

Hillcrest Cemetery, Cary, NC - Let me add my thanks to American Legion Post 67 and the Auxiliary for bringing us together for this 21st community observance.

In the Book of Joshua we read that after the People of Israel had crossed over the Jordan River into the Promised Land, the Lord commanded Joshua to erect a memorial. Joshua selected one man from each of the twelve tribes and directed them: "Each of you take up a stone on his shoulder...so that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, 'What do these stones mean to you?' then you shall tell them that...when (the ark) crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off...So these stones shall be to the Israelites a memorial forever (4:5-7)."

Today we gather among the stones of Hillcrest Cemetery and we think of burial grounds like it around the country and on foreign fields. These stones commemorate patriots who served our country sacrificially. Some are etched with premature dates of death, giving us special pause, because this soldier, sailor, airman, marine, or Coast Guardsman made the supreme sacrifice on our behalf. We are reminded that those we honor today, as the President has put it, are part of "an unbroken chain of proud men and women who served their country with honor; who waged war that we might know peace; who braved hardship so that we might know opportunity; who paid the ultimate price so we might know freedom."

We are also part of an unbroken chain of remembrance. "What do these stones mean to you?" the children still ask, and we ask one another. We must never fail to ask the question, and this occasion gives us the opportunity to remind ourselves of the answers. "What do these stones mean to us?" They mean gratitude to those who have given so much. They bespeak the obligation we have to give of ourselves, to our community and our country, to help make them all that they can be. They mean determination to honor those who have served and to live up to our country's obligations to them. And they mean that we cannot and must not ever forget what has been done for us.