

MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

Veterans Day speaker asserts we are all vets in new war

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The Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon have changed how Americans react to each other and world events, according to retired Army Lt. Col. Thomas L. Jones.

"We are, as a society, more cautious and more patient, and our children and grandchildren are more precious," said Jones, keynote speaker for the Veterans Day 2001 service held Saturday at the Martinsville High School auditorium.

Yet because no further instances of mass terrorism have occurred since then, it "shows the country is doing a good job of interdicting and denying our newly acknowledged enemy," he said.

During his speech, Jones asked for all veterans at the ceremony to stand and be recognized. Those who did received applause.

Jones, who now is the senior Army instructor for the Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) unit at Magna Vista High School in Ridgeway, said that Veterans Day is designed to recognize all who served their country, no matter what conflict they fought in or what branch of the military they served in.

A native of Indiana, Jones served in the Army for 22 years and is a Vietnam veteran. He has received numerous medals and commendations, including the Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart, the Meritorious Service Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters, the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Gold Star and the Vietnamese Campaign Medal.

With more and more World War II veterans dying in recent years, Jones indicated that many people today do not fully understand the experience of being at war.

The situation is changing, though.

"In the war against terror, we are becoming a society of veterans," Jones said. That is because, unlike traditional wars fought solely on battlefields, the war against terrorism also is being fought in the nation's post offices, mailrooms and hospitals. "It knows no borders."

As a result, people other than soldiers are directly feeling its effects, he evinced. "Our countrymen (who died in the Sept. 11 attacks) did not die in vain," said Jones.

Although he cautioned that terrorist attacks may occur at any time, Jones expressed confidence that the American military can win what President Bush has called the "war against evil."

In closing, he asked God to guide the nation's leaders in making the right decisions on how to fight the war against terrorism.

During the Veterans Day observance, Corky Corcoran sang the national anthem, while Cadet Colonel Wills Kitchen led the Pledge of Allegiance. The Laying of the Wreath was performed by Martinsville Mayor Mark Crabtree, SFC Stephen Gill and SSG Sam Phillips.

The Laurel Park High School JROTC presented and retired the colors, while the Martinsville High School JROTC conducted the Three Volley Salute. Emily Wood and Liz Hooper performed "Taps."