

Great Falls CONNECTION

Great Falls Honors Veterans

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The Langley Madrigals sing at the Veterans Day ceremony at Freedom Memorial in Great Falls with a number of patriotic songs.

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The audience applauds as all veterans at the ceremony were recognized.



All those who were able stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

PHOTOS BY OLIVIA ANELLO/THE CONNECTION

Great Falls Honors Veterans

A touching ceremony held at the Freedom Memorial.

BY OLIVIA ANELLO
THE CONNECTION

It was a beautiful fall morning on Monday, as many gathered to celebrate Veterans Day at the Great Falls Freedom Memorial. The morning ceremony was conducted by Andy Wilson, President of Friends of the Great Falls Freedom Memorial.

Wilson reminded guests why we celebrate Veterans Day, which is because the Armistice was signed at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918. The Armistice was a proclamation signed by President Woodrow Wilson, that celebrated the gratitude of victory and the heroic lives that served in World War I.

Colonel Richard Leadbetter, a retired US Army veteran and keynote speaker for the morning shared thoughts and experiences so moving, captivating the audience for every word he had to say. He opened his speech expressing gratitude for a type of soldier he called the “citizen soldier.” These were all the men that were drafted to fight in World War II. Leadbetter shared what a privilege it was to serve with the draftees, because “they put down whatever they were doing and answered the call to put down their lives.” He reminded the audience that “These were kids... Kids that went to school with *your* kids. They were dating or about to get married. But they were ready to go wherever, and do whatever it took to protect their country.” He acknowledged what remarkable soldiers they were, and how the war could never have been fought without them.

Leadbetter also drew attention to people who call his generation, “The Greatest Generation” because of the capabilities of the military at the time of war. He disagreed and acknowledged those who were left behind from the war. “Those that weren’t drafted, the mothers, the wives, siblings,



Andy Wilson, President of the Friends of the Great Falls Freedom Memorial, welcomes guests to the Veterans Day ceremony

“‘The Greatest Generation’ was built on the combination of a great fighting force and the United States working to support them.”

— Colonel Richard Leadbetter, US Army (ret), keynote speaker

families...” he continued. “Those were the people who built ships and sent equipment and sold war bonds, all to support the war

efforts and provide for the soldiers overseas.” Leadbetter concluded that “The Greatest Generation was built on the com-



Retired US Army veteran, Colonel Richard Leadbetter delivers a thoughtful testament to those who served with him.

bination of a great fighting force and the United States working to support them.”

Pastor Ho Kang of the Smith Chapel United Methodist Church in Great Falls led the audience in prayer as he delivered the invocation and the benediction. “Stir in our hearts to be thankful for our heroes and let them never be taken for granted,” Pastor Kang rang out. He directed guests of the ceremony to “honor those who served our righteous country, those who bear the scars of war, let us remember them and give thanks to them.”