

**Remarks of Commissioner Orson Swindle  
Federal Trade Commission  
Arlington National Cemetery  
National POW/MIA Recognition Day  
September 21, 2001**

Distinguished Guests, Families and Friends ....

I am always concerned that I will overlook someone deserving of recognition, forgive me if I have done so today. Most certainly, all here deserve recognition.

With the awesome responsibilities that our government and military leaders have before them, I know that I can express for the families and friends of those Missing in Action an enormous sense of gratitude for your being here.

I have struggled with what might be appropriate to say to you at this moment in history. Emotions, images and memories, both old and new, fill my mind.

We are gathered for the twenty-second year to commemorate National POW/MIA Recognition Day ... to remember and recommit to those lost in conflicts of long ago. But, today we are stunned by more recent tragic losses from terrorist attacks on Americans and symbols of our nation.

Some may suggest today's tragedy replaces yesterday's --- not so, for they are part of the same cloth that is what we are. Our grieving and remembering is proper, it is American --- we care --- human life and sacrifices matter --- we remember.

It is even more fitting and essential that we do this today.

Rather than cower in fear, we have seen our nation come together with determination, unlike anything we have seen in too long a time. We are prepared to fight for our beliefs and our freedoms. We have a President and Team now who are up to the challenge.

We pause today because of commitments and our sense of obligation. We remind ourselves and our Country to not forget our responsibilities to those who served and made the ultimate sacrifice. Recent events emphasize just how important it is for our government and our people to keep those commitments. We will be calling upon a new generation to make enormous sacrifices. The torch continues to be passed.

Our future depends upon the strength of our people. Without the confidence of commitment, loyalty to cause and each other, we are lost.

Our Marine Corps' motto, "Semper Fidelis" --- Always Faithful --- is not conveyed lightly among Marines. It is a part of our very being. We are deadly serious.

More than most Americans, the families of POWs and MIAs from wars past know firsthand the agony and uncertainty that so many are suffering today. These families and people like Ms. Joanne Shirley and Ann Griffith of the National League of Families, DPMO Director Jerry Jennings, and Members of the Joint Task Force and CILHI and those volunteers like Karen McManus in our audience who have kept the flame alive truly know the meaning of commitment and Semper Fidelis. They know of tireless work, faded dreams and frustration, and they know the meaning of small victories ... and they know about sacrifice. They show us the way.

The pain and grief experienced long ago eventually subside, and as most of these families will likely tell us, life must go on. Hard as it may be to believe, even in these recent tragedies, the uncertainty and

horrible grief will end, but the losses will forever change personal lives and our nation. We must never forget.

The uncertainty for the families of America's POW/MIAs has continued for over 10, 25 and even 50 years.

Our determination (or sadly at times, the lack of it) to resolve the fate of our Missing in Action, and return these men and women, alive or dead, speaks volumes about national commitment to those who serve --- past, present and, as recent events tell us, in the future. It reveals so much of our national character.

Never has it been more important to show our resolve.

It is in this spirit that I urge you to renew your commitment to help obtain answers about America's POW/MIAs, whether from the Vietnam War, Gulf War, Korean War or the Cold War era. We need your commitment. We need a Nation's commitment. Those unaccounted for and their families deserve no less.

There are currently 1,956 Americans missing from the Vietnam War alone. We have work to do and "miles to go before we sleep."

If I may impose upon you for a few minutes longer, I would like to tell you some stories about Americans I have known personally or have come to know through others, which I hope will put this into a personal kind of perspective.

My father was a Marine, a PFC, who made the assault on Iwo Jima with the 28<sup>th</sup> Marines on February 19, 1945. WWII was bigger than life itself to a 7 year old in Camilla, Georgia. I was destined to be a Marine.

As a young second lieutenant, I chose to write a research paper about Colonel Evans Carlson and his Marine Raiders and came to know the details of the Makin Island Raid, of the heroism, of the tragic losses in the earliest of days of WWII. A few weeks ago, I stood in the rain outside the Arlington National Cemetery Chapel with hundreds of Marines, Americans, Raiders and friends to honor those **Marine Raiders** who lost their lives on Makin Island --- Marines who gave their all and are now home -- almost 60 years later.

In the years immediately following our POWs return from Vietnam, I attended memorial services and visited families of dear friends of mine who had lost their lives in prisoner of war camps in North Vietnam. I met some of their families on the occasion of their remains returning to American soil. While grieving so painfully, there was joy in the knowledge that USAF Colonel **Ron Storz** and Marine Chief Warrant Officer **John Frederick** had come home to us.

In recent years, the remains of my dear friend and squadron mate, Marine Captain **John Sherman**, were returned. John was special. We went through flight school together and were on the same set of orders to our first squadron to fly the F-8 Crusader. Bright, athletic, full of life and so very talented --- his name was the first my son, Kevin, ever spoke. We lost John west of Chu Lai in 1966. John is now home where he belongs.

This afternoon I was to attend memorial services and burial of four members of Marine Reconnaissance Patrol Partyline One. Sadly, the occasion has been postponed due to the recent tragedies. When the services are rescheduled, I will be there with other Marines.

I did not know Corporal **Thomas Gopp**, or Corpsman **James McGrath**, or Lance Corporals **John Nahan** and **Jack Wolpe**. In recent years, I have come to know their officer and patrol leader, retired Marine Lt Colonel **Bill McBride**. These four young men died in the A Shau Valley, a place with which I am quite familiar, on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1967, when the helicopter attempting to extract them was hit by a North

Vietnamese rocket.

Reconnaissance Patrol Partyline One consisted of eight young men including then Second Lieutenant McBride. Corporals **Lathum** and **McCarty** were there as were Lance Corporals **Cleon Kitchens** and **Dan Heckathorne**. These Marines, along with another similar unit, were inserted into the A Shau Valley, a deadly place, to collect intelligence before a major operation. Partyline One turned out to be the trip wire that exposed an enormous force of North Vietnamese, seemingly much greater than was anticipated in an operation in which heavy Marine casualties were already predicted.

Because of the efforts of these Marines and what they had discovered, the operation was postponed. Later, with greater strength, Marines would enter the A Shau and achieve success. Lieutenant McBride and his small band of brothers suffered incredible losses, four killed and the rest badly wounded; but in the process, they saved the lives of many.

McGrath, Gopp, Nahan and Wolpe, fine young Americans, are coming home, now some 34 years after the incident where their sacrifice saved many.

As Bill McBride told me recently, "It was a long patrol, and it is almost over."

Four short stories about the finest America has to offer say it all. We must keep our commitments if we are to expect courage and sacrifice from our next generation to face the challenges we now see so clearly before us. These men, some dear friends, are home because we cared enough to remember and do all within our power to keep our commitments.

I will close by referring to a bit of contemporary art form --- a movie we have all seen, Saving Private Ryan. Despite the recent tragedy, we are incredibly blessed people. Except in time of grave crisis, the most that is demanded of us is that we be Keepers of the Flame of Hope, Liberty, Fairness, Kindness and Progress for all people --- that we be good stewards for our blessed America. We have been given these blessing by sacrifices of so many like those I have mentioned today.

Recall, for a brief moment, the scene at the end of the movie, when Private Ryan is attempting to thank Captain Miller, who is dying of wounds. Miller's response cries out to all of us

***"Earn this ...."***