

**Boston College  
Veterans Day 2021**

**Ray Berube '78, USN**

Good morning, it is an honor to have the opportunity to be a part of today's annual Boston College Veterans Remembrance Ceremony and to spend Veterans Day here on Chestnut Hill, in such good company. Thank you all for attending.

I would like to acknowledge our distinguished guests and those individuals who made this event happen so smoothly: Boston College Executive Vice President Michael Lochhead, Leah DeCosta Spencer Associate Vice President of Boston College Alumni Relations, Lieutenant Colonel David Mun, Lead Officer, Liberty Battalion, Major Grady Stebbins, Boston College ROTC, Jean Chisser, Associate Director of Alumni Special Services who is fully engaged as our advocate, and Robert Santiago, Boston Veterans Commissioner. I would also like to thank Mike Dunford and Bill Kelley, co-chairs of the Boston College Veterans Alumni Network (BCVAN).

Although he is not in attendance today, I would be remiss if we did not recognize the efforts of Paul Delaney, a BC alum and founder of the effort to build the Veterans Memorial Wall many years ago.

Veterans Day was originally known as Armistice Day in the United States for honoring military veterans who served in World War I. It coincides with other holidays including Armistice Day and Remembrance Day which are celebrated in other countries that mark the anniversary of the end of that war. Major hostilities of World War I were formally ended at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918 when the Armistice with Germany went into effect. At the urging of major U.S. veteran organizations, Armistice Day was renamed Veterans Day in 1954 to recognize veterans who served in all U.S. conflicts.

First and foremost, I want to begin today by recognizing all those among us who have been a part of our U.S. military—our veterans, active-duty service members, guardsmen and reservists. Your service and sacrifice have kept our country safe and free. I would also like to welcome the alumni, family, members of the ROTC unit, and the faculty and staff of Boston College that are in attendance.

Today we recognize all Veterans and especially the Boston College Veterans who gave their lives in the line of duty in U.S. military conflicts since World War I and whose names are enshrined in the Boston College Veterans Memorial Wall. Later this morning, in the highlight of today's activities, we will add 1<sup>st</sup> LT Thomas Redgate's name to the Roll Call. This hero had been missing for 71 years after a fierce battle near the Chosin Reservoir in North Korea during the Korean War. I would like to ask any family members of our 211 alumni who gave the ultimate sacrifice present today to please stand so we can recognize these Gold Star family members. .... Thank you.

If you have the opportunity to speak to the BC veterans here today one on one, you will hear the shared pride they feel in having provided service to our Nation and being part of something that is bigger than themselves. While there are many common aspects in a military career, there are also many unique aspects and experiences for each veteran. I would like to share some aspects and experiences from my career as a Navy Supply Corps Officer.

The beginning:

My time at Boston College was tremendous: the academics and overall experience were a great fit for me. I met my spouse, Mary, at BC and made a number of lifelong friends, all of whom were instrumental in keeping me grounded throughout my career. When I graduated from Boston College my plan was to find a job that provided business and or financial experience, go to grad school and then pursue my career.

I first learned about the Navy Supply Corps through a targeted Want Ad in the Sunday *Boston Globe*. The ad highlighted the opportunity to get financial and supply chain experience and required only a 36-month commitment. I followed up, took the required battery of tests and on 2 October 1978, took the oath and was sworn in in downtown Boston. That day in history will never be forgotten across New England, not because I joined the Navy but because Bucky Dent of the rival New York Yankees hit a late inning home run at Fenway Park to win an extra season game that was added since the two teams tied after the regular season. As a die-hard Red Sox fan, it took a little of the steam out of the first day of my career. I was then off to Officer Candidate School in Newport, RI and then six months of training at the Navy Supply Corps School in Athens GA. In Athens, we learned the core Navy business management skills of Supply Chain Management, Financial Management and contracting as we prepared for initial afloat assignments as Navy Supply Officers. Navy Supply Officers are sea-going staff officers versus line officers. We are assigned on all ships, submarines, aviation units and even deploy with Navy SEAL teams.

