

Packers President and C.E.O. Mark Murphy

Thank you. I am honored to be here and want to start by expressing my personal thank you to all of the Vietnam and Vietnam-era veterans assembled here tonight.

Thank you. The Green Bay Packers have always valued our relationship with the men and women of our armed forces. Both active and veterans. And we are very proud to be a part of this special weekend. On behalf of LZ Lambeau, the Green Bay Packers and literally thousands of people who have volunteered their time and contributed to making tonight happen, it is my pleasure to welcome all of you here to Lambeau Field.

On a personal note, my father was a veteran. Served in World War II and earned a Purple Heart. He passed away two years ago. A real regret is that I had some talks with him about his military service, but it was difficult for him to talk about his military experience. I encourage all of you veterans to talk with your families, your sons and daughters. I know it's difficult but it would mean a lot to them and it's a special thing that you should share.

Also, I'm 54 years old. I just missed serving in Vietnam so I know what a difficult time it was in America in those years and you were never properly welcomed home. Well, you're welcomed home now. It's never too late.

We had hoped to have our legendary quarterback Bart Starr here with us tonight but his schedule did not permit him to be here. And Bart asked me to express his deep regrets that he was unable to attend this evening. Bart's father served in the Air Force and Bart has always held the members of the armed forces in the highest respect. He sent along a message which I would like to share with you. Please direct your attention to the Tundravisision on the south end zone.

Former Packers Quarterback Bart Starr

Hello, everyone. Thank you for being part of this historic evening. Please accept my apologies for not being with you in person.

Lambeau has always been a historic place and LZ Lambeau continues that tradition. I'm humbled to be included and grateful for the opportunity to express my personal thanks to those who have served our great country.

Over 40 years ago I had the opportunity and privilege to travel with the U.S.O. and meet with service members recovering from sustained injuries. I met a redheaded man from Milwaukee and we shared a nice conversation. Gary was clearly a long-time Packer fans and he knew more about me than I knew about him. I was thrilled to learn our visit had lifted his spirits.

Like many of you, I learned later about his courage under fire. Gary Wetzel was nominated by his comrades in arms, cited for his action and I know there are thousands of heroes at Lambeau tonight and all of you have our gratitude, respect and deep appreciation for your service. Thank you.

Congressional Medal of Honor Recipient Gary Wetzel

Thank you. Thank you. Awfully, awfully nice of you. I really appreciate it.

I stand before you as a recognized man wearing this blue ribbon but you've got to trust me, when I have the privilege, which I do today, to wear this blue ribbon, I wear it for all of us. It's part of all of you guys.

The last couple of days we have come from all four corners of this great state, all different organizations, all different personalities and all different military units that had the one thing in bond. Us.

And we tend to look back once in a while to the World War II vets and then we look at the Korean vets and then comes Nam and we got that one word which nobody can take away from us called brotherhood. That's what it's all about!

I had the privilege the other day to ride in with a bunch of bikers call the Honor Ride. We're here because it's us and we love us. And for some of us, it's the first time amongst Vietnam people.

And we want to say welcome. We love you and thank you. We look at what we're all about and what we try to do. We come in on the Honor Ride and at times it's hard to visualize the casualties of war. But out here, we'll have 1,244 empty chairs. They're for the people that aren't here. We came in for these people.

But there's also another organization that represents these people called Rolling Thunder. And they want an accountability of the people we so-called left behind. There's a group called Rolling Thunder. They're going to come out here and put on a program for you. I know it touches my heart. I hope it touches your heart.

But before I leave, I don't think I'm going to say thank you. What I'm going to do is, ladies and gentlemen, I take my hat off for you. God bless you.

Commander of the Wisconsin National Guard, Brigadier General Don Dunbar

Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, and especially veterans of the Vietnam war, it's an honor to join you and participate in this solemn event.

Tonight we honor our Vietnam veterans. Soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and coast guardsmen who served our nation with honor and distinction at a very difficult time in our nation's history. A time of war and a time of social unrest, a time when our society failed to distinguish between our nation's policy and the faithful service of our military.

You endured the horrors of war. Your battle scars were deep and our nation's gratitude was, sadly, in short supply. However, time has brought perspective. Your country now knows that your service was extraordinary and that honor was and is due. Tonight, I am proud to join Wisconsin in extending that honor as we say thank you and welcome home.

I am privileged to command the Wisconsin National Guard comprised of over 10,000 soldiers and airmen and we share a sacred bond with you. For the vast majority of us are combat veterans as well. Like you, we served our nation in a time of war.

However, things have changed on the home front. Citizens still exercise free speech, they question policy, they occasionally protest but today our nation does value the service of today's veterans.

Our bond with you is unique. Let me explain. Each spring a small group of men and women graduate from West Point and embark on military careers as officers. They join a long line of West Point graduates who have served this nation in an unbroken succession since 1802. It is referred to as the long gray line and if you close your eyes, you can just imagine the young lieutenants walking out those gates stretching out to 1802 and it's impressive.

