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Remarks of
The Honorable Susan M. Livingston
Under Secretary of the Navy
At the dedication of a memorial to Lt Charles Ware
Veterans Memorial Park
Athens, Tennessee
June 8, 2002

Freedom is Not Free

Thank you, Congressman Duncan, for that very gracious introduction, and I congratulate you, Mayor Mahery, RADM Sullins, Austin Fesmire, Frank Biondo, the Athens City Council - and so many others—for all that you did to make this very special day possible.

Congressman Bryant ... family members of LT Charles Ware and Petty Officer Bill Stambaugh who unite for the first time today in pride and shared sacrifice... proud shipmates of the USS Charles R. Ware ... current and retired Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen and Merchant Mariners ... and distinguished guests all:

It is an immense honor and privilege to join with you this morning to commemorate the incomparable men and women who serve our Nation in uniform ... and ... to particularly remember and honor those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom.

Our Nation has been very blessed by the service of so many. For over 226 years, our best and brightest have stepped forward ... time and again ... to answer our Nation's call. Today, over 2.6 million men and women ... Active and Reserve ...serve our Nation in uniform. Like Charles Ware and Bill Stambaugh, they have volunteered to protect and defend us. Like Charles Ware and Bill Stambaugh, they know their job is serious and dangerous. Like Charles Ware and Bill Stambaugh, they perform their job with dedication and bravery. Like Charles Ware and Bill Stambaugh 60 years ago, they today ... once again ... willingly go into Harm's Way for you ... and for me ... and for this great Nation we love. And ... like Charles Ware and Bill Stambaugh, some will NOT come home. And they know that ... and yet they still choose to serve.

Five years ago, a young Navy Lt Commander, Dan Shanower, wrote an article about the loss of 4 of his colleagues when their plane was lost off the USS Midway in 1987. He wrote: "These four men have been dead ten years. I miss their friendship".... (And he continued) --- "The military loses scores of personnel every year Each one risked and lost his or her life for something they believed in ... leaving behind family ... friends ... and shipmates to bear the burden and celebrate their devotion to our country....They knew the risks they were taking and gave their lives for

something bigger than themselves. I will never forget them, and I'll never forget the day I learned ... that freedom isn't free."

Think of Dan Shanower's words: "they...gave their lives for something bigger than themselves"....."never forget them".....and always remember what Dan learned that day - that our American "freedom (indeed) isn't free".

It was my privilege to know Commander Shanower. He was a Naval Intelligence Officer ... bright ... young ... full of humor ... who briefed me every morning at the Pentagon. That is, until Flight 77 was deliberately driven into the Pentagon on September 11, and 189 people died, along with over 3000 others at the World Trade Center or on the plane brought down by heroic passengers in a Pennsylvania field.

Dan Shanower was one of those far too many who were killed that day as a result of the cowardly terrorist attacks on this Nation. Like the heroes of Midway, Dan believed that serving his country was the right thing to do and he chose to serve in its defense. And he lost his life because of his honorable and chosen profession. And he died how he lived, working in service to this Nation.

Heroes are defined not by how they die ... but how they live.

When Dan went to work at the Pentagon that morning of September 11, he did not know he would be among the first casualties in the first war of the 21st century. But Dan did know ... because he had thought and written about it ... that "freedom isn't free" ... and ... as he wrote so eloquently 5 years ago ... he gave his life for "something bigger" than himself ... and we ... you and I ... have the honor and the responsibility to never forget him ... and to never forget the hundreds of thousands of other Americans—like Charles Ware and Bill Stambaugh—who have died in service to this country throughout its history.

Today, that honor and responsibility are what gather us together at this wonderful Veterans Memorial Park in this wonderful city of Athens, Tennessee.

We are here to REMEMBER. We are here to remember and honor all who have served this Nation. We are here to remember and honor the selfless service and sacrifice of so many Americans. We are here to remind ourselves that we must never forget that our "freedom" is indeed "not free". And we are here to remember and honor a hometown hero ... a young man of just 31 who, from his high school days, just wanted to serve his country.

But we are also here to remember that those who lost their lives to protect our freedom and democracy are owed far more than just our remembrance. They are owed our commitment ... our commitment to value and cherish that special American gift of freedom they ensured for us ... our commitment to NEVER, EVER FORGET our incomparable privilege to be citizens of this great Nation ... and we owe them our commitment to NEVER our obligation ... our very individual and personal obligation ... to always serve and honor them with the same resolve ... and the same dedication ... to our citizenship responsibilities as they gave to defend and preserve them.

