

Ike was a great hero, a man of great moral courage with the willingness to shoulder responsibility that is the mark of a great leader.

The Long Gray line has never lacked for courageous leaders. General Barry McCaffrey, class of '64, and General Ric Shinseki, class of '65, both proved their courage in combat in Vietnam, where they suffered horrendous wounds.

It took great moral courage to come back from that experience and decide to stay in an Army that had been shattered by Vietnam. But, by that choice, and the choice of so many like them, were able to rebuild that Army into what it is today: an Army without equal.

Courage comes in all ranks—all shapes and stripes. Look to your left—look down the line to your right—you may well be seeing a hero; you may be looking at another Rocky Versace.

After graduating from West Point in 1959, Rocky grew bored with stateside duty and volunteered for Vietnam where he served with enthusiasm and distinction. In October of 1963, just weeks shy of completing his second tour, he was captured by the