

I would like to congratulate Bruce Seymore as he retires and wish him and his family all the best.

WALTER CAPPS "IN OUR HEARTS"
MEMORIAL DAY SPEECH

HON. LANE EVANS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 1997

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, this Monday is Memorial Day. Members of Congress will be home in joining with our constituents at many important ceremonies honoring the memory of those who sacrificed their life in the service of our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, one of our new Members, WALTER CAPPS, of California, will be giving the keynote address as a major Memorial Day gathering in Los Osos, CA. Congressman CAPPS is a true friend of those currently serving in the military and a staunch advocate on behalf of our veterans and their families.

Representative CAPPS has shared his planned remarks with me. I am pleased to submit a copy of Representative CAPPS' remarks into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD moving speech and I urge my colleagues to read and reflect on his remarks.

IN OUR HEARTS

(By Walter Capps)

Corporal Haley, Father Kozancki, Master Sergeant Martin, Supervisor Laurent, Reverend Ford, esteemed Veterans, ladies, and gentlemen.

It is a humbling and awesome task to stand before 1,000 people this morning in this breathtaking location to help observe Memorial Day.

Today, all over this great nation, Americans from every walk of life are taking time to honor the memory and reflect on the sacrifices of those who gave their lives so that we can live our lives in peace and freedom. Today more than any day, they are in our hearts.

And just as importantly, we pay tribute to those—like the hundreds in this gathering today—who served in our military forces. You may not have given your lives, but you certainly gave of your bodies and souls in defense of your country and the cherished principles which make our nation so great. You too are in our hearts.

From the first shot fired of the Revolutionary War to the scud missile casualties in the Persian Gulf, nearly 1.2 million Americans have been killed at war.

This statistic is staggering. Simply uttering it and moving on threatens to obscure the individuality of each fallen man or woman, and to dim the historic lessons of each American conflict.

The first Memorial Day was observed on May 30, 1868, three years after the Civil War set our nation against itself and claimed the lives of half a million people from the Union and the Confederacy.

Nearly 130 years later, these deaths must remind us of the urgency to settle our own differences under the rule of law and with the decency of a civil society. We must never resort to the internal warfare that has killed countless people across the globe—from Zaire to Chechnya—even this year. And the lesson of the Civil War about the cruelties and degradation of racial bigotry are sadly those that still have not been fully realized by our society.

Many of you fought in World War II. In fact, some have made their home in this

beautiful county because you trained here before shipping out overseas.

To you, and your 400,000 comrades in arms who perished in Europe and in the Pacific, the world will forever owe a priceless debt of gratitude for vanquishing tyrants who committed unspeakable crimes against innocent people and who threatened the very existence of civilized life on earth. The lessons of World War II, of course, are that we can never tolerate the unchecked genocidal passions of ruthless dictators and expansionist military campaigns which threaten fellow democracies and even our own shores.

I see many Vietnam vets here today. I have known and worked with some of you since I first came to California 32 years ago and began teaching a university course on the Vietnam War.

The lessons of the Vietnam war are profound. From this war, we learned that we must never blame the war on the warriors. The sad fact that more Vietnam vets have killed themselves than died on the battlefield teaches us that when we send soldiers to war, we must, as a nation, support them when they return.

And from the Vietnam war, we must resolve only to send U.S. troops into harm's way when critical American strategic or moral interests demand our engagement, and never make this decision out of a sense of ideological zealotry.

Those who join us today who served in World War I, Korea, the Gulf War, and other conflicts and peacekeeping missions have, of course, made their own special contributions in defense of American security and values.

My friends, I have participated in Memorial Day exercises for many years, but this is the first year that I have been honored to do so as your Congressman.

It is an unparalleled honor and high privilege to represent our communities and its people in our nation's capital. And as your Representative, I have new challenges and responsibilities.

As a Congressman, I have no higher duty than to preserve the security of our nation by ensuring that our military remains the best trained, best equipped, and most prepared in the world. Yes, even in the age of budget cuts and downsizing, we can and must maintain an efficient and cost-effective military skilled not only in conventional warfare, but at combating the new enemies of terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime.

As a Congressman, and a Member of the International Relations Committee, I am doing all I can to rid the world of the most horrifying weaponry of past and potential wars. I am active in the efforts to ban anti-personnel land mines and am pushing for swift action on the critical chemical weapons treaty.

As a Congressman, I am committed to maintaining the highest level of Federal benefits for our veterans and their families. In this effort, I will continue my previous work as a private citizen, when I helped bring the first ever Vet Center to Santa Barbara.

I am, for example, cosponsoring legislation to ensure that veterans receive substantial health benefits and that they are never shortchanged on retirement pay. And I am proud to say that my office has been able to help a number of veterans secure medals to which they were entitled but never received.

As a Congressman, I will keep pushing our government and the governments of Vietnam and other former adversaries to leave no stone unturned in our sacred battle to determine the final status of all the brave combatants who are still missing in action.

And as a Congressman, I will honor the memory of those who died in service of our nation by trying to preserve the unique

American values for which they fought. Today is the day when all of us should pledge to redouble our fight to ensure that the basic rights we all enjoy—freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, and the freedoms afforded by our democratic political system are never, ever, diminished.

My friends, some of you know that I was born in Omaha, Nebraska. That's why I'm particularly proud to quote the inscription that many of you have read for yourselves at the Omaha Beach Cemetery in Normandy:

"To these we owe our highest resolve, that the cause for which they died shall live."

Freedom, peace, justice, dignity, and prosperity. These are the qualities of life all of us here on the Central Coast and across America enjoy. We must never take them for granted. And we must forever remember and honor those who fought and died for the cherished causes that will endure for generations to come.

Today, and every day, they are in our hearts.

TRIBUTE TO MAJ. HAL GEER—
MILITARY ORDER OF THE
WORLD WARS

HON. BRAD SHERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 1997

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege for me today to rise and pay tribute to an exemplary American, Maj. Hal Geer, who is being honored by his peers with the Military Order of the World Wars for his extraordinary devotion to our country. The order symbolizes distinguished service within the Armed Forces and is awarded to one who embodies the highest degree of honor, duty, and patriotism.

Hal's life story exemplifies those virtues that make a true hero. The tenderfoot oath that he swore when he was 12—"On my Honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my Country,"—became the creed by which he lived his life. Just 1 week after the tragedy of Pearl Harbor, Hal heeded the call of duty to his country and voluntarily enlisted in the Army, leaving behind his wife, to fight for democracy abroad. Hal also passed up officer candidate school to become a combat photographer and he actively sought front-line assignments.

Gen. George Patton once said, "Wars may be fought with weapons, but they are won by men." We can stand here free today because of men like Hal Geer who went beyond the call of duty.

Hal's courage and valor place him among the pantheon of true American heroes. He flew more than 85 air combat missions in China, risking his own life to show the American people the courage of our troops in action. Hal later volunteered to work behind enemy lines in China where he stood under constant fire. That heroism has brought Major Geer countless decorations and commendations, and has made him World War II's most highly decorated combat photographer.

However, Hal showed his devotion not just in war but also in peace time. In addition to serving as president of the Congregational Church of North Hollywood, he has also devoted countless hours to teaching religious education classes. Furthermore, Hal has produced Memorial Day services to ensure that