In recent days across our Nation, many Americans gathered as we do here today to commemorate and remember the 60th anniversary of the Battle of Midway. The men who fought at Midway ... six decades ago ... proved (once again) that Americans - no matter how tough the odds - have the courage, honor, and commitment to secure victory during a "defining moment in our nation's history". The Battle of Midway will always remain a symbol of this uniquely American spirit ... an American spirit that Ronald Reagan once referred to as "the formidable will and moral courage of free men".

This is the American spirit ... that in the first week of June 1942 ... sent our aviators into the skies ... uncertain of the enemy's position ... and knowing that many would not return.

This is the American spirit that carried the day even though we were outnumbered four to one ... with no battleships vs. Japan's eleven ... and only three carriers - the ENTERPRISE, the HORNET, AND the YORKTOWN ... vs. the Imperial Navy's six.

This is the uniquely American spirit that lifted the wings of LT Charles Rollins Ware and his air-gunner, Petty Officer William Stambaugh, off the pitching decks of the USS ENTERPRISE into a battle where their courage, will, and determination helped turn the tide in one of the most defining battles of the 20th century.

And this is the uniquely American spirit that today carries us forward once again in yet another defining moment in our Nation's history - this time a global war against terrorism.

Today, we honor Charles Ware, a man who chose this small but friendly city named Athens, to enlist in the Navy in 1929. It is appropriate we honor Charles Ware for he is an American hero. But Charles Ware also was just a person like you and me. He had hopes and dreams. He no doubt suffered his share of frustrations ... and maybe told bad jokes ... or perhaps he drove his mother crazy in high school.

But somewhere inside Charles Ware was something special that I would hope all of us would seek to find in ourselves. For he found something bigger than himself ... something he cared about more than himself or his self-interests ... and that was an abiding love of our country and what our country stands for.

Charles' brother recently said of him, "When Charles did anything, he did it thoroughly. He aimed for the highest." And certainly Charles Ware's naval career proved that.

After graduating from Annapolis in 1934, he served at sea for six years, and then was accepted for flight training as the Nazis stormed across Europe. He tested his wings on the ENTERPRISE, then the YORKTOWN and then back to the ENTERPRISE. It was from there that LT Ware and his section of six Dauntless Dive Bombers flew into naval history during the Battle of Midway.

On the 4th of June 1942, LT Ware and his men launched devastating attacks against three enemy carriers only to encounter a new wave of Japanese Zeroes protecting a fourth carrier. Low on fuel and running out of ammunition, LT Ware without hesitation engaged the enemy aircraft despite the clear knowledge that with every second that passed, his chances of returning to the ENTERPRISE diminished.

LT Ware knew his chances were low, but he - like Commander Dan Shanower - knew that "freedom isn't free", and he and his scouting squadron pressed on ... giving their Nation ... our Nation... their last full measure. Only two of LT Ware's section mates ever made it back to the ENTERPRISE that day, but for his "extraordinary heroism and courageous devotion to duty", LT Ware was awarded the Navy Cross.

And make no mistake - LT Ware's brave yet fateful decision that day in June, was not the split second decision of a young pilot, but the steady, calm decision of a man who after serving his country for over 13 years, understood what a defining moment our nation faced at Midway. Indeed, the Battle of Midway proved to be the most decisive victory of WWII in the Pacific. Because of Lt Ware's heroic actions and those of so many other brave and heroic Sailors and Marines at Midway,

to include Bill Stambaugh, never again would the enemy's Navy pose a strategic threat to this Nation.

In LT Ware's honor and in recognition of his heroism, on April 12, 1945, the USS Charles R. Ware was launched at Bethlehem Steel Shipyard by his mother and Athens resident Arva Zena Ware.

And for the next 29 years, thousands of young men carried forward LT Ware's legacy with honor, courage, and commitment aboard the destroyer that carried his name.

Today, in a year in which we celebrate the centennial of the Navy destroyer, we are honored to have so many of those young men from the USS Charles R. Ware with us - and gentlemen, I salute each of you for your service and sacrifice to our Nation. And I salute every other man and woman in this audience who has served our country ... for all of you embody the values we hold dear ... honor and courage ... commitment and accountability ... service and duty to Nation ... and we are forever in your debt.

The Waremen with us today ... and the family members of Charles Ware and his air-gunner Petty Officer William Stambaugh with us today ... and all those Waremen and family members who could not come ... remind us that those who oppose freedom and our way of life will learn the same lessons that our enemies did in places with names like Belleau Wood, Iwo Jima, and Midway.

