

Memorial Day 2025 Speech

Thank you, Dave.

First, I want to thank the Village leadership, the organizations, and all the people that had a hand in or participated in this wonderful Memorial Day parade and ceremony. These traditions are the thread sews our country together, and, at times, mends it back together. Thank you.

Thank you to all my brothers and sisters in arms, past and present, and my fellow Barringtonites; all of us that get to call the Village of Barrington "home," for attending the parade and this Memorial Day Ceremony.

As eloquent as I would like everyone to believe I am, I lack the words to describe how good it is to call Barrington my home and the grace given to me so I may tell my family and friends I am home. On this Memorial Day, nestled between the 80th Anniversary of V-E Day on May 7th and V-J Day on September 2nd, I know there are approximately 1.3 million American Servicemembers -- men and women far greater than I -- who never made it home since the founding of this great nation across all her wars. Each and every one, from the beginning, gave his or her life fighting for the freedoms and ideals we all live and are embraced with. While that number may be a mere fraction of the population of the United States, it is on their brave, selfless, and broad shoulders we stand.

As I said before, this year marks 80 years of victory in WWII. 16.4 million Americans put on the uniform, swore an oath, and fought in WWII. Over 405 thousand gave their lives and never made it home. Today, in the US, there are only about 66 thousand

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WWII Veterans ~~are~~ remaining. In Illinois, only about 2,500.

Here, in our home of Barrington, we are blessed to have one of our own, Mr. Fred Schaffer, the American Legion Post 158 commander and our fearless leader. Please join me in giving Fred a round of applause.

We don't serve alone. The men and women who gave their lives for our country were grandfathers, mothers, brothers, daughters, and friends. On May 11, 2007, I lost a friend and mentor in an alleyway ambush on the dark and dirty streets of Adhamiyah, Iraq while we were on a combat operation. MAJ Doug Zembiec was the greatest warrior I had ever known in a career full of warriors to my left and right. He was arguably the greatest Marine in the Global War on Terror. He was a great man, a loving father to his daughter Fallyn, and cherished husband to his wife, Pamela. On this day of remembrance and memorial, I always choose to remember Doug.

He was hard Marine and special operator. He was born in the wrong time, more suited leading Spartans at Thermopylae or howling a war cry to some Norse God during a Viking raid. Chuck Norris sleeps in MAJ Zembiec pajamas. Yet, not in spite of, but because of his strength of character, he was a man that wrote love poems to his wife and sang over the phone to his infant daughter. In his journal, one of many, he wrote precisely what he lived by:

"Be a man of principle. Fight for what you believe in. Serve your country. Be brave. Teach. Mentor. Give something back to society. Conquer your fears. Be a good friend. Appreciate your friends and family. Set goals and accomplish them. Tell your friends 'I love you' before getting off the phone with them. Live as if you are getting better or getting worse, and not just 'maint-

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aining.' Compliment your friends and compliment their girlfriends and wives more. Cry while toasting loved ones, and lead your men, not by the rank you wear on your shoulders, but the one you wear in your heart...become the greatest husband and father ever, who compliments his wife." (Zembeic, p.142-143).

MAJ Zembeic, and all of the 1.3 million with him, never sacrificed their lives for our country, they gave them willingly and often in glorious and violent defiance of the enemy at the gates.

General Patton said, "it is foolish and wrong to mourn the men that died. Rather, we should thank God that such men lived."

I thank God for MAJ Doug Zembeic, I thank God for SSG Mike Hullender, I thank God for all the men and women greater than me who did not make it home, and I thank God for the United States of America. On this Memorial Day, we remember those that gave their lives for our freedoms and we give thanks to God for them.

Thank You.

- Jeffery M. Curry, MAJ(RET), US Army