My initial operational tour was an aircraft carrier USS America CV-66 between 1979 and 1981. This was a very difficult assignment; it was post-Vietnam and readiness and resourcing were challenged. My first shore tour was at Naval Air Station Brunswick, ME, close enough to attend some BC football games and watch a quarterback named Doug Flutie. Mary and I were married during this tour and Mary split time between Brunswick and Concord, NH where she was attending law school. We then accepted orders on the west coast as commissioning Supply Officer of the USS Vandegrift FFG48, a guided missile frigate built in Seattle, WA, and homeported in Long Beach, CA. The Vandegrift tour was a turning point in my career. The commissioning crew of 200 were highly professional and throughout the Department of Defense and Navy resourcing, pay and training opportunities expanded greatly as the all-volunteer force became a reality and performance standards were raised. Our next set of orders sent us to the Naval Postgraduate School in beautiful Monterey, CA, where I completed a Master of Science degree in Financial Management. Three successive tours in Washington, DC followed, involving weapon system acquisition and financial management. My final tour in

DC was in the Pentagon serving as the senior Supply financial analyst for the Comptroller of the Navy. In this billet I reviewed and submitted the Department of the Navy's \$6B repair part budgets to the Secretary of Defense, Comptroller, and ultimately Congress. The budget cycle involved many reviews and very often negotiation on the size, priority and underpinning of the funding request. I found that my BC Economics and overall academic studies served me very well in this fast-paced Pentagon environment. In fact I will never forget one individual telling me he hated to have to defend his budget input to me because I was so logical in my positions and arguments. I had in fact taken a Logic course at BC. As I recall I did not exactly ace the mid-term which earned me a trip to St. Mary's at Father Barrett's request, where he tutored me for about an hour. I don't think I was his best logic student, although I did review my transcript and did pull out a B+. When we left DC after seven years, we headed to San Diego for two tours including another afloat tour, this time as Supply Officer on USS Essex LHD 2, an amphibious assault ship. An LHD looks like a small aircraft carrier and carries a Marine ground and air combat elements. We enjoyed a highly successful deployment with our embarked Marines (15th MEU) but there was a clear sign that the world was changing when during our deployment the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Tanzania were bombed by terrorists leaving 258 people dead and more than 5000 injured. My USS Essex tour culminated with selection to Navy Captain, which had become my personal career goal. During this tour I was humbled by the tireless work ethic of my 300-person Supply Department. I learned my most valuable leadership lesson, that these dedicated men and woman would work tirelessly if you just told them what needed to be done, showed that you cared about them and the task at hand, by being involved and measuring and recognizing their progress.

My most significant assignment as a Navy Captain was the opportunity to Command the Fleet and Industrial Supply Center, San Diego, a multi-faced logistics support operation of about 1500 military and civilian employees. I took command on Friday, Sept 6, 2001. I enjoyed the weekend and after getting settled the following Monday, like the rest of the world I got up Tuesday morning and watched terrorist actions destroy our security and take so many innocent lives on 9/11. Much of my command tour was spent adapting the supply chain to heightened security requirements and helping to load out and support Navy ships in San Diego, the majority of which soon sailed to the 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet for Middle East operations. The importance of our collective military missions and capabilities clearly grew after that tragic event.

I had not planned to serve past Navy Captain and never set a goal or considered making Rear Admiral, but as a friend said to me, "they have to pick someone." After lightning struck in 2003, I served eight years in three Flag Officer assignments. Highlights included supporting Navy's logistics response efforts during Hurricane Katrina, managing a global logistics organization comprised of about 8000 civilian and military personnel, and finally managing Navy's 28 billion dollar repair part inventory. Throughout, I continued to be humbled by the superb efforts and contributions of the extraordinary men and women that I served with.

When I retired from active duty the most important people at the ceremony were my family. They had enabled and supported my career every step of the way in so many ways. So, on Veterans Day, we need to thank all family members of veterans for their service, support and sacrifice.

In closing, I first visited the Veterans Memorial Wall and learned about the ongoing efforts of the BC Veterans Community in the summer of 2009, when we were completing parent orientation for my daughter who was an incoming freshman. I could not have been prouder of Boston College and the many alumni who worked so hard to make this splendid BC remembrance memorial a reality and to promote the BC veterans' alumni network, robust initiatives in support of veterans and to make Eagle veterans a recognized and valued Boston College affinity group.

BC is strongly supporting alumni veterans, veteran students, ROTC students, and most importantly bringing us all together to remember all veterans, and in particular the heroes who are named in this memorial and their ultimate sacrifices.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today and I thank you for what you are doing to recognize and support of our veterans.