

Honoring those who protect us

As a severely wounded Vietnam veteran, retired in 1968 as a double leg amputee, the brave men and women who have protected us on active military duty, in the intelligence community, in law enforcement and first responders, have always been uppermost in my mind for their commitment, dedication, and often their ultimate sacrifice in fulfilling a purpose and calling to protect us in our beloved America.

Over the recent past years, it is my observation that only lip service officially has been given to these loyal Americans on the front lines daily in far flung overseas field of fight and daily on the front lines combatting crime and terrorism in the homeland. In my war, Viet Nam, a vocal minority of the population protested the war and the warriors. In recent years, I have been heartened that the majority of our citizens have measurably and demonstrably honored our military. However, on the home front our police often have been vilified and murdered in the streets, witness Dallas, Texas. It has been an appalling demonstration of strife on our own turf.

This past weekend I was brought to tears of joy, often by what I observed as demonstrated by our new President, Donald J. Trump. My witness to his actions and participations in recent days at the Inaugural events have been most heartening as to where his heart and soul reside.

As a teenager in Washington, I watched as members of the Old Guard marched their paces in front of the revered site at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery. The day before the inauguration, there was our President-elect paying his respects at this memorial. There must have been many demands on his time, yet he took the time to visit Arlington. After the luncheon in the Capitol following the official inauguration, I viewed our new Commander-in-Chief and President and Mrs. Trump and Vice President and Mrs. Pence on

the bottom steps of the east Capitol side, flanking probably the Commanding General of the Military District of Washington, in their first official function relating to the military. The active military units to be marching in the Inaugural Parade passed in review. There were few spectators. The Capitol grounds were closed off for security.

Viewing the parade, it was obvious the extraordinary security placed around the President's vehicle. When he exited, as it turns out, only shortly twice on the parade route, he was immediately "surrounded" by Secret Service, who were prepared to stop bullets if any of the protesters, who were so prevalent in the Capitol, had been so inclined to become world famous in infamy.

Then there was the parade itself. There the President was standing for most of the parade, saluting smartly, presumably each time our national colors passed him. It was especially noticeable, that, before each active military unit marched past the reviewing stand, that that service branch member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff stood between the President and Vice President to honor their marchers. The family members of our military fallen in action were prominently represented as were our Disabled American Veterans and Paralyzed Veterans of America. My own service academy, West Point, was minimally represented in a small contingent of cadets, a far cry from the entire 2500-member Corps of Cadets, which marched in President Kennedy's parade in 1961. (With pride, I marched with my fellow cadets on that bitterly cold day!)

Typically, in the past, there have been a number of balls inaugural night, but only a reduced number this time, presumably only three. One, most important and heart-warming assuredly, was the Armed Forces Ball attended by our new President Trump. How it warmed my heart to view the President and First Lady, the Pences, and the new President's immediate family on the dance floor at the Armed Forces Ball, dancing with members of the backbone and soul of our military, our

enlisted men and women!

It had been written, perhaps as "Fake News," that our new President was to take the weekend off, following the inauguration day activities. But, not for this new and vigorous Chief Executive. On Saturday, he was at the National Cathedral for a prayer service. On the morning of the inauguration he attended a worship service at the Church of the Presidents, St. John's Episcopal, across Lafayette Square from the White House and immediately west of the headquarters building of Veterans Affairs, where I served in the administration of President George H.W. Bush. Pastor Robert Jeffress in his sermon harkened back to the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem by Nehemiah in mid-fifth century B.C. Nehemiah, like our new President Trump, was subject to constant attacks. But Nehemiah, as will our new President, prevailed over all and accomplished his mission.

President Trump's first agency visit was to the Central Intelligence Agency in Langley on Saturday afternoon. It certainly did not look like he took the weekend off. His leadership style was in full bloom as he called attention to the endeavors of the CIA in combatting our enemies overseas. He brought significant and appropriate attention to his new CIA chief, Mike Pompeo.

A good and great leader gets with the 'troops' and this was a classic example of his style.

On Sunday, he continued his expression of his respect for our Americans, who are on the homeland's front lines in serving and protecting us. He held a White House reception for law enforcement and first responders. He called an individual forward to stand between him and VP Pence and I presume it was the head of Secret Service. President Trump stated words to the effect that he felt well-protected from the beginning. In the keeping of his relaxed and humorous style he called up FBI chief James Comey and joked, "He is more famous than I."

The most single expression of the respect to be commanded most deservedly by this new Commander-in -Chief is the story I heard about a high school senior residing in the northeast. A West Point classmate related he had been working with the senior for admission to West Point. He said he would not have entered West Point had President Trump's opponent become president, but was more than proud under President Trump to serve his country as an officer and as a graduate of West Point and is proceeding to obtain admission to the Academy.

That is my story and I am sticking with it! God bless America, our military, intelligence community, law enforcement, and first responders. It is morning in America again!

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