

**State Rep. Tom Tangretti**  
**Remarks for VFW Post 33 anniversary**  
**Aug. 21, 2004**

Thank you ladies and gentlemen.

I am extremely proud and honored to be here with you ~~today~~. *TONIGHT.*

As America's fighting men and women once again accept and undertake the mission of freeing people from tyranny halfway around the world, we gather today to celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this organization, whose members over the past near-century have accepted and fulfilled that same responsibility with dignity, honor, pride and humility.

As we gather this evening, 59 years have passed since World War II came to an end.

It was a war that defined the lives of many of the people in this room, and shaped ~~of~~ the world and the future of our nation forever.

*changed the shape of  
OR  
re-shaped the world*

This is definitely a night for reflection on that time, and on the times since then when Americans from this area have been called to battle, and answered that call.

~~As the~~ <sup>A</sup> poet once wrote: "Go with time, but remember to come back every once in a while."

I believe that's wonderful advice, and I am happy to be able to join with members of VFW Post 33 who are gathered here together to go back to their own significant moments, and to remember those times spent with each other in battle, and also to remember those times since spent with each other in friendship and fraternity.

I think it is not only important for all of you to have this opportunity, but also for the community to recognize this opportunity, and to celebrate it.

In fact, I think the biggest reason we are here this evening is because there is that need to go back every once in awhile, to recall what happened all those years ago, and for some, not that many years ago.

We do this in part because we need to remember those who are no longer here with us.

But we also do it to remind people of the men and women like yourselves who are still with us, and who can still teach us the many things we need to know about sacrifice, pride, service, honor and commitment.

For those of us who were not in the places you were, who have not seen the things that you have seen, who have not lived the lives you have lived, this gives us an opportunity not only to bear witness to what you have all done on our behalf on the battlefield, but also to celebrate the lives you have lived since then, and the contributions you have made to our society and to each of our communities since then.

After all, this is the least that we can do: ensure that your triumphs over tyranny, and your sacrifices in that fight, should not ~~w~~e wasted.

We must stand ready to help you in whatever way we can.

And I promise you, that we do, and we always stand ready to join you to remember, and to honor you.

We know the price you paid was high.

But we also recognize that the gift you bought with that high price – our freedom -- is well worth the cost.

We continue to believe in that freedom, and it is inspiring to me to see today that millions of young Americans are still willing to follow in your footsteps to protect it, defend it, and extend it.

As we celebrate the company of each other here this evening, we must also take a moment to remember those men and women who were your friends, comrades and buddies, and who gave their lives for our freedom.

We recognize, of course, that they, in their own way, had much to do with making you who you are, and in building this organization into what it is today.

I know that not a day goes by where members of VFW Post 33 do not think about and mourn those who were left behind.

In a way, the VFW and other groups like it ~~you~~, are living monuments to these men and women, a way for heroes like you who were able to return from service to remind the community around them that freedom and democracy must be fought for.

VFW Post 33 and its members remind our community just who did, and who is doing, that fighting – their friends, neighbors and family members.

That is who we are speaking of when we praise the soldiers, engineers, airmen and sailors overseas.

We are speaking of you – fathers, ~~uncles~~,  
grandfathers, mothers, aunts, ~~uncles~~, brothers and  
sisters. UNCLES

You keep alive that notion of sacrifice for us, and  
you also keep alive for us the memory of those who  
were taken from us – and the honor and respect  
they deserve.

The war cemeteries around the world are a  
testament to what freedom costs.

But VFW Post 33 and its members ~~around~~ are a  
living testament to what freedom means ... and to  
why paying that price is important.

All of us who are responsible, engaged citizens of  
this nation do our part every day to preserve the  
freedom you gave us.

But, of course, you, who were part of the front lines,  
carry the heaviest burden. CARRY

Strong experiences mark you, as do strong  
memories.

I know there are many proud memories, good  
memories.

Many of those memories will be celebrated tonight.

But I'm sure there are also many memories you  
wish you could forget.

War is chaotic.

A person's best – and worst – are brought out at the  
same time.

Bravery, care and solidarity are a part of every soldier, but by necessity, so are despair, fear and brutality.

Those of us who have grown up in the world of your making look upon you with deep gratitude.

*never mind*

When war broke out, you saw what had to be done, and committed yourselves to doing it, even though you knew you might have to pay the highest price.

So as you see old friends, reminisce about experiences, and meet new friends, those of us who cannot know what you went through can always know this:

That while peace and dignity for all people cannot be taken for granted, peace and dignity for all people IS POSSIBLE TO OBTAIN.

You proved that because it is you who helped to obtain it for us and so many others in the world.

The proof that you provided is why so many people here in the United States and around the world are willing to continue and fight for that peace and dignity.

The members of VFW Post 33 have shown us for nearly a century – not just by the way they fought, but also by the way they lived once they returned from fighting – that while the price of peace is high, that price is a price worth paying.

You proved to us that, yes, war is destructive, painful and tragic, but that sometimes it is necessary.

You proved to us that war is hell on earth, but that the peace and dignity that result from an honorable fight is a worthwhile reward.

Finally, you proved to us that out of war can grow friendships and fraternity that last a lifetime.

And that is mostly why we are here this evening ... to once again celebrate and renew those friendships ... to embrace and enjoy those fraternal bonds.

I'm sure many of you have experienced difficulties as the result of your war experiences, but through *the* VFW, you have always been there for each other, and that is very important.

Those of us who benefited from your sacrifice need to make a promise that we, too, will always be here for you, not just to take care of your needs and to answer your concerns, but also to help you celebrate each other, the undying friendships you forged, and the new world – a much better world – that you helped to create for us.

I want to thank all of you personally for everything you have done for this nation, and for this community.

And I want to take this opportunity to also thank you on behalf of all the people of the community who do not have the opportunity I do tonight.

You can be sure they are grateful, as well.

You know, it was residents from this very area who fought on the frontier of what is considered the very first war involving Americans – the French and Indian war.

The residents of this region have been answering the call on behalf of this region and the nation ever since.

Members of VFW Post 33 – the second-oldest VFW post in the nation – are a living testament ~~that~~ <sup>of</sup> that tradition.

What a great jewel of the community and the region you are.

I could not be more proud to have been invited here to speak to you, and in truth, could not be more proud of knowing each and every one of you.

What you have done for me and my family, <sup>us</sup> <sup>our</sup> <sup>rec</sup> <sup>our</sup> my friends and my neighbors, is of course, beyond thanks. <sup>our</sup>

What you gave us, and continue to give us, is what I go to work every day to preserve and make stronger, and believe me, I do think about that all the time.

It is a tremendous honor, and every time I am invited to join a group like yours I am again reminded what a heavy responsibility I bear, and it makes me want to work that much harder.

For tonight, though, I can simply take great pleasure and pride in helping you celebrate a great milestone, and to help celebrate some of the greatest people in the history of our nation.

I am proud to know you, and even prouder to be invited here this evening to personally say, "Thank you, and congratulations."

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