

WAR MEMORIAL DEDICATION SPEECH  
BY CAPTAIN RAY E. PIERCE, USN/RETIRED  
AUGUST 16, 2003

AS THE HANCOCK MEMORIAL COMMITTEE, JARVIS COFFIN AND HOWARD WESTON JOIN ME IN WELCOMING YOU TO THIS CEREMONY. YOU HAVE OUR GRATITUDE AND THANKS FOR JOINING US ON WHAT IS FOR US A VERY SPECIAL DAY. WITHOUT THE GENEROUS DONATIONS FROM MANY OF YOU WE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE WHAT YOU WILL SOON SEE.

AS SOME OF YOU MAY HAVE HEARD, INITIALLY WE PLANNED TO PLACE A LARGE SLAB OF GRANITE FROM THE MEETINGHOUSE STEPS IN FRONT OF THE MONUMENT. HOWEVER, WE REALIZED THAT THIS WOULD DETRACT FROM THE QUIET SIMPLICITY OF THE MONUMENT BOULDER. INSTEAD WE HAVE MOUNTED TWO SMALL BENCHES WHICH YOU SEE COVERED TO MY RIGHT AND LEFT. WE DO PLAN TO CONVERT THIS AREA INTO AN ATTRACTIVE, RESTFUL PARK AREA AS BEFITS SUCH A MEMORIAL.

-IF YOU STUDY THE NAMES ON THE MONUMENT NEAR THE BANDSTAND, YOU WILL FIND GENERATIONS OF FAMILIES SUCH AS LAKIN AND WASHBURN THAT HAVE RESPONDED TO OUR NATIONS CALL REPEATEDLY. AS TIME WENT ON THOSE NAMES GAVE WAY SUCH NAMES AS WESTON AND HAYWARD WHICH IN TURN GAVE WAY TO NAMES SUCH AS RUSS AND DALY DURING THE VIETNAM CONFLICT. THE COMMON THREAD IS THAT HANCOCK SONS AND DAUGHTERS, HUSBANDS AND WIVES, MOTHERS AND FATHERS HAVE MAINTAINED AN UNBROKEN RECORD OF ANSWERING THEIR COUNTRIES CALL TO DUTY TO THIS DAY.

SO WE MEET HERE TODAY TO DEDICATE THIS NEW MONUMENT TO THOSE WHO SERVED IN THE THREE MOST RECENT CONFLICTS THAT ARE NOW BEHIND US. BY MOUNTING AN APPROPRIATE PLAQUE ON THIS PIECE OF HANCOCK GRANITE, WE BELIEVE THAT THE MEMORIES OF THOSE LISTED WILL JOIN THOSE ON THE FIRST MONUMENT AND REMAIN WITH US FOR AS LONG AS THIS STONE WILL, WHICH SHOULD BE FOR GENERATIONS TO COME.

OF THE THREE WARS LISTED, WWII WAS AN ALL-OUT WAR WITH BROAD NATIONAL SUPPORT FOR OUR FIGHTING MEN AND WOMEN. IT IS A WAR WHERE MOST OF OUR ARMED FORCES WENT OVERSEAS IN UNITS AND STAYED WITH THOSE UNITS BUILDING COMMON TIES THAT I'M SURE HELPED MANY WHO MIGHT OTHERWISE NOT HAVE COME HOME. WHEN THE SURRENDER TOOK PLACE OUR TROOPS CAME BACK IN THOSE SAME UNITS. AS THOSE OLD ENOUGH WILL RECALL, THEY WERE RECEIVED WITH ACCOLADES AND HONORS. A GRATEFUL GOVERNMENT MADE AVAILABLE TO THEM THE 52/20 CLUB, WHICH TRANSLATES TO \$20 A WEEK

FOR 52 WEEKS. IT GAVE MANY A CHANCE TO UNWIND AND HAVE TIME TO SETTLE BACK INTO A CIVILIAN LIFE. A GENEROUS GI BILL ALLOWED MANY TO FIND THEIR WAY INTO A BETTER LIFE AND TO PROFITABLE CAREERS. THEY TRULY BECAME THE GREATEST GENERATION.

