

Throughout human history, there have always been men who have fought and died for their cause. Throughout human history, no one ever expected to die a hero. The United States has very little history compared to the rest of the world, yet we are here today to honor those who have died for our country - our freedoms and way of life.

Those we honor today - many of whom we knew personally - were so much more than fallen heroes. They were sons, daughters, husbands, mothers, uncles. They were also someone's best fishing buddy, go-to girlfriend, class clown, someone's sweetheart. Each of these heroes had dreams - becoming a college graduate, getting married, having a family, being the best in their trade, retiring, taking care of elderly parents. Yet at that special time in his or her life, they laid those plans aside and took an oath to do what was necessary to protect citizens of like-mindedness. They were just kids - depending on the era, teenagers or just out of school. Many volunteered in the moment. Pearl Harbor or 9/11. Many were drafted. They changed their plans and priorities.

They all came to that defining moment when they took the oath to protect, even if that meant the ultimate sacrifice. Many never saw combat, or if they did, they came through. That is what is supposed to happen. But for those select few we honor today, the moment came when the options ran out, and the training kicked in. The fear in those last few moments is known only to them - and to God. But they did what was necessary, certainly never expecting a place of honor in our time.

The births, the deaths, the lives lived in between - remember you are also a part of that mosaic - the painting that becomes important to others in a small way. Mr. Belcher asked me several weeks ago for my biographical sketch. Prior to that, I never imagined that anyone would want to know about me! But somebody did. Fortunately, I was here to see that it was presented accurately. None of us knows how we will be remembered. Each of us will die. Someone will want to know about you. Write down your story. Have someone write it for you. Talk about your relatives, your best friend, your golfing pal; the fun times you had. That is history.

God told the Israelites to pass their stories to their children and their children's children. There is a reason for that directive. God does not make friendly suggestions. It is too easy to think that no one will care about your life. From my short tenure with the Historical Society, I can tell you that you would be wrong. Everything becomes history. Not one of the individuals we honor today in Marcellus or other communities ever thought they would be a hero. Each was an ordinary, everyday person. Yet with that final act, they were elevated to a status we now find fascinating.

The Marcellus Historical Society began in 1960 with a small group of locals determined to keep the history of Marcellus thriving and accessible. Many of those names are familiar to you because they saw to it that their lives would be remembered. We have a vast collection of artifacts, including original farm implements, blacksmith tools, the restored carriage of Dr. Israel Parsons from the late 19th century, original paintings by Ruth Reed Cummings and Ruth Anne Reagan, and countless pictures, scrapbooks, maps, articles, newspapers, information on lives,

and other research material. We are very willing to share these things with you if you visit the Steadman House, built in the 1830s. The House itself is in the National Registry. We get requests for information about ordinary people like me. Or you. Can you tell me about my great-grandfather who lived in Marcellus? I think a distant relative lived on RFD4 in Marcellus. Did she? We recently helped a citizen obtain some facts about a WWI hero buried in Amber. Many times we can help research and send the person to a more appropriate source for more information. Sadly, many times there is no information, or we reach a dead end. Each of us is a necessary part of that big picture. Don't let those details be forgotten. Tell your story to someone! We hope to begin digitizing our records soon. It will be a long process, but it will make researching much easier. We are willing to help you. Please visit the Steadman House and follow us on Facebook. Better yet, become a member so you can say you are part of the process.

May God bless the stories and the memories of those we honor today. Let's make sure we are part of the history of our native or adopted hometown. Thank you, and God bless the United States of America as we celebrate 250 years of being a shining example to the world in so many good ways.