

1975 Reunion Message

Bill Murray

Fellow 1975 Air Force Academy Graduates and relatives and friends of our fallen classmates, welcome to our Memorial Service. For me, this is the most significant, the most moving, the most meaningful and the most solemn event I will attend this weekend for many reasons. It is the singular event that separates our reunion from most other college reunions. It is one of the primary reasons I flew my children and grandchildren out here this weekend...I wanted them to experience first-hand the camaraderie of our class and the majestic beauty of Colorado. Because of this, it is a great honor for me to stand before you this day and hold high those who have gone before us. The committee who asked me to say a few words today also asked me to keep my remarks to about 7 minutes, so this will not be a long sermon.

With this in mind, let me say a short prayer before I begin. "Lord Jesus, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be always acceptable in Thy sight O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Father God Almighty, thank you for creation. Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for sustaining us in life, and Holy Spirit thank you for giving us the grace to live each day. Lord guard and guide the men who fly through the great spaces of the sky. Amen."

In the 5 years since our last reunion, we have buried 7 more classmates. In the last 5 years, we have touched the lives of many men and women in our daily lives. We are about to retire our last classmate on active duty, Col Mark Wells...congrats Mark for your service to our country and for being the last man standing. In these last 5 years I also attended the retirement ceremony of Col, Chaplain Harry Mathis, at the time an Air Force Active Duty Chaplain at WPAFB. What a neat time that was...His Master of Ceremonies was the 4-Star former AFMC Commander, Gen Janet Wolfenbarger a 1980 Grad. And she couldn't say enough nice things about Harry.

But more significant for me was a long sincere note she read aloud during her remarks. It came from another 4-Star General, the former Commander of AETC, Gen Robin Rand, a 1979 Grad. You could tell by the tone and sincerity of Gen Rand's remarks...he just wasn't "filling a square" by sending this note. He truly appreciated Harry's friendship and the help Harry had given him when Gen Rand was the commander of Balad AB, and Harry was his Wing Chaplain. I was so taken by those remarks that I wrote a short email to Gen Rand and told him that Gen Wolfenbarger, true to her promise, had read his note in its entirety.

I didn't think I would hear back from Gen Rand, but in about 5 minutes I received an email back from him saying, "Bill, where have you been for the last 35 years?" I was shocked to get an email so soon, because I didn't know Gen Rand. He went on to explain that I had coached him in football when he was a Freshman at the Academy, and how he remembered my coaching and the little life lessons I incorporated in my teaching football. I wrote right back and said thank you, but I had to admit that I really didn't remember him as a player. He replied right away that there was no reason I would remember him, because he was a third string defensive back that was just trying to make the team. My point in telling you this little story is that we never know whose lives we will touch along the way if focus on what The Lord has put in front of us...

Today I'm here to honor our fallen classmates and encourage the family and friends left behind. Jesus said, "No man has greater love than this...that he lay down his life for his friends." I want to encourage you to finish strong, because whether we want to admit it or not, we are in the 4th Quarter of Life. All of us have separated from the military now, but I would hasten to remind you that we took our Commissioning Oath of Office for life, not only for our length of service. Think positively about the

time you have remaining on this earth and touch those that God has put in your path. Stay connected to your classmates and to the families of those who have fallen.

Most of you know that I am a communicator and love to stay in touch with people. But I regret to say that I have lost touch with Cindy McCarthy, the wife of our only squadron loss, Capt Dave McCarthy, who died in an F-15 accident at Luke AFB in 1986. Somehow through PCS moves and email address changes, I lost touch with Cindy. That's sad to me, because she will always be a part of our class and our squadron. Don't let that happen to you. Make it a priority that in the chaos of life you stay in touch with the family and friends of our class. I am so thankful for those in our class who put together a great website, a network of emails and addresses so we can do this. The Class of 75 probably has better communication than most classes at the Academy because of their efforts. Thank you for doing that for us...

Some of you might have seen the video of Lou Holtz this year, the famous football coach at Notre Dame. He gave a graduation address to a small Catholic University saying to keep things simple. If you haven't heard this graduation message, take the time to Google it! It is one of the most inspirational speeches I've ever heard. In 17 minutes he says many profound things. Most of all, he encourages us to keep things simple. He points out there are only 7 colors in the rainbow but look what Michael Angelo did with these 7 colors. He points out there are only 7 notes on a musical scale, but look what Beethoven did with those 7 notes!

Looking back on his very successful life with 20/20 hindsight and great wisdom, he said that there are only 4 things you really need in life: you need something to do, you need someone to love, you need someone to believe in, and you need something to hope for...And I would tell you that these are the same things you need in the 4th Quarter of life, because we are never promised tomorrow. He followed those 4 principles with 3 rules for life: Do what's right because that builds trust. Do everything to the best of your ability in the time allotted, and show people that you care.

You know I've heard people say there are so many ways to interpret the Bible, and for certain passages that is certainly true. But nothing could be more clear than what Jesus has to say in the 14th chapter of the gospel of St John, when his friend Doubting Thomas asked Him to show them the way: Jesus answers Thomas by saying, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

Jesus also said in the 6th chapter of St John, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst."

In your own personal walk of faith in the 4th Quarter, I encourage you to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, have faith, love your family and stay in touch with good friends. And God will do his part as it says in the song, "On Eagle's Wings":

"And He will raise you up on Eagle's Wings, Bear you on the breath of dawn,
Make you to shine like the sun, And hold you in the palm of His hand."

God Bless all those associated with the of Class of 1975, and I pray The Lord will keep His divine hand of protection on us, because we are mere mortals and we need His strength and leadership as we play out the last Quarter our lives...