

## Recalling the Words of an “Old Soldier” During Military Appreciation Month

*“Old soldiers never die; they just fade away.”* These famous words were spoken in the spring of 1951, by one of America’s greatest and most admired military leaders, General Douglas MacArthur, in his Farewell Address to a Joint Session of Congress, as he concluded more than 5 decades of distinguished and dedicated service in the U.S. military. His poignant statement is particularly apt during Military Appreciation Month in May, when a grateful nation should remember the service and sacrifice of its soldiers, as well as sailors, airmen, and members of all branches of the Armed Forces, both old and young, men and women, throughout our country’s history.

In May, 1962, at age 82, Douglas MacArthur delivered another farewell address, one that likely had a much deeper, personal meaning for him. His alma mater, West Point, from which he had graduated at the top of his class in 1903, and where he had served as Superintendent from 1919 – 1922, was presenting him with the Silvanus Thayer Medallion for outstanding service to his country. Although many military leaders and other dignitaries were in attendance, Gen. MacArthur’s speech was clearly directed at the Corps of Cadets at West Point. It was a moving tribute, centered on his, and their, devotion to “Duty, Honor, Country”, the motto of West Point. The selections below can remind all of us why days such as V-E Day, Armed Forces Day, and Memorial Day this month are important observances on which the American flag should definitely be flying.

*“Duty, Honor, Country: Those three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be...They build your basic character. They mold you for your future roles as the custodians of the nation’s defense.*

*“...And what sort of soldiers are those you are to lead?...Their story is known to all of you. It is the story of the American man at arms. My estimate of him was formed on the battlefields many, many years ago...I regarded him then as I regard him now, as one of the world’s noblest figures...[who] gave all that mortality can give...He belongs to history as furnishing one of the greatest examples of successful patriotism. He belongs to posterity as the instructor of future generations in the principles of liberty and freedom. He belongs to the present, to us, by his virtues and his achievements.*

*“...Duty, Honor, Country...The code which those words perpetuate embraces the highest moral laws and will stand the test of any ethics or philosophies...Its requirements are for the things that are right, and its restraints are from the things that are wrong. The soldier, above all other men, is required to practice the greatest act of religious training – sacrifice. In battle and in the face of danger and death, he discloses those divine attributes which his Maker gave when He created man in His own image. No physical courage and no brute instinct can take the place of the Divine help which alone can sustain him.*

*“...Yours is the profession of arms, the will to win, the sure knowledge that in war there is no substitute for victory...that the very obsession of your public service must be Duty, Honor, Country...For a century and a half you have defended, guarded and protected [the Nation’s] hallowed traditions of liberty and freedom, of right and justice. Let civilian voices argue the merits or demerits of our processes of government...Your guidepost stands out like a tenfold beacon in the night: Duty, Honor, Country.”*

May the courage and commitment of all those who have served honorably in America’s Armed Forces never fade from our memories, and may they be remembered in the prayers offered up on the National Day of Prayer, May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

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