

**VETERANS DAY ADDRESS  
COLLEGE OF DUPAGE  
NOVEMBER 9, 2017  
BRIAN W. CAPUTO**

I am very pleased and honored that the Office of Veterans Services asked me to be here with you today to recognize our veterans. If you are a veteran, would you please stand up/raise your hand? To be standing with other veterans – be they soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen, coast guardsmen, merchant marines, or members of any of the other service branches – is – at the same time – humbling and inspiring.

Every service is represented here on campus. Approximately 1,100 veterans come to the College of DuPage as students, faculty members, or staff each year. Perhaps our most senior veteran is a Merchant Marine aged more than 80 years, who is taking art courses at the college for personal development.

Our veterans have aspired to and continue to aspire to something different. Relatively few Americans take the oath to serve this great country. The simple oath that they took – to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic – reflects the inner self. Yet, the military member or veteran is outwardly focused. Deep in his or her soul reside values that prompt a desire to live a life of honor and service. Those values will impact the military member for life – whether the military member remains in service or chooses to serve society in other ways after leaving the military.

Military service has come to mean a great deal to my family. My late father served as an airman and fought during the Korean Conflict. I stepped onto the Plain at West Point to take the oath at age 18. Including my Academy time, I was soldier more than 26 years. My oldest son, Brian Jr., is now an

Army second lieutenant serving in Kuwait with the 1st Armored Division. He is a graduate of the College of DuPage and the University of Illinois at Chicago. Communicating with him keeps me close to the United States Army. But aside from my connection to the Service through my son, I have always felt a strong attachment to the Army. This attachment has endured throughout the years since 2004 when I retired. Why is that? If you are a veteran, do you still feel that attachment to the military? I suspect that you do – at least to a degree. I believe that we feel the attachment because of the experiences we had and the values that the military instilled in us. As a result, in my heart, I am and always will be a soldier.

My fondest memories of my military experience involve being with and leading soldiers. If you ask any officer what jobs in his military career he enjoyed the most, the answer will almost invariably be command. It is in command that a leader is

afforded the privilege of working alongside troops. From the vantage point of four commands, I was able to witness the commitment, persistence, and character of the American soldier. When push comes to shove, it was my observation that the American soldier simply will not give up. I know that this is true for the members of other services. Those experiences shaped us. I believe that they shaped us for the better. They have shaped us for lifelong service to society.

The Army espouses seven core values. I believe that these values transcend the Army and pervade all military services. In fact, because statistics show that student veterans have higher grade point averages and higher graduation rates than most other student populations, it appears to me that our veterans are still living those values. Two of the core values are duty and selfless service. Duty requires that we fulfill our obligations – completing the tasks that we should complete as an individual

and as a part of a team. Vlad Metodiev, a marine and student at the College of DuPage, understands the concept of duty completely. So exemplary was Vlad's performance this summer as an intern with Primera Engineering that the company's president asked that we send him four more "Vlad's." Vlad, you have made us proud.

Selfless service is another core military value. Selfless service requires that we put the welfare of the nation and others above our own. Marine Jose Pasindo and Soldier Janine Arriola exhibit this value when they serve veterans at the college as peer mentors. Both of these veterans have moved on from the College of DuPage to continue their education at North Central College. However, they are still peer mentors here. What motivates Jose, Janine, and other COD veterans to devote their time to the mentorship program? They are not compensated in

the conventional sense. I believe that the value of selfless service is at work here.

Other military values include loyalty, respect, integrity, personal courage, and honor. Honor is the embodiment of all of the other values. As the Army says, “honor is a matter of carrying out, acting, and living military values in everything we do.” Our challenge as veterans is to consistently demonstrate all of these values. Our society needs individuals who do. Indeed, if you are a veteran, you have a responsibility to exhibit military values. In encounters with others, it may not take long before a veteran is identified for his or her military service. In essence, the veteran is being watched. When others see the veteran, they may wonder what effect military service had on the individual.

- Does he fulfill his obligations?
- Does she treat people as they should be treated?
- Does he put the welfare of others above himself?
- Does she do what is right, legally and morally, even when no one is watching?

- Does he face adversity with fortitude?
- Is she a loyal daughter, sister, spouse, work colleague, classmate, and friend?

If the behavioral responses to these questions are the right ones, the veteran will continue to reflect credit upon his or her branch of military service. I trust that the lives of our College of DuPage veterans will reflect honor and that they will represent the military well.

Earlier this year we dedicated our Homeland Security Building to SSG Robert J. Miller. I think that it is fitting that we recall the culmination of Sergeant Miller's service today. He was a DuPage County resident. He was a Special Forces soldier. He was serving a second tour of duty in Afghanistan in 2008 with the 3rd Special Forces Group at the time of his gallantry. Gallantry that earned SSG Miller the Medal of Honor.

While conducting a combat reconnaissance patrol through the Gowardesh Valley, SSG Miller and his small element of

U.S. and Afghan National Army soldiers engaged a force of 15 to 20 insurgents occupying prepared fighting positions. SSG Miller initiated the assault by engaging the enemy positions with his vehicle's grenade launcher while simultaneously providing detailed descriptions of the enemy positions to his command, enabling effective, accurate close air support.

Following the engagement, SSG Miller led a small squad forward to conduct a battle damage assessment. As the group neared the small, steep, narrow valley that the enemy had inhabited, a large, well-coordinated insurgent force initiated a near ambush, assaulting from elevated positions with ample cover. SSG's Miller's squad was exposed and totally vulnerable to enemy rocket-propelled grenades and automatic weapon fire. As the point man, SSG Miller was at the front of the patrol, cut off from supporting elements, and less than 20 meters from enemy forces. Nonetheless, with total disregard for his own

safety, he called for his men to quickly move back to covered positions as he charged the enemy over exposed ground and under overwhelming enemy fire in order to provide protective fire for his team.

While maneuvering to engage the enemy, SSG Miller was shot in his upper torso. Ignoring the wound, he continued to push the fight, moving to draw fire from over 100 enemy fighters upon himself. He then again charged forward through an open area in order to allow his teammates to safely reach cover. After killing at least 10 insurgents, wounding dozens more, and repeatedly exposing himself to withering enemy fire while moving from position to position, SSG Miller was mortally wounded by enemy fire. His extraordinary valor ultimately saved the lives of 7 members of his own team and 15 Afghanistan National Army soldiers.

Did SSG Miller exhibit the Army's core values?

Loyalty

Duty

Respect

Selfless Service

Integrity

Personal Courage

Honor

I do not believe that there is any question that SSG Miller was the consummate soldier and epitomized the core values of the military.

Few will ever be asked to give what SSG Miller gave.

However, it is the obligation of the veteran to continue demonstrate the values that the military sought to instill.

Today is a day to celebrate the service of our veterans. They are part of a lineage of Americans who chose to devote a share of their lives to answering the call. Whether they served

in Afghanistan, Iraq, Vietnam, on the seas, or in some other corner of the globe, we sincerely thank them. Their choice has made America safe and protected our way of life. I cannot think of a greater contribution to society.

I very much appreciate having had the opportunity to address you today.