



Straight Talk

By Muriel Sluyter

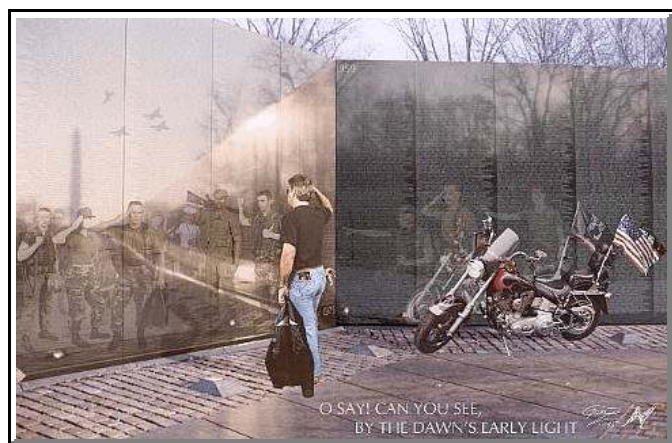
Brian Shul "A Proud American" Transcript

7 August, 2004

Bonus Column

Greetings, Gentle Reader,

Brian Shul... A Vietnam era USAF fighter pilot, 212 combat missions, shot down near the end of the war and was so badly burned that he was given next to no chance to live. [He] did live, went on to fly SR-71s and completed a 20 year career in the Air Force.



It is not often that a fighter pilot is asked to be the keynote speaker. There is a rumor that they are unable to put two sentences together coherently. I'd like to dispel that rumor today by saying that I can do that, and in fact that I have written several books. I always wanted to be an author, and I ARE one now.

I'm a pretty lucky person really. I'm like the little boy who tells his father that when he grows up he wants to be a jet pilot, and his father replies, "Sorry son, you can't do both". I made that choice a long time ago and flew the jets.

I was fortunate to live my dream, and then some. I survived something I shouldn't have, and today, tell people that I am 28 years old, as it has been that long since I was released from the hospital. It was like I received a second life, and in the past 28 years, I have gotten to see and do much, so much that I would not have thought possible. Returning to

fly jets in the Air Force, flying the SR-71 on spy missions, spending a year with the Blue Angels, running my own photo studio.... and so much more. And now, seeing our country attacked in such a heinous way.

Some of you here today have heard me speak before, and know that I enjoy sharing my aviation slide show. I have brought no slides to show you, as I feel compelled today, to address different issues concerning this very difficult time in our nation's history.

I stand before you today, not as some famous person, or war hero. I am far from that. You know, they say a good landing is one you can walk away from, and a really great one is when you can use the airplane again. Well, I did neither . . . and I speak to you today as simply a fellow American citizen.

Like you, I was horrified at the events of September 11th. But I was not totally surprised that such a thing could happen, or that there were people in the world who would perpetrate such deeds, willingly, against us. Having sat through many classified briefings while in the Air Force, I was all too aware of the threat, and I can assure you, it has always been there in one form or another. And those of you who have served in the defense of this nation, know all too well the response that is needed. In every fighter squadron I was in, there was a saying that we knew to be true, that said, when there was a true enemy, you negotiate with that enemy with your knee in his chest and your knife at his throat.

Many people are unfamiliar with this way of thinking, and shrink from its ramifications. War is such a messy business, and there are many who want no part of it, but rush to bask in the security blanket of its victory.

I spent an entire military career fighting Communism, and was very proud to do so. We won that war, we beat one of the worst scourges to humankind the world has known. But it took a great effort, over many years of sustained vigilance and much sacrifice by so many whose names you will never know. And perhaps our nation, so weary from so long a cold war, relaxed too much and felt the world was a safer place with the demise of the Soviet Union. We indulged ourselves in our own lives, and gave little thought to the threats to our national security.

You know, normally my talks are laced with numerous jokes as I share my stories, but I have very few jokes to tell this afternoon. These murdering fanatics came into our land, lived amongst our people, flew on our planes, crashed them into our buildings, and killed thousands of our citizens. And nowhere along their gruesome path were they questioned or stopped. The joke is on us. We allowed this country to become soft.

We shouldn't really be too surprised that this could happen. Did we really think that we could keep electing officials who put self above nation and this would make us stronger? Did we really think that a strong economy adequately replaced a strong intelligence community? Did we imagine that a President who practically gave away the store on his watch, was insuring national security? While our country was mired in the wasted excess of a White House sex scandal, the drums of war beat loudly in foreign lands, and we were deaf. Our response was to give the man two terms in office, and even then barely half the American public exercised their right to vote. We have only ourselves to blame. Our elected officials are merely a reflection of our own values and what we deem important.

Did we not realize that America had become a laughing stock around the world? We had lost credibility, even amongst our allies. To our enemies we had no resolve. We made a lot of money, watched a lot of TV, and understood little about what was happening beyond our shores. We were, simply, an easy target.

But we are a country awakened now. We have been attacked in our homeland. We have now felt the reality of what an unstable and dangerous world it truly is. And still, in the face of this unprecedented carnage in our most prominent city, there are those who choose to take this opportunity to protest, and even burn the flag.

If I were the regents or alumni of certain large universities

in this county, I would be embarrassed to be producing students of such ignorance and naive notions. Like mindless sheep, they march with painted faces and trite sayings on signs, blissfully ignorant of the world they live in, and the system that protects them, hoping maybe to make the evening news. Perhaps if they had spent more time in class they would have learned that those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it. They might have learned that all it takes for evil to succeed in the world, is for good people to stand by and do nothing. If they had simply gone back in history as recently as the Viet Nam War, they would have learned that an enemy that knows it can never defeat us militarily, will persist as long as there is dissension and disruption in our land. Their ignorance can be understood, as their young empty minds have been filled with the rewritten history tripe that tenured leftist professors can spew out with no fear of removal. But the unwitting aid they provide the enemy, in disrupting the national resolve, is unforgivable.

I think this is wonderful country, though, that gives everyone their voice of dissension. I am all for people expressing their views publicly because it makes it much easier for us to identify the truly foolish, and to know who cannot be counted on in times of crisis. These are the weak and cowardly who, when the enemy is crashing through the front door, will cower in the back room, counting on better men than themselves to make and keep them free. Well, the enemy is at our front door, and isn't it interesting those who cry loudest and most often for their rights, are usually those least willing to defend it.

I heard a student on TV the other day say that this war just wasn't in his plans and he would simply head to Canada if a draft occurred. Just wasn't in his plans.

Source: <http://www.saintsandheroes.com/proud1/>