



GRATITUDE FOR WHAT?

Sometimes we need reminding

"There is in every breast a sensibility to marks of honor, of favor, of esteem, and of confidence, which, apart from all considerations of interest, is some pledge for grateful and benevolent returns. Ingratitude is a common topic of declamation against human nature; and it must be confessed, that instances of it are but too infrequent and flagrant both in public and in private life. But the universal and extreme indignation, which it inspires, is itself a proof of the energy and prevalence of the contrary sentiment." --James Madison, 1778

Like many [American Patriots](#), I get up early every morning prepared to do battle to sustain Liberty for this and future generations. On occasion, however, I experience battle fatigue, which can diminish my morale and stamina. Inevitably in those moments, something occurs that restores both my drive and my determination.



Patriots across the nation know that we are engaged in a [never-ending campaign](#) to defend Liberty from the relentless assaults of those who would replace [Rule of Law](#) with the [rule of men](#).

Some battlefronts are colossal. Take, for instance, the national scheme of [Democratic Socialism](#) under the leadership of the [Obama regime](#), which endeavors to collapse our economy and replace it with statist

socialism. (In case you missed it, our nation closed the books on 2011 with a record national debt of \$15.223 TRILLION. More significantly, total U.S. debt is now more than 100 percent of GDP -- an ominous threshold.)

Other battlefronts are smaller, such as the local assaults on the [First](#) and [Second](#) Amendments. Small they may be, but the Left is expanding any victories in those arenas, via Thomas Jefferson's "despotic branch," to undermine our [Bill of Rights](#) and most notably, [Tenth Amendment Federalism](#).

[Post Your Opinion: What are the most important battlefronts of 2012?](#)

In the final months of 2011, with the stress of keeping our substantial mission and operations capability at full throttle, and dealing with the added daily burdens of managing the business platform supporting those capabilities, I was tired and my attitude reflected a dour spirit.

In our household, I share this maxim with my children: "Attitude is a reflection of Gratitude!" A grateful heart results in a joyful spirit. Clearly, however, my faded attitude was a reflection of my lack of gratitude. (In such times, I invoke the Iron Law of Parental Hypocrisy: Do as I say, not as I do.)

Another tenet related to attitude is that when we lose sight of all for which we should be thankful, that vista can always be recovered through service to others.

Still another method for regaining gratitude is to be catapulted into that recognition by loss or trial. In my case, it was a great loss, which restored my sense of gratitude, and my attitude.

A heroic American Patriot, a man who had been a mentor to me for almost 30 years, died on Christmas Eve.

While the words "patriot" and "hero" are often bandied about these days, sometimes those character traits are well earned.

Roger Ingvalson was an American Patriot of the first order, and truly a hero. He stood tall among American Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines, and history will record that he was not only extraordinarily courageous, but in equal measure both humble and faithful.

In 1968, Roger was flying the F-105D with the 34th Tactical Fighter Squadron out of Korat Royal Air Force Base, Thailand. The air war over Vietnam was in its third year, and the pilot casualty list included Roger's wingman and best friend, Wayne Fullam, who was shot down in late 1967.



On 28 May, Roger took off on his 87th combat sortie, leading a mission to destroy a bridge in North Vietnam. (Roger would note lightheartedly that it is very important to keep the number of mission takeoffs and landings equal.) With 1,600 hours in the F-105, he was confident that this mission would be a success. As he pulled off the target, an air controller requested that

he hit an enemy truck convoy nearby.

Roger's tactical preference was for high speed and low altitude engagement in order to assure accuracy. At about 0900, he located the convoy of Soviet-built trucks near Dong Hoi and rolled in at more than 500 knots. At 50 feet above the hard deck, he fired a long 20mm burst into the convoy.

Moments later, Roger recalls, "I heard and felt an explosion and my cockpit immediately filled with smoke. I hit the afterburner to gain valuable altitude, then pulled the canopy ejection handle to get rid of the smoke. I rocketed up to about 600 feet before my aircraft went into an uncontrollable roll. I pulled the ejection seat handle and squeezed the trigger. As I was catapulted out of the burning aircraft, the wind blast knocked me out, and I didn't regain consciousness until just prior to landing on a dried out rice paddy."

As he hit the ground, Roger's first reaction was to feel for broken bones. "With 15 years as a fighter pilot, I was fully aware of the fact that there is very little chance of survival during an emergency ejection at high speed and low altitude without a multitude of injuries. To my amazement, I had no broken bones or other injuries." He told me at that moment, he knew God had a plan for his life.

For the next 1,742 days, Roger endured torture, starvation, desolation, disease and one stretch of 20 months in strict solitary confinement. He spent much of his internment in the infamous "Hanoi Hilton" prison, made famous after "[Hanoi Jane](#)" Fonda collaborated with Roger's captors to make a propaganda film purporting that American POWs were being treated humanely.

The rest of his remarkable story is included in our 2006 Veterans Day column, [A Tale of Two Oaths](#).

Roger was a living example of the maxim "attitude reflects gratitude."

In 1808, John Adams, wrote, "Our obligations to our country never cease but with our lives." Indeed, Roger honored his [sacred oath](#) to "support and defend" our Constitution. He loved our great country.

Of such Patriots, Gen. George Patton once said, "It is foolish and wrong to mourn the men who died. Rather we should thank God that such men lived." However, I both mourn Roger's absence and thank God he lived, while taking great comfort knowing he has gained

victory over his suffering and is with our Savior for eternity. Job well done, good and faithful servant!

Roger drew his last breath on Christmas Eve, but his legacy is eternal. He was buried with full military honors at National Cemetery, and fittingly that ceremony included a flyover of F-16s in his honor, and that of his surviving family members, who are an extraordinary lot in their own right, including two grandsons who are Air Force Cadets.

On that note, my sense of gratitude has been fully restored.

Moving into 2012, with all of the formidable challenges awaiting us, our Patriot team has renewed our resolve and redoubled our efforts in steadfast support of Liberty. We pray that you, too, are renewed, and we look forward to standing side by side with you in defending Rule of Law, with a deep sense

of gratitude for generations of Patriots gone before, and in thanksgiving to God, Almighty for His endowment of Liberty!

"With hearts fortified with these animating reflections, we most solemnly, before God and the world, declare, that, exerting the utmost energy of those powers, which our beneficent Creator hath graciously bestowed upon us, the arms we have compelled by our enemies to assume, we will, in defiance of every hazard, with unabating firmness and perseverance employ for the preservation of our liberties; being with one mind resolved to die freemen rather than to live as slaves." --John Dickinson & Thomas Jefferson, 1775

(Note: If you have a minute to pause and contemplate just how great our nation really is, I invite you to listen to "[My Beautiful America](#).")