-SADLY MANY DID NOT COME HOME. IN THAT WAR THE FISHER AND FISH FAMILIES AND HANCOCK LOST A NATIVE SON, PFC GEORGE FISHER. HE WAS KILLED IN ITALY JUST AS AN ARMISTICE WENT INTO EFFECT. HE IS THE FIRST OF TWO GOLD STAR SERVICEMEN ON OUR PLAQUE. THE COVERED BENCH TO MY LEFT IS BEING DEDICATED TO HIS MEMORY. WAYNE FISHER, THE SON HE NEVER SAW IS WITH US TODAY TO REPRESENT THE FAMILY AND TO HELP HONOR HIS FATHER.

THE SECOND OF THE THREE CONFLICTS IS THE SO-CALLED POLICE ACTION IN KOREA. TO THOSE BRAVE SOULS WHO SUFFERED AND DIED THROUGH IT, IT WAS NOTHING BUT A BLOODY WAR. THIS IS THE FORGOTTEN WAR. OUR SOLDIERS, SAILORS, AIRMEN AND COASTGUARDSMEN WHO SURVIVED CAME HOME WITHOUT PUBLIC WELCOME AND ATTENTION. THEY SIMPLY RETOOK THEIR PLACES IN SOCIETY, AND BUILT THEIR LIVES ANEW, THOUGH MANY WERE LEFT WITH PHYSICAL AND MENTAL DISABILITIES. MANY HAVE FELT, WITH JUSTIFICATION, THAT HAVE BEEN FORGOTTEN. IT IS OUR HOPE THAT THIS MONUMENT WILL HELP PERPETUATE OUR MEMORY OF THEIR SACRIFICES AS WELL AS THOSE OF THEIR LOVED ONES AT HOME WHO ALSO GAVE SO MUCH.

THE THIRD PORTION OF OUR PLAQUE LISTS HANCOCK MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED IN THAT UGLY ACTION IN THE JUNGLES, AIR AND WATERS OF VIETNAM. I CALL THAT THE LONELY WAR. AS TIME WENT ON, OUR MILITARY WERE FED INTO THE COUNTRY PIECE-MEAL, OFTEN ONE AT A TIME. MANY ARRIVED UNNOTICED AFTER A LONG, LONELY CHARTER FLIGHT TO SERVE THEIR YEAR IN COUNTRY. THEN, A YEAR TO THE DAY, MANY WOULD DEPART UNNOTICED ON A LONG, LONELY RETURN FLIGHT. MANY ARRIVED HOME WELCOMED ONLY BY THEIR LOVED ONES. MANY HAD SPOUSES AND CHILDREN WHO WERE RIDICULED AND BELITTLED BECAUSE THE SERVICE MEMBER FOUGHT IN AN UNPOPULAR WAR. MANY DID NOT GET THE HELP THEY NEEDED SO DESPERATELY. WE MUST BE SURE THAT WE NEVER SEND OUR MILITARY INTO SUCH A QUAGMIRE AGAIN.

-IT WAS IN THIS WAR THAT ANOTHER HANCOCK SON WAS LOST. HE WAS A. BAYARD RUSS, WHO DIED FLYING COMBAT MISSIONS OVER VIETNAM. HIS MOTHER, MRS. FRANCES RUSS, AND HIS SISTER, MRS. PRISCILLA RUSS MALCOLM ARE WITH US TODAY AS WE HONOR BAYARD. THE BENCH TO MY RIGHT WILL BE DEDICATED TO HIS MEMORY.

