINE WHAT YOU WENT THROUGH”—ARE FOCUSED WITHIN THE ASYMMETRICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE VETERAN OR SERVICE MEMBER AND LARGER SOCIETY. WHILE OFTEN CELEBRATED, THESE INDIVIDUALS ARE PART OF A MINORITY, AN “OTHER,” AND MAY FIND IT DIFFICULT TO LOCATE THEIR MILITARY EXPERIENCES IN THE BROADER TAPESTRY OF THEIR DAY-TO-DAY LIFE. IT IS FOR THIS REASON

THAT PEOPLE LIKE ME LOOK BACK FONDLY ON OUR TIME COMBAT. EVEN THOUGH IT WAS PUNCTUATED BY MOMENTS OF ABJECT, VISCERAL TERROR AND LOSS THAT LINGERS TO THIS DAY, EVERY MINUTE I WAS SURROUNDED BY FRIENDS AND TEAMMATES WHO UNDERSTOOD EXACTLY WHAT I WAS FEELING. FROM THE PRIVATE ON THE OP TO THE UNIT COMMANDER, WE WERE ALL AFRAID EACH DAY. THE PHENOMENON WE WERE EXPERIENCING IS EGALITARIANISM—DON'T WORRY DEFENDERS, I'VE GOT YOU...EQUALITY AMONGST ALL—A STATE OF BEING THAT CONVEYS A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL SAFETY. BACK IN THE REAL-WORLD THINGS ARE FAR MORE COMPLEX, COMPLICATED, AND CHAOTIC, WITH SEEMINGLY NO END TO RESPONSIBILITIES THAT ARE OFTEN AT ODDS WITH ONE ANOTHER (SEE HERE: WORK-LIFE BALANCE). IT IS NOT HARD TO IMAGINE WHY ONE MIGHT LONG FOR THE SIMPLICITY OF ONE SHARED COMMON OBJECTIVE: SURVIVE AND MAKE IT HOME.

THE GOOD NEWS IS THERE IS A WAY TO CORRECT THIS TREND, TO BRIDGE THE WIDENING CHASM BETWEEN THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVE IN UNIFORM, AS GOVERNMENT CIVILIANS, AND AS CONTRACTORS, AND THE SOCIETY THEY SERVE, PROTECT, AND DEFEND. IT IS BY HOSTING, ATTENDING, AND DOCUMENTING EVENTS LIKE TODAY. IT IS THROUGH WRITING AND READING STORIES—FICTION AND NON-FICTION—ABOUT AMERICA'S CONFLICTS, PAST AND PRESENT. IT IS THROUGH FOSTERING GENUINE DIALOGUE TO PROMOTE THE COLLECTIVE UNDERSTANDING THAT WILL, BIT BY BIT, SIGNAL TO OUR COMBAT VETERANS THAT THEIR STORIES ARE SAFE FOR THE CIVILIAN AKA THE UNINITIATED, OR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT BEEN, AS KARL MARLANTES REFERS TO IT, WITHIN THE TEMPLE OF MARS. THE GOAL IS TO REPLACE THE EFFECTS OF A SINGULAR EXPERIENCE OF HYPER-BELONGING WITH A LARGE VOLUME OF EXPERIENCES THAT CONVEY A SENSE OF BASIC AWARENESS AND ACCEPTANCE. BY DOING SO WE WILL BE ABLE TO PROVIDE OUR VETERANS AND SERVICE MEMBERS WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN SEARCHING FOR: PERMISSION TO FINALLY, COMPLETELY, COME HOME.

THANK YOU FOR COMING TODAY, FOR LISTENING, AND FOR PAYING YOUR RESPECTS TO CAPT REGINALD V. MAISEY, JR. END OF WATCH: JANUARY 31, 1968.