

*Full Remarks from Lt. General (Ret.) Daniel W. Christman '61, delivered on Monday, Nov. 14, 2022 inside the Chapel*

Jordanne (Nichols), thank you very much for the kind introduction. And congratulations to you and Landon for leading the Student Body; few experiences here will mean more.

To our Head of School, Suzanne Walker Buck, deepest appreciation for your endorsement of this project. In military terms, you've provided "strategic top cover." It's been vital to project success.

Finally, to the incredible War Memorial Committee, your vision in rectifying a decades-long oversight has been breathtaking. You've been the ground troops who have brought this memorial to life. We can't thank you enough.

This morning, we are dedicating a memorial. In 1888, at a memorial ceremony a few hundred miles east of here, a retired Union Civil War general used the following words at the dedication: "In great deeds, something abides; on great fields, something stays. And spirits .... linger, to consecrate the ground for the vision-place of souls."

These words were spoken by one of the many heroes of the Battle of Gettysburg, Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, who, after the war, became the president of Bowdoin College and the governor of Maine.

We may not have brought here the "great fields" Chamberlain alludes to. But maybe, in one way, we have – in the compelling stories behind each of these 66 names. Seeing the concept of this memorial – it's beyond emotion; it's almost spiritual, as Chamberlain suggested.

But what IS a memorial? Simply, it's a focus for the memory. In the years following the second world war, starting in the late fifties, that purpose – symbolized by the beautiful plaque honoring those from Reserve who paid the ultimate price in WWII – seemed forgotten.

I visited the old site at Bicknell Gym many times as a kid; I lived only a few blocks away from the Gym, on Elm street. And with the plaque tucked away in a quiet spot by the gym, I stood transfixed, softly saying and counting the names.

Like so many of our generation, my sister and I were daughters and sons of the WWII generation. So many members of our extended families were in uniform, were deployed, fought, and died.

46 names on the plaque. 46? From a school this small? Why so many?

But during my four years here as a student, not once do I remember any reference being made to the memorial – not on Veterans Day, not on Memorial Day, not ever.

As I served in the Army, fought in Vietnam, and became familiar later in life with battlefields like Gettysburg and Normandy and Antietam, the size of the sacrifices from this school became, perhaps, more .... understandable. This school produces leaders. Always has. And leaders ....lead.....from the front. "Follow Me" and "Rangers Lead the Way" became part of my soul, starting at West Point and through 40 years in uniform.

In Vietnam, for helicopter assaults, leaders got on the helicopters LAST, we got OFF first; we were last in any chow line, knew our soldiers' names, and met them where they worked: on patrol, on firebases, in their fox-holes or fighting positions or bunkers; and we tried to know about their families. That's what leaders do.

So many of the names on this memorial were LEADERS — in the image of "Captain Miller" (Tom Hanks in "Saving Private Ryan") or Lieutenant Dick Winters in real life (played by Damien Lewis in the HBO series "Band of Brothers"). They knew their jobs. They inspired. They respected their soldiers. They were selfless. Disproportionately, they were at higher risk; and for too many, they paid the supreme sacrifice.

Reading the vignettes of these 66 from all the wars — the small stories of these young Reservites — I'm struck repeatedly: the stories mirror America's history and the dramatic, page-turning conflicts of the era: Shiloh, Missionary Ridge, Guadalcanal, Bataan Death march, the Burma-Rangoon railroad ("Bridge on the River Kwai"), battle of the Philippine Sea, Battle of the Atlantic, northwest Africa, Normandy, 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force raids over Nazi Germany, battle of the Bulge, the Cold War, Vietnam, 9-11. These young men were there. And they led.

But reading these stories is more than connecting dots and memorizing dates. It's keeping memories alive. It's what memorials do. As Joshua Chamberlain said, they become a "vision-place of souls."

One of my favorite Shakespeare plays is Henry the Fifth. Because in part it's about a young leader who's trying to inspire his troops to fight — outnumbered — and win. Think this is no longer relevant? Think Ukraine. Think Volodymyr Zelensky. From Shakespeare's pen, that was young Henry in 1415, before the battle of Agincourt. Fighting outnumbered. And trying to inspire the troops.

How does Henry try to inspire? Amongst other themes in this by-now famous address, by suggesting to his soldiers that when they grow old, they and the battle they are about to fight will ALWAYS be "freshly remembered."

Listen to HENRY in Act IV, Scene 3: "He that shall live this day and see old age, will yearly on the vigil, feast his neighbors, and say tomorrow is St. Crispin..."

By the way, what is "St. Crispin?" It was the feast honoring the brothers Crispin and Crispian -- put to death by the Romans in the third century AD. They became the

patron saints of cobblers and tanners and shoemakers. (It was evidently a big deal in the 15th Century!) The battle of Agincourt was fought on that feast day, October 25.

But, back to Henry, conjuring the image of a soldier grown old but still remembering that day: “Then shall he strip his sleeves and show his scars and say ‘these wounds I had on St. Crispin’s Day.’ Old men forget, yet all shall be forgot, but he’ll remember with advantages what feats he did that day. Then shall our names, familiar in his mouth as household words — Harry the King, Bedford and Exeter, Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester — be in their flowing cups FRESHLY REMEMBERED! This story shall the good man teach his son; and Crispin Crispian shall ne’er go by from this day ‘til the ending of the world, but we in it shall be REMEMBERED!”

But what about THIS memorial? THESE names? THEIR battles? THIS school? NOW, not 1415? SO, let’s put THEM and this school in the words of Henry:

“Then shall their names, familiar in our mouths as household words: Pierce the Major, Pomeroy and Stewart, Conrad and Heyman, Weaver and Thum, be in THEIR flowing cups Freshly Remembered! This story shall Reserve always teach; and Veterans and Memorial Days shall ne’er go by from this day ‘til the ending of the world, but they in it shall be REMEMBERED!”

The Wounded Warrior Project has a compelling reminder: “The worst casualty of war is to be forgotten!”

This memorial helps to ensure that these 66 names will be “freshly remembered;” that the “power of the vision” shall pass unto YOUR souls.

I visited and helped lead battlefield tours on the Normandy beaches a few months ago. On this ground, there’s another memorial – the American Cemetery, overlooking Omaha Beach. Over 9300 crosses and Stars of David are arrayed in front of visitors, at a site where nearly 2000 young Americans lost their lives in a span of a few hours on the morning of June 6, 1944. It’s as moving a view as you will ever see.

And as you enter the cemetery, there’s a large, highly visible statue; it’s of a young man, arms reaching for the sky. The sculptor titled this inspirational work, “The Spirit of American Youth, Rising From the Waves.”

As you visit THIS memorial, to ponder and dream in the months and years ahead, think of the names on this memorial as the youthful spirit emerging from this school, reminding about service — service above self; about inspirational, values-based leadership; and about “freshly remembering” these 66, who shall remain forever young and treasured in our hearts.

I hope in short that what has been done here becomes a true “vision-place of souls.” I’m confident it will. And it will reflect superbly on the excellence, integrity and compassion of this great school.

Thank you.