

*Remarks for the
Mississippi Veterans Monument Dedication
November 10, 2001*

Will Rogers once commented, “we can’t all be heroes because somebody has to sit on the curb and clap as they go by.”

We can’t all be heroes. That’s part of what makes them special people, special in their deeds and in their words.

We need heroes in our lives. Those heroes might be professional athletes. They might be writers or musicians or artists. They might be policemen or firefighters.

Whoever they are, we need heroes. We need someone to look up to, to admire.

Today, we honor heroes who have sacrificed for our freedom. We honor many of them by name, many of them by memory. We honor their actions, their courage, their commitment.

Thousands of Mississippi's sons and daughters have worn the uniforms of our armed services. Their dedication to the oath they swore to protect our country is reflected here today in our dedication of this monument.

Those we honor with this beautiful monument made the conscious decision to swear the oath of allegiance, to take up arms against our enemies, to make the ultimate sacrifice if needed.

It is because of their decision that we are here today, free people in a free land.

I have never been more proud of our state and our nation in recent weeks. The manner in which we have responded to the terrible and tragic attacks of September 11 has demonstrated our resolve to those who want to bring us down.

We are flying the flag in our yards. We are taping smaller flags to car antennas and putting flag magnets on our car trunks. We're wearing flag pins in our lapels.

“God Bless America” is the most commonly used phrase in the country, and we are saying it not just because we know how God has blessed us in our history, but because we trust in God to help us in the tests before us now. With this phrase, we know our future is secure because our faith is strong.

This faith has carried us through wars before. This faith is carrying us now.

Add to this faith the courage of the men and women of the American military, and we know we cannot be defeated.

The soldiers of America are our friends and family. They are answering a call that demands the ultimate test of will, strength and endurance. They have been doing it since the birth of our nation and our commitment to them must be unwavering.

In 1900, the British explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton placed an ad in London newspapers for an expedition to the South Pole.

The ad read, “Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful. Honor and recognition in case of success.”

The conditions described in Shackelton’s ad are not unlike what those in our military have faced over the years. “Constant danger, safe return doubtful. Honor and recognition in case of success.”

What kind of courage must it take to sign up for a mission like this? I know this much – it takes a courage that generations of Americans have displayed and a courage that we honor here today.

It is the courage of Mississippi's veterans. It is the courage of men like Van Barfoot and Jacklyn Harold Lucas.

It is the courage of heroes.

May God bless the men and women to
whom we dedicate this monument, and may
God bless America.