

## LTC (Ret) William T. Anton – Ranger Hall of Fame Induction Speech 5 August 2009

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Distinguished Guests, Members of the Ranger Hall of Fame, fellow inductees, Rangers, Ranger Moms and Dads, wives, families and friends of Rangers:

As I reflect upon this honor today, I stand before you a very humble man. I never once dreamed I would receive this honor. This honor ranks with the birth of my daughter Susan and my son Michael. I searched my soul to see if I had any regrets in life. I have only one: that my parents who both repose in Arlington National Cemetery are not physically here today to witness this occasion. I feel their presence and they are with me – thanks Mom and Dad. My parents were great examples for me and my two brothers, who are fine men.

I am truly blessed for I've had a great life, and the largest single contributor to this has been that I am a **Ranger**. I learned that both the strongest and weakest part of the human body is the human mind. When one learns to discipline the mind, all things are possible. In Ranger school I learned much about myself and the art of leading men who are hot or cold, wet, tired, and hungry. I learned about prompt obedience and self-discipline. These lessons served me well in my military career, and in life.

I was the first Second Lieutenant ever assigned to the Patrolling Committee at Camp Darby.

I was then assigned to Company O (Arctic Ranger) 75<sup>th</sup> Infantry (Airborne) as a Patrol Platoon Leader in Alaska and made the historic first tactical parachute jump on the Polar Ice Cap.

I requested combat duty in Vietnam and was assigned to Company H (Ranger) 75<sup>th</sup> Infantry (Airborne), 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division. I had the good fortune to serve as both Executive Officer and Commander of this legendary unit. There were 13 Ranger Companies in Vietnam and Company H was the most decorated unit with 3 Valorous Unit Awards and 4 Vietnamese Crosses of Gallantry. While we were there in combat, our unit had no idea about our battle honors, nor would it have mattered – we accomplished our mission daily and were too busy to think of

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anything else. I want to thank the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division for their outstanding support of our Ranger Unit, as they made the Rangers their first priority.

Company H (Ranger) 75<sup>th</sup> Infantry (Airborne) was the last Ranger unit in Vietnam, and our colors were formally retired at Fort Hood in the Autumn of 1972. In 1974 our unit was reactivated and re-designated 2d Ranger Battalion. Our unit lives through 2d Ranger Battalion, as **WE** are part of their history, and they carry our combat colors and battle honors.

Today I become the second member of our unit so honored in the Ranger Hall of Fame, the other being COL George Paccarelli, the first Commander, and currently the Colonel of the Regiment of the 52d Infantry.

I stand here to receive this honor, but I only accept this as a member and representative of my unit, and our 33 KIA and one MIA. We were an invincible **TEAM**. Every soldier, NCO, and Officer assigned with me deserves to stand with me here today. Rangers, it was an honor to share the same battlefield with you. I witnessed intrepid bravery and gallantry in action every day by these men, and they have earned my undying respect and admiration. I accompanied Ranger teams as a **member of the team**, whatever job was required: How else could I understand what my men experienced if I was not there to share it with them. When not in the field, I would fly in the extraction helicopter to ensure the safety of my Rangers – their lives meant everything to me.

I was reminded at our last reunion for our Ranger unit in June 2009 that I never had a smile on my face. This was very serious business and I understood the possibility of sending them to their death on a daily basis. I prayed for them every day, as I have every day since then, and I found great solace and strength. The Great Architect of the Universe and the Holy Spirit gave me the strength and wisdom to act correctly.

I look to the future and see shining examples of our Rangers. We all stand on the shoulders of Rangers from generations past and look to the future for those to carry the Ranger banner forward to live their lives according to the Ranger Creed.

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Ranger Jeff Walters, who made the combat jump into Panama recently finished his Masters Degree and will start working on his Doctorate at Rutgers University. Ranger Dennis Hanson, who had multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan just completed his Bachelors' Degree from Colorado State University with a 4.0 average and will attend medical school. His desire is to return to be a battalion surgeon in the 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment. These men will be our future leaders.

Our lives in Company H were changed inexorably. **WE** were part of something **GREAT** and no matter how fleeting, this stays with a man **forever**. Every one of us here who has experienced this greatness, whether in combat, the military, sports, or in academics dreams to have this feeling at least one more time. We here today live it – if but for a moment!

[Salute]

RANGERS LEAD THE WAY!

