

Ms. Beckert, Mr. Young, Mrs. Bush, fellow veterans and McNick Rockets, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on Veterans' Day.

My name is COL Bill Butler, 30 years ago I was a senior here at McNick and thinking about what lay ahead in my future: where I was going to go to school, what career or profession I would choose, and where I would end up pursuing my career. I attended Eastern Kentucky University on a 3 year Army ROTC scholarship, majored in biology then history, was commissioned a 2LT of Infantry in the Army and have been a career Army officer for the past 25.5 years. I have a wife of almost 23 years, two college age kids, and we have lived all over the United States, Italy, and Germany. I have trained throughout Europe, Panama, Australia, Morocco, Botswana, and Korea. I have deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan for three year-long deployments. I was even a technical advisor and in charge of military related stunts in the movie Blackhawk Down. I don't tell you this to brag but to describe some of the incredible opportunities our country and our Army have given me and my family.

Today, I want to talk about four things that I learned while at McNick, four things that established a foundation for me and continue to serve me throughout my career: teamwork, respect, discipline and accountability.

Teamwork: I learned the importance of teamwork across the street at GA and here at McNick, where I played football and wrestled. Many of my teammates then are still my friends today (Rodney Bachman, Juba Costello, the Monteliscianis, Mark Gerome, Jeff Oaks, Jeff Dietz, and Mike Browning, to name a few). We put in a lot of hours up at Paradise, in the weight room, and on the practice field. Our coaches, George Markley, Steve Jostworth, Bob Jewel, and Ray would crush us at practice. I don't know how many gassers we ran, how many weights we lifted, and how many offensive and defensive schemes we practiced, but it made us collectively better than our best athlete could ever hope to be. This is where I learned the importance of teamwork. We succeeded as a team or we failed as a team. Our junior year the football team went to the State Championship and my senior year we went to the playoffs again. I loved being on a team and the incredible sense of camaraderie we shared, which is one of the reasons I was drawn toward Army ROTC in college.

There is no greater requirement for teamwork than in our military services, especially our ground forces, where the stakes are significantly higher than a regional title or state championship. In Infantry units (think Saving Private Ryan, Blackhawk Down, Band of Brothers) where our mission one minute is to close with and destroy the enemy and the next minute can change to distributing humanitarian aid packages. The difference between effective or ineffective teamwork can be measured in Soldiers wounded, lives lost, or mission failure.

Those Soldiers are not just a picture in the paper or on social media, they are someone's child, spouse, or parent, they are also a friend, comrade, and critical member of the team. So, when they are injured or killed it has an enormous impact on

their friends and the unit, not just their families; an irreparable hole on the team. The men and women on these teams know that they can count on the man or woman to their left, right, or rear to do the right thing and to always have their back when things go to hell in a hand basket.

Those strong bonds of teamwork I learned here. Pushing the blocking sled back and forth across the practice field forged something in me that drove me to want to always be a member of a high functioning team, playing for high stakes.

Respect: My profession has taken me all over the world. I have had the good fortune to work with Soldiers, police, and government officials in almost all of the countries I rattled off earlier. They all are from cultures and societies vastly different than that here in Anderson Township, where, for the most part everyone is from a Judeo-Christian background, of European descent, moderate, and tolerant of others.

In Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31 they both wrote about the “Golden Rule.” “Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you,” which has helped guide me in situations where I found myself well outside of my comfort zone. The cultures in Iraq and Afghanistan are so incredibly different than anything I ever experienced, fortunately, that New Testament verse I learned here at McNick served me well.

In Afghanistan I had innumerable meetings with tribal elders and imams, in a tent, up some remote valley, where we worked thru interpreters, to try to understand one another and our respective challenges. Me an English speaking, Catholic, American Soldier, raised in suburban southwestern Ohio and them Sunni or Shia Muslim, Pashtun or Hazara tribal or religious leaders, from rural Afghanistan, who spoke Pashto or Dari, but probably couldn’t read. They all lived in mud or stone buildings that they built by hand with their fathers, brothers, and cousins. I had to understand their issues at the basic level. They were deeply suspicious of outsiders, of any and all non-Muslims. In all but a few exceptional cases they didn’t believe in freedom of speech, freedom of religion, women’s rights, let alone educational opportunities for girls, but I had to respect their beliefs in order to help build trust between us, so we could focus on establishing security in that remote valley.

