

Honoring Those Who Fought for Our Freedoms

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Today is Memorial Day. It's the day when we remember those who have died fighting for our freedoms.

And in their honor, it seems so fitting, somehow, to revisit one more time, another soldier, Corporal Tibor 'Ted' Rubin, who fought for freedom against all odds. He didn't perish, perhaps because his message is important for all in America to hear.

And, thanks to the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Prescott (JCFGP), many in our community got to hear this story first hand, when he spoke at the Days of Remembrance event.

What is so amazing about Rubin is that he didn't have to join the United States Army, or fight any battles. After all, he wasn't even an American citizen at the time.

You see, Rubin was put in a concentration camp during World War II, when he was just 14. About a year and a half later, the camp he was in was liberated by the United States Army, under General Patton. He went on to join the United States Army, and eventually was captured and put in a Korean Prisoner Of War camp. He is the only Holocaust survivor to be given the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Yes, Rubin knows what freedom is. As Jim Simmons, an attorney in Prescott who heard Rubin speak said, "I wish all Americans were that patriotic, we wouldn't have the problems we have now. Unbelievable. Sometimes it takes a foreigner to understand how precious and how delicate our freedom is. And he sure captured it all. Unbelievable."

Simmons knows what sacrifice is, too. He explained, "I'm a combat veteran, got shot up by a machine gun, and can really identify with him and I could identify with what he went through. I'm Presbyterian,

but my wife is Jewish, so I was really impressed with those parts of his story. I was laughing one minute, crying the next, just an amazing man. Rubin makes me teary eyed just thinking about him, haven't been that moved in a long time. "

Sheila Polk, the Yavapai County Attorney, expressed her feelings about Rubin's message this way, "I absolutely loved it. I did not expect to laugh as much as I laughed. It's obviously a very solemn topic, but what an amazing man, of such wit and charm and sense of humor. And after a while I started thinking, that's probably what got him through such terrible times, was his sense of humor. I was very moved by his message, that we are all brothers and sisters and his message that we need to love one another. It's a message that I personally believe in, but a message coming from a man that experienced such hatred and yet he's still passing on that message."

Dr. David Hess, the President of JCFGP described how Rubin came to Prescott, "I have spoken with Mr. Rubin for probably six or eight months over the phone, preparing for his trip. And I've heard his stories over the phone, and I've had the benefit of reading his letters of commendation for his Medal of Honor. So I know that what he tells me is absolutely truthful. But the most remarkable thing about Mr. Rubin and I did not say this, is that when I called him to come for the Days of Remembrance, I asked him what his honorarium was. And he said that he does not accept money to come and speak, which is very unusual. And I said, 'Would you be willing for us to give the United States Holocaust Museum a donation in your name,' and he said that would be nice."

Hess continued, "I said, 'Would you come?' He said, 'Well, I'm not sure.' He then asked me, 'Do you have a VA hospital?' I thought, I wonder why he's asking that? I said, 'Well, yes, we do.' He said, 'I will come, on one condition. And that condition is if I can stay over the next day and visit the veterans at the VA hospital.' And that was his only condition of coming.

Hess paused for a moment, and then said, "I tell you, Mr. Rubin makes you proud to be an American. He makes you think of how lucky we are to be in this country. We take it for granted, but Mr. Rubin just makes you realize that there are places in this world that you don't have these freedoms and this security and feeling safe, that no one's going to arrest you just for the color of your hair or your religion, so I think that really struck a chord with a lot of people the other night, that this man makes me appreciate what I have and probably taken for granted too many times."

So, as our community takes this time to remember our fallen heroes, we also might want to honor those who are still among us, such as Rubin did. Shake a veteran's hand, maybe even visit the VA. And, most of all, as you see the flags flying proudly in our skies, take time to remember those who fought for our country.

Rubin probably put it best, "I must show my appreciation, I want thank them, what the soldiers did for me. I was a kid, I was 15 years old and I was liberated. And then, I loved America. You know, I never eat that good. And I come on the boat, I gained 15 pound, I eat like a horse. So, what I try to tell you, the only thing I can tell you, we all are lucky because we are living in the most beautiful country in the world."