And I have great respect for our service academies and the leaders they develop but my friends, we, you and I, Vietnam veterans and veterans from all generations share something more sacred, more special. We are part of a red, white and blue line. We are citizens who are veterans. We came from all walks of life, from small communities and big cities, families rich and poor, some volunteered and some were drafted but all served and gave America the best that they had to offer.

Our red, white and blue line has served this nation with dignity and pride from generation to generation in an unbroken succession dating back to the independence war. Through the Civil War, Korea, Vietnam and today in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Each generation of veterans in this line has written its own chapter in our nation's history. These chapters are rich with valor and often poignant with hardship and loss. They're written by young men and women who have answered nation's call.

I tell you without fear of contradiction that your service, your chapter in America's history is just as important to this nation and just as valued as any generations prior or since. You, like previous veterans who served in time of war, served with valor on the field of battle and came home to make America better. And I offer no Pollyanna here.

I know that many of you suffer the wounds of that difficult time and the empty chairs before us are a testament to those veterans who paid the ultimate sacrifice or are yet to come home.

But our Vietnam veterans have made America better and stronger. You have built upon our institutions; you have started and succeeded in businesses. You served in office and you served in our community. You raised families and many of you continue to serve today in the various veteran service organizations.

You may ask, how do I know that? I know of your commitment to family because I serve with many of your sons and daughters and grandchildren. I know of your service in the veterans service organizations because I saw you there.

When we mobilized our guardsmen and sent them into harm's way and I saw you again when we welcomed them home. It didn't matter if it was 10:00 at night or 3:00 in the morning, you were there with a smile, a word of encouragement, a hurra because you were determined to make sure this generation of America's veterans were appreciated and I appreciate that.

Today I believe we are a better nation. And although we face great challenges, I will remain convinced that our future is bright and the future is bright in part because of your service and your sacrifice. Our history is freedom's history and it must be preserved.

Each generation must keep the torch of freedom lit and pass it to the next generation and this is not a cliché, my friends. It is not easy to do. You, the Vietnam generation, faced significant challenges as you carried that torch but you kept it burning and burning brightly. I am honored and humbled to be in your presence.

I join my country men in expressing sincere gratitude for your service. And I'm proud to be part of the red, white and blue line and to share the title of veteran with the soldiers, airmen, marine and sailors in attendance tonight. I say to you our nation's Vietnam veterans, thank you for your service and welcome home.

May god bless each and every one of you and your families and the families of those service members who are represented by the empty chairs before us and may god continue to bless the United States of America. Thank you.

Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle

Thank you, General Dunbar. Thank you for the incredible leadership you have provided to the greatest citizen militia in the world, the Wisconsin National Guard.

As Governor of Wisconsin, I have been present on countless occasions to welcome home our brave servicemen and service women as they have returned from Iraq and

Afghanistan. The flags have waved, the bands have played and families and communities in Wisconsin have shown their honor, their respect and their love.

And as Governor of Wisconsin, I have been present at those sacred occasions when we have mourned and honored the loss of those brave servicemen and women who have given their lives to this country. So tonight with the help of those who have sponsored LZ Lambeau, I am here as Governor of Wisconsin to do what should have been done over 35 years ago. On behalf of the 5.8 million citizens of our state to our brave Vietnam veterans, welcome home.

And to the families of the more than 1200 Wisconsinites who were killed in Vietnam or who are still missing in action, know that 5.8 million people of this state will never forget. To the Vietnam veterans of Wisconsin, thank you for your service. Thank you for all that you have done for this state during all of those years since your return.

You have been the heart and soul of this great state. You have been our teachers, our medical professionals, skilled tradesmen, business leaders, firefighters and police officers and much more. You ever been the parents who have raised our families and you have been the community leaders that have made this such a wonderful state.

So I thank you for the inspiration of your patriotism. I thank you for the quiet dignity, often in the face of indifference and hostility and I thank you. I thank you for working so hard to make sure that all the veterans who have followed you have received the honor and respect that they deserve.

As governor I take great pride in serving as the commander in chief of the 10,000 soldiers and airmen that serve in the Wisconsin National Guard. 3/4 of these members have been called to active duty, many of them on two and three occasions. And like so many of you did in Vietnam, they have served selflessly.

I want you to meet Command Sergeant Major Edgar Hansen. Ed became a soldier in 1968. After completing his initial training, he was sent to Vietnam where he served with the 101st Airborne division for 18 months as a Screaming Eagle. He later served in Korea and completed several stateside assignments before joining the Wisconsin National Guard.

Since September 11, 2001, Sergeant Edgar Hansen has returned to combat three times, once to Afghanistan, and twice to Iraq. Sergeant Major Hanson's commitment to soldiers has never wavered. He even asked to delay his retirement to complete his most recent tour with the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, and he celebrated his 60th birthday in a combat zone. Ladies and gentlemen, it is my honor to welcome, just home from Iraq, Command Sergeant Edgar Hansen.