They also remind us that the defense of our freedom and way of life has been borne by our men and women in uniform and paid for with their blood.

Sixty years ago - for what we had hoped was the last time in our nation's history - our Nation's way of life, future, and mere existence, perhaps, hung in the balance.

Today, sixty years after the Battle of Midway, we face yet another great threat to our Nation.

Today, just as 60 years ago, we find ourselves at war against an enemy dedicated to the destruction of our freedom and way of life.

Today, just as LT Charles Ware did in the skies above the Pacific, the United States is once again demonstrating its resolve against the enemies of freedom.

And today, in a global war against terrorism, a new generation of Sailors, Marines, Airmen, and Soldiers - once again go forth to serve in dangerous lands far from our shores - and are acquitting themselves with honor and courage.

And if I might express a bit of parochial pride for a moment, for those of you in the audience who served in the Navy or Marine Corps, you can be so very proud that it was your Naval Forces who were the first on the scene ... the first to fire ... and the first to fight. Indeed, it was a carrier named the ENTERPRISE who first brought sovereign America and the might of our military home to the terrorists.

General Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has called this War Against Terrorism the "most significant war" since World War II.

Like WWII, the United States has entered a struggle of years - but today, we face a new kind of war against a new kind of enemy. The terrorists who struck America are ruthless, they are resourceful, and they hide in many countries. They came into our country to murder the innocent and the unsuspecting. There is no doubt they wish to strike again, and are working to acquire the deadliest of all weapons.

Against such enemies, America and the civilized world have only one option: wherever terrorists operate, we must find them where they dwell ... stop them in their planning ... and one by one bring them to justice. And we are not alone in this struggle ... for more than 180 other countries have offered or are providing support in this war of the forces of freedom against the forces of fear.

This is a war we did not seek ... and a war we did not want. But make no mistake, we are at war ... and we will prevail. It will demand our patience, determination, and resolve ... it will take persistence ... but most of all, it will take the participation of all Americans. For this war is not just about our military, or our government. It is about all of us ... and it is about our resolve, courage, and commitment to sustain our democracy and freedom ... not just for ourselves ... but for future generations to come. And not just today, but always.

But I don't think I need to tell you this. Your presence here today already demonstrates that you deeply care about your community, greatly love your country and take your citizenship seriously.

Indeed, as I look out over this audience I am humbled. Our Nation has been blessed with the service of so many of you here today. And I am honored to be in the midst of so many heroes and the memories of so many heroes passed. Our men and women in uniform today draw strength and inspiration from your legacy of service and sacrifice ... and honor you with their magnificent spirit and performance as they go forth once again to fight the enemies of freedom.

But they also need you ... for our Nation will continue to depend on civic leaders like all of you to keep the faith and maintain our resolve during the long fight ahead.

So in closing, let me bring you to September 12, 2001 ... one day after the attacks on our Nation. President Bush came to the Pentagon that day to meet with our military leadership. The Pentagon was still on fire, and our Nation did not know when the next terrorist attack might occur.

The President looked at his defense leadership and said that he would never forget what happened on September 11. And then he pointed to every person in the room, and said:

“And I want each of you to Never Forget.”

This morning, I leave you with those same words - Never Forget.

Never forget the sacrifices made by the heroes who wear the uniform today and in days gone by.

Never forget those who never came home or their loving families like the Ware's and Stambaugh's ... for their pain never goes away.

Never forget that our Nation is counting on each of us to do our part as we wage “this first war of the 21st century”.

Never forget the thousands of men, women, and children we so recently lost on September 11 ... or those we have lost thus far in this war against terrorism ... or the grieving families, friends and colleagues they left behind.

Never forget the gifts of freedom and liberty that the Charles Ware's and Bill Stambaugh's of our Nation gave to us.

And for Dan Shanower, never forget that Freedom isn't Free”.

Finally never forget that our Nation ... now and always ... requires and deserves our resolve and our fortitude, but ... most of all, it requires and deserves our patriotism.

PATRIOTISM. What an incredible word. Patriotism demands much of us ... but in reality, its concept is quite simple.

One month after September 11, a little 4th grade girl was asked what patriotism meant to her. And she said, without even a pause, it means “taking care of America”. So as I close, I thank all of you for your selfless service to our Nation. I thank all of you for your support of our military and their families. And I thank all of you for your patriotism ... for indeed it is engaged citizens like you who truly ...

“take care of America”.

Thank you for the privilege of joining with you today. And ... as we say in the Naval Forces:

Godspeed, fair winds and following seas to all of you.

Thank you.

- USN-