AS TIME GOES ON, UNFORTUNATELY, THERE WILL BE CAUSE TO ADD NAMES OF PARTICIPANTS TO THIS PIECE OF HANCOCK GRANITE FROM CURRENT AND FUTURE CONFLICTS. THERE IS SPACE TO DO SO BY ADDING MORE BRONZE PLAQUES. THE UNBROKEN CHAIN OF RECOGNITION WILL SERVE TO REMIND US THAT IT IS ALWAYS THE COMMON, EVERYDAY FAMILY, FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS WHO ARE CALLED UPON TO DO THE UNCOMMON, WHO ARE CALLED ON TO SOLVE THE GROSS FAILURES OF WORLD LEADERS. WE SHOULD REMEMBER THIS WHEN WE CHOOSE OUR NATIONAL LEADERS.

BEFORE GETTING ON WITH THE BUSINESS OF THE DAY I WANT TO PAUSE TO RECOGNIZE SOME PEOPLE. FIRST OF ALL, WOULD ALL VETERANS PRESENT PLEASE STAND UP AND BE RECOGNIZED. WE THANK YOU AND HONOR YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE TO YOUR COUNTRY.

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AS HAS BEEN THE CASE FOR MANY YEARS, IT WOULD NOT BE OLD HOME DAY WITHOUT THE TEMPLE BAND. THEY GRACIOUSLY AGREED TO PROVIDE THE ALL-IMPORTANT MARSHALL MUSIC FOR THIS EVENT. WE ARE TRULY GRATEFUL FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.

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WE ARE PARTICULARLY PRIVILEGED TO HAVE AS THE COLOR GUARD MEN FROM HANCOCK'S OWN IRREGULARS. THEY ARE A DETACHMENT FROM THE IRREGULARS WHO MARCH IN EVERY OLD HOME DAY PARADE. THANK YOU GEORGE BYAM, DOC BENOIT, EDWARD LAPINE, AND BOB SCHMITT.

REVEREND CREBBIN, WE THANK YOU FOR BRINGING THE PROPER SENSE OF SOLEMNITY TO THESE PROCEEDINGS.

WE THANK JOHN KAUFHOLD OF PETERBOROUGH MARBLE AND GRANITE WORKS, TOM KEENAN, OUR HERCULES WHO MOVED THE BOULDER INTO PLACE, AND KURT GRASSET AND HIS HIGHWAY CREW. WITHOUT THEM WE WOULDN'T HAVE A MONUMENT TO DEDICATE.

AND FINALLY, WE THANK SANDY WESTON FOR PROVIDING THE UNIQUE COVER FOR THE MONUMENT.

AND ONE LAST ADMINISTRATIVE TASK. I AM ABOUT TO HAND JARVIS COFFIN, PRESIDENT OF THE HANCOCK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, A LISTING OF ALL THOSE WHO DONATED FUNDS TO THIS PROJECT. WE THINK IT PROPER THAT IT BE IN THE TOWN ANNALS.

NOW IT IS TIME FOR THE UNVEILING. ESCORTS PLEASE GUIDE WAYNE FISHER AND MRS. FRANCES RUSS, PRISCILLA RUSS MACOMB AND ROBERT RUSS TO THE MONUMENT. WILL ALL PLEASE RISE IN RESPECT FOR THOSE ON THE PLAQUE WHO ARE NO LONGER WITH US AND IN TRIBUTE TO

THOSE WHO ARE AND REMAIN STANDING UNTIL THE COLORS ARE RETIRED.

THE RUSS FAMILY AND WAYNE, PLEASE DO THE HONORS AND UNVEIL OUR MONUMENT.

IF YOU WILL NOW MOVE TO THE BENCHES AND UNCOVER THEM. EACH IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF ONE OF OUR GOLD STAR VETERANS, GEORGE FISHER AND BAYARD RUSS.

AT THIS TIME BUGLERS WILL PLAY TAPS IN MEMORY OF ALL ON THE MONUMENT WHO ARE NO LONGER WITH US.

MILITARY - ATTENTION, RIGHT HAND SALUTE

BUGLERS SOUND OFF.

REVEREND CREBBIN, PLEASE GIVE THE BENEDICTION.

COLOR GUARD, RETIRE THE COLORS.

THIS CONCLUDES THIS CEREMONY. YOUR ATTENDANCE HAS MADE THIS EVEN A MORE SPECIAL EVENT. THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING.