

Honoring Our Veterans

Will Robinson, Nov 11 2010

Julio Ramirez '12 delivered this short piece co-written by himself and Chaitanya Singhania '12 at the conclusion of a Wednesday Night Chapel led by Mr. Everhart's 20th Century History class. The service honored alumni who served or are presently serving in the armed forces. Students read letters from alumni who served in World War II and asked the community to remember those who bear the greatest share of war's cost.

Remembering Those Who Served

The 20th Century saw conflict, war, and hatred escalate to an unprecedented scale. You just heard Arthur B. Dodge Class of 1941's reflections on the totality of war. He says, "War is a thousand paths to hell." War lets the animal in man take over, making him a weapon of mass destruction. People just like us, though, fight wars: people like St. Andrew's football captain Buzz Speakman '38, and the other hundred or so St. Andreans that fought in the Second World War. None of them would have ever imagined that they would end up serving in the military. But they did: they ended up serving us. What they found was that war is a complicated and contradictory experience. It is full of terror, joy, heroism, sacrifice, and loss.

You heard Winthrop Schwab Class of 1936's reflections on watching a WWII funeral, attended by a panoply of people — African, Mexican, French, Italian, Irish, Filipino — all united by the cause of fighting Hitler's oppressive regime. Veterans have learnt lessons from war; they have their stories to tell.

The total number of U.S. soldiers ever killed in battle is 24.9 million. The total number of people killed in battle around the world in the 20th century numbers around 550 million. In the 21st century, 3.3 million people have been killed in battle. The U.S. itself has spent more than 1.1 trillion dollars on war since 2001. This number continues to grow with every passing second. It is important to realize that Veterans Day is a day to not only support and honor the troops, but also to strive for world peace, and to know the financial and human cost of war.

To keep us safe and to help us live in peace, soldiers are risking their lives, fighting all over the world. Yet, instead of supporting the troops, there have been instances of people demonstrating hatred against not only war, but the veterans as well. Although you may firmly disagree with a country's decision to enter a war, it is important that we make the distinction between supporting war and supporting the troops. As we walk out, we must remember the service and sacrifices the soldiers make for us, regardless of our individual views and sentiments. While we may never understand war unless we have been a part of it, it is our obligation to understand war as best we can, so that we can help our elected leaders make sound decisions. It is also imperative that we appreciate the services of our soldiers, and respect and honor all who serve or have served.

To that end, we are making care packages which will be sent to the troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, to make their time in the war less brutal and a bit more bearable. Many of you have given supplies and money for the care packages, and if you would like to help construct these care packages and perhaps add letters to the soldiers, please join us in the chapel Friday after lunch.