

Remarks by the Honorable Ray Mabus  
Secretary of the Navy  
2010 Lone Sailor Awards Dinner  
Washington, DC  
Wednesday, 15 September, 2010

Thank you, Admiral Ted Walker, for that introduction and thank you all for being here for this wonderful occasion in this beautiful place.

There are so many distinguished visitors – and I’m going to talk about the award recipients in just a moment – but I can’t pick out everybody and I shouldn’t try. But there is one person here that I do want to thank in particular and that’s Daniel Murphy, the father of Lieutenant. Michael Murphy, Medal of Honor awardee for whom we have named one of our newest ships, the USS Michael Murphy. Thank you for your service and your family’s.

I want to thank the Navy Memorial Foundation for all the good work that you do on a day-to-day basis. The Navy Memorial is the face of the Navy to the thousands of visitors that sail the granite sea in front of the memorial every year. It’s the face of the Navy for its youth services programs that educate our future Sailors and Marines and Coast Guardsmen. It connects our veterans day after day through the Navy Log.

But tonight, tonight’s about the three veterans we’re here to honor; what they did for our country both in and out of uniform and what they represent for the legacy of the Navy and the Marine Corps. You’re going to get a chance to hear a lot about each one of them and I’m not going to steal too much of that information, but I do want to say a few words about each one and thank them on behalf of the Department of the Navy.

Lanier Phillips – Mr. Phillips, I come from Mississippi and as a young man I saw the injustices that you fought against occur where I lived. I want to personally and officially as Secretary of the Navy thank you for breaking down some of those barriers in our Navy.

During World War II, you saw something you knew you could do - be a Sonar Technician. You were told that you could not, that you would inevitably fail at Navy sonar school. You proved people wrong and our Navy is better for it. After the Navy, you worked to remove some of those same barriers for all Americans and to make the hope and the promise of the Constitution more real – that all men, all men are created equal. Thank you, Lanier Phillips.

To Bill Cosby: I’m a fan. I watched *I Spy* and *The Cosby Show*; watched your TV kids grow up. One of the very first albums I ever had belonged to you - “zip, zop, my face was ripped to shreds. All I wanted was a clean shave, not a self-sacrifice.”

I’m looking at your long career in acting and comedy and children’s entertainment and educational programs and I think a lot of what you did can be linked to the time you were in the Navy. As a corpsman, you were charged with the physical health of our Sailors; looking after them. And since then, you’ve taken care of the mental health of the United States of America.

And through entertainment, you've done some preventative measure – medicine on all our souls.

Thank you for seeing the need to make America laugh, usually at ourselves, and for leading that laughter and making millions of us smile. But more importantly, thank you for your long advocacy of moral responsibility and your tireless efforts on behalf of our Sailors. You may have left the Navy after four years as a hospital man third-class, but there are admirals who would have been – who are envious of the impact you have had.

And to Eddie LeBaron, no award that we are capable of giving can adequately thank you for your service to our country or match the Bronze Star you were awarded for your actions on Heartbreak Ridge. But I hope what is done here tonight will go a small way toward thanking you for your service to our country.

Getting this award is sort of like being selected to the Pro Bowl of Marines. That'll make you a five-time Pro Bowler, I believe. In my job, I get to meet literally thousands of Marines. They serve all over the world and I can honestly say that every Marine I've ever met shares the same tenacity, the same courage, the same dedication that you showed both in Korea and later on the football field.

And one other thing – as I've told people about you and your career, the fact that you have two Purple Hearts, the fact that your actions on Heartbreak Ridge were so heroic, the fact that you played for both the Redskins and the Cowboys - which is a strange combination –and the fact, in the offseason, you earned a law degree, which is the only nonproductive time I can see in your entire career. (Laughter, applause.) I've told a lot of Marines about you and I get the same response every time - Wow, what a Marine. Thank you for everything that you've done.

All three of our honorees represent the heroism, the character, the dedication to service that our Sailors, our Marines, our Coast Guardsmen give every day as they carry on the work of our nation around the world.

Their legacy is evident in the 20,000 Marines that today serve in Afghanistan and the 12,000 Sailors on the ground throughout the Middle East, joined by the 7,000 Sailors and Marines of the Harry S. Truman Strike Group on station tonight in the Arabian Sea. Their legacy is evident with the Sailors and Marines of the USS Peleliu and the 15<sup>th</sup> Marine Expeditionary Unit right now providing humanitarian assistance to the people of Pakistan after those horrific flights that occurred last month. Their legacy is evident in the Coast Guardsmen who, every day, patrol the Caribbean and interdict the flow of drugs headed for our country. And their legacy is evident wherever the flag of the United States flies on the masthead and wherever a Marine is on patrol.

Together, our forces form the most formidable fighting force the world has ever known. That is what we are here to honor. That is what these three men helped build and that is what their service represents.

Thank you again to the Navy League, to the Navy Memorial Foundation, for putting this event on, for honoring these three for their service. Have a great time. Godspeed.