

Speaker Ryan: Remarks honoring Sen. John McCain

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WASHINGTON—House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) made the following remarks at today's service in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda honoring the late Sen. John McCain, as prepared for delivery:

On behalf of a grateful nation and Congress, I want to begin by giving thanks to the McCain family, for your many years of service to the country.

We share your anguish in losing this great man.

Rarely does this glorious Rotunda fall silent at this hour.

On a day like this, John would usually be bounding right through here, visitors turning to each other asking if that's who they think it is.

But in this quiet hour, we are left to ponder how his life speaks to us.

John McCain deserves to be remembered as he wished to be remembered.

A patriot who served his country.

A man of yes, the Senate, but also of the House.

A Navy man. A family man.

A man who made an enormous difference in the lives of countless people.

A man of conviction.

A man of state.

There is a line from his farewell statement that really just grabbed me:

"Our identities and sense of worth are not circumscribed but enlarged by serving good causes bigger than ourselves."

How fitting. How true.

What stands out about John McCain is what he stood for:

The rich blessings that only freedom can bestow.

The sense of purpose that a battle joined can bring.

The common humanity that burns in our hearts.

Hemingway once wrote:

"The world breaks everyone, and afterward many are strong at the broken places."

No one was stronger at the broken places than John McCain.

The brokenness was his ballast. He never lost the joy that time can dull or the edge that political life so often sands away.

I myself was—from time to time—on the receiving end of John's distinct brand of candor.

And happily so.

I remember thinking more than once, "Yeah, he really does talk like a sailor."

But you see, with John, it was never feigned disagreement. The man didn't feign anything.

He just relished the fight.

He showed us that in the arena, in the honest back and forth...that's where the cause gets bigger.

That's where the triumph is all the sweeter.

We get stronger at the broken places.

Though the highest office eluded him, he attained what is far more enduring: the abiding affection of his fellow citizens, and an example down the generations.

So I think ahead now.

I think ahead to the day when I—like so many—will bring my own children, and perhaps their children, to that hallowed lawn in Annapolis.

I think about that. I think about what I might say to them:

This is one of the bravest souls our country ever produced.

However you choose to do your part, I hope you do it in the way he did: with energy and urgency; playing for keeps, never back on your heels; never letting principle yield to expedience; resisting the false allure of the fleeting, and battering down the hatches when things get rough; and always, always having a good story to tell.

Today our nation bows in grief. But here—under the work of Brumidi and the gaze of the greats, where soldiers known and unknown have laid before—we have this beautiful thing: the chance to do for this man what he did for us.

To stand up. To stand up, and to embrace the cause of his life.

No one of us can fulfill this charge, but all of us sure can try

Because all of this—all of this—is worth the fighting for.

God bless John McCain.

God bless the country he so dearly loved.