By stabilizing and securing that valley, it would help bring in non-government agencies to sponsor projects, to help bring everyday needs (clean water, medicine, electricity, paved roads to make a 2 day travel to the doctor possible in 2 hours). Security in that valley brought stability, which brought projects, which facilitated security, stability, and projects in neighboring valleys; slow, arduous work for little victories that would take weeks and sometimes months to achieve. I attribute it to the golden rule I learned here at McNick, treating others like I would want to be treated.

Discipline and accountability: My favorite teachers at McNick were those who demanded good work, held students to high standards, yet were approachable when we needed assistance. Teachers like Mr. Bill Fanning and Mrs. Gwyn Bush. Teachers who demanded excellence and held us to high, but achievable standards. Teachers who

made themselves available at any time. Teachers who had disciplined classrooms. I liked them because I always knew what to expect and I knew what they expected. Quite simply, they expected discipline, excellence, and accountability.

I have led or commanded units that ranged in size from 30 men to 1,100 men and women. In the military, unit leaders and commanders are accountable for everything their units do or fail to do. If a young 19 year old Soldier gets a DUI or in a fight downtown at 3 o'clock in the morning, it is the leader's fault for not creating the conditions to prevent that from happening. Success, and more importantly, failure is levied upon the leader; always. And that is the way it should be since the stakes are so high when we deploy.

You can't lead or command that many people unless they are disciplined and accountable. Now, imagine being in Afghanistan, with 1,100 people under your charge, in 10-15 combat outposts with 30-150 other men and women. The closest unit is maybe a 45 minute drive away, if the roads are clear and you don't run into any ambushes or roadside bombs. The men and women in those outposts have to be disciplined and accountable. They have to do the right thing when senior leaders aren't there to ensure they are doing the right thing. They have to be accountable to each other, their leaders, the unit, the mission, and our core Army and national values.

Unlike previous conflicts, a mistake made by a Soldier or provocative statement made by an ignorant racist here in the U.S. might get filmed and posted to YouTube or some other social media and almost instantly go viral. The pastor in Florida who every now and again threatens to burn the Koran caused riots and demonstrations in Wardak Province, Afghanistan outside the gates of several of my combat outposts.

Think about that, in the matter of less than 24 hours, a statement made by a U.S. citizen in south Florida negatively impacted the mission of the U.S. Army and our country in Afghanistan. Soldier discipline and accountability is vitally important to our success. I attribute it in part to my desire to be disciplined and always be accountable to my teachers here at McNick, where they established the foundation that the Army continually reinforces.

Veterans' Day was established in 1919, one year after the conclusion of World War I. It was intended to commemorate those who served in the bloodiest conflict the world had ever known; the War to End All Wars. Unfortunately, the world is a tumultuous place and there have been many other wars and conflicts that require men and women to volunteer to serve their country, to serve our country, and to possibly go into harm's way for others. Some of you probably have great grandparents or grandparents, aunts, uncles, parents, or neighbors who served in our military. When you go home tonight, thank them for what they did for us and for our country.

In closing, very few things in life are going to fall exclusively on you as an individual. You are almost always going to be part of a team, whether that is while you are in

college, during your professional career, or just raising your family. Always be a good team mate.

Wherever life takes you and whatever you decide to do with yourself, you are going to work with people very different from you. People with different skin color, people who have different religious, political, or social beliefs. That doesn't mean that they are wrong and you are right, just that you are both different people with different opinions and different beliefs. Respect their differences and treat them with dignity; treat them like you would want them to treat you. America is great because we have divergent thought, which leads to creativity and innovation.

Lastly, be disciplined and always be accountable for your actions, good or bad. Take the harder right over the easier wrong. Be the first one to admit your mistakes, after all we are only human, everyone makes mistakes, and the important thing is that we learn and grow from those mistakes.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak today. Seniors, best of luck in your future endeavors. If anyone needs any blackmail material in Mr. Stricker, Mr. Mulvey, Coach Christman, or Coach Moore please see me in the parking lot.