

Point / Counterpoint

The inclusion of the word “Beauty” on the Veterans Administration’s new Gateway Plaza is a source of conflict for some...

“Beauty, Honor, Country”

It’s Our Mission Statement

By Major General Gwynn H. Robinson, USAF (Ret.)

IWRITE AS CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR VETERANS PARK CONSERVANCY (VPC), THE NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION THAT COLLABORATED WITH THE WEST LOS ANGELES VETERANS ADMINISTRATION MEDICAL CENTER (VAMC) to create the beautiful wrought-iron fencing and majestic Gateway Plaza at the corner of Wilshire and San Vicente Boulevards. Among the stone engravings on the walls are the words: “Beauty, Honor, Country.”

We appreciate the concerns that have been brought to our attention by a few well-intentioned individuals, but must respectfully disagree with the assessment that “Beauty, Honor, Country” is in any way degrading to veterans, our military, West Point, or General Douglas MacArthur.

This paraphrase of the famous West Point motto is the mission statement of Veterans Park Conservancy (VPC). VPC is a non-profit organization that has spent the last 20 years protecting the 880 acres known as Veteran’s National Park from commercial development. This land was privately donated over one hundred years ago for the exclusive benefit of all who had served their country in its armed forces. The acreage includes the National Military Cemetery (“The Arlington of the West”), the Veterans Administration Medical Center, two Theatres and valuable open space. Much of it had fallen into disrepair over the years, and VPC continues to preserve, restore and enhance the property in honor of our nation’s veterans.

General Douglas MacArthur famously quoted the motto “Duty, Honor, Country” in his farewell speech at West Point which closed with the words: “My last thoughts shall be of The Corps, The Corps, and The Corps.” So specific are these words to the Corps of Cadets, that to use their motto literally would place a limitation on those from all ranks and all services whom we honor. Veteran’s Park Conservancy substitutes the word “Beauty” because it is a vital part of our mission to restore and maintain this hallowed ground, not only for those who have served and died, but also for us, the living, to have a place of peace in which to celebrate their service and our country.

“Beauty Honor Country” was suggested by Korean War Veteran and Emmy-winning producer Harve Bennett, a supporter and member of VPC’s Board of Directors. “We believed then and now,” says Bennett, “that National Veterans Park must be an oasis of beauty for those who, as Lincoln said, ‘have borne the brunt of battle’ as well as all who come here to honor them.” Toward that end, VPC has successfully fought off major developers who have tried to turn this land into shopping centers, condominiums and an NFL Stadium. This fight against those who would encroach the original land gift of 1880 continues to this day.

We invite all who would like to join us in this effort to visit our website at: <http://www.veteransparkconservancy.org>.



“Duty, Honor, Country”

It’s Our Duty To Replace The Word “Beauty”

By Robert L. Rosebrock

WHERE’S THE BEAUTY? WITH DEAD AND UNSIGHTLY FLOWERS, HOW CAN THIS NEW MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR PLAZA AT THE NATIONAL VETERANS HOME IN BRENTWOOD BE DESIGNATED AS A PLACE OF BEAUTY?

Proud Veterans conquered “Beauty” with their steadfast “Duty,” if only temporary, in the battle of words. They left behind a humble message that said: “From the Veterans of All Wars ... Past and Present.”

Since 1898, The United States Military Academy has had the words “Duty, Honor, Country” proudly emblazoned on its coat of arms and boldly engraved on some of its oldest buildings. The motto has become such a distinct code for military leadership and loyalty to our country that these time-honored ideals have become firmly embedded into the minds and hearts of all who actively serve in our Armed Forces, regardless of his or her respective branch of service.

In his famous “Duty, Honor, Country” speech given to the West Point Cadets in 1962, General Douglas MacArthur resolutely declared: “Those three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be. They are your rallying points: to build courage when courage seems to fail; to regain faith when there seems to be little cause for faith; to create hope when hope becomes forlorn.”

The General’s inspirational message notwithstanding, he also forewarned: “The unbelievers will say they are but words, but a slogan, but a flamboyant phrase. Every pedant, every demagogue, every cynic, every hypocrite, every troublemaker, and I am sorry to say, some others of an entirely different character, will try to downgrade them even to the extent of mockery and ridicule.”

Unfortunately, the General’s prophecy has now come true at the new multi-million dollar gateway plaza on the corner of Wilshire and San Vicente Boulevards in Brentwood. There, on the historic grounds of the National Veterans Home are the words: “Beauty, Honor, Country.” This pretentious project is a joint venture between the non-profit Veterans Park Conservancy (VPC) and the local Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and they’re belittling the hazardous rigors of military duty as quaint beauty was either a foolish blunder or outright blasphemy against the highest code entrusted to all who serve in our military.

Jesse Brown, the late Secretary of Veterans Affairs restored a new sense of pride in our Veterans by ordering sensitivity training for all VA employees as part of his campaign for “Putting Veterans First.” Apparently, the honchos at the VA and VPC didn’t get the memo, otherwise their thoughtless mission to transmogrify this time-honored creed into an insensitive slur against our Veterans and their Honorable Duty to our Country would never have happened.

While someone thought it was clever that beauty rhymed with duty, there is absolutely no rhyme or reason as to why the VA and VPC chose to engrave this in stone. Nonetheless, by refusing to correct their disrespectful blunder, this infamous insult remains a public spectacle and will forever be an embarrassment to those entrusted to protect these sacred grounds.

After all, if they cannot preserve and protect the three most hallowed words of military history, how can they possibly be expected to preserve and protect four hundred hallowed acres of Veterans’ property?

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