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Commandant of the Marine Corps

Eulogy for Chairman C. W. “Bill” Young

Remarks as prepared and delivered

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Largo, FL

Beverly…family…ladies and gentlemen,

Over the past week, I’ve been approached by many senior leaders and colleagues in the military who admired Chairman Young … to a person, they speak of his passing as a tragedy of national proportions.

They expressed an appreciation for the quiet, reserved way he’d get business done … of how he never sought credit for himself … rather, he just wanted to make sure that America had the soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines that it needed to defend our freedom, both at home and around the world.

Bill Young knew what it meant to persevere. He survived a hunting accident, a plane crash, and more than 50 years as a leader in American politics … and he did it all while maintaining integrity, a strong sense of dignity and honor, and a compassion for his fellow man … especially those less fortunate.

Chairman Bill Young did more to serve our nation and its people than just about anybody I know. While representing the people of Florida for more than a half-century, he gave more than just years … he gave of himself to touch the lives of the people he served.

What mattered most in his life was not the accumulation of riches and fame. Chairman Young turned his back on that. What mattered most to him was to live honestly, live selflessly, and to live meaningfully. That we are remembered for what we did … and who we have helped along the way is what mattered to him.

Bill Young wore our nation’s cloth himself when he served as a soldier in the Army National Guard and later in the Reserve. From this experience, and from his many visits to troops around the world as a member of Congress… he knew that a military life was full of challenges, hardships, and personal sacrifice.

He made a point of stepping in and helping our young men and women and their families whenever, and wherever he could.

I’m reminded of a story of one of my Marines, Maj Brandon Graham, was having a great deal of difficulty getting a surgery authorized for his daughter Kaelyn who had a congenital heart defect that was threatening her life.

You can imagine the weight of helplessness her parents felt grinding down on their souls … they had a precious little girl with a serious problem that they could not fix themselves. Brandon was fighting with Tricare to get authorization for a heart transplant … but the appeals continued to build, ever delaying the process…there was no end in sight.

The Grahams were stationed at our Special Operations Command at the time, and somehow Chairman Young, as only he could, caught wind of the plight of the parents. Before the sun set that day, Kaelyn’s procedure was approved and she was fast-tracked for her heart surgery. Thanks to Chairman Young, today she is a healthy little girl attending elementary school … all because the Chairman cared enough to help.

This is just one of the thousands of acts of kindness he performed that touched the lives of service members and their families. Quite frankly, he did them so often they became routine business for his staff.

Chairman Young, along with his soul-mate Beverly, were champions for our Wounded Warriors. He and Beverly frequently visited our wounded service members at Walter Reed and Bethesda, and once flew an injured Marine corporal back from Kuwait on his own plane.

The young corporal had been shot in the back by a light machine gun during a training accident in Kuwait, and it was questionable whether he would survive the wounding.

Chairman Young was with the young man during his initial surgery in Kuwait …and then on into Germany where he received subsequent treatment, and finally at Bethesda.

Our young Marine had no real family or home, so Chairman Young took him in, treated him like a son, and the entire Young family encouraged the corporal during his recovery. Eventually he did get better, and Bill Young helped him get a job with the Idaho Veterans Administration. The corporal is now fully recovered and just recently married.

Chairman Young got involved with the lives of our troops because he never took freedom for granted.

He knew that if America was to remain the land of the free, that Americans must take care of their brave … both while they are deployed, and after the sounds of battle have long echoed from the headlines.

General Chuck Krulak, our former Commandant, told me just the other day that Chairman Young personified our core values of honor, courage and commitment, and that what he appreciated most in Chairman Young was his fidelity…his faithfulness. Chuck said that he knew that when he was heading into a fight on the Hill, he could always count on Chairman Young to be right there by his side … covering his flank.

Earlier today, I was privileged to make Chairman Young an HONORARY MARINE. While he was physically absent during my remarks to Beverly and their family, he was most assuredly there in spirit. To the men and women who wear my cloth…this is the very highest honor that we could bestow upon this great warrior. While his heart was always with his Marines…he is now officially one of us.

You may be wondering about the afterlife and where precisely in Heaven Bill Young’s soul might be found resting today…well…let me ally any anxiousness once and for all.

As Marines, we know that the answer to that question can be found in the last stanza of our beloved Marine’s Hymn…”If the Army and the Navy ever look on Heaven’s scenes, they will find the gates are guarded…by United States Marines!” Bill Young is on duty ladies and gentlemen…he has the watch.

To Beverly and the entire Young family, there are no words sufficient to ease your loss…our hope is that you’ll find comfort from the love and admiration of all who have gathered here this afternoon. America has lost a great public servant … liberty has lost a great patriot, and we … who are left behind … have lost a great friend.

1,033 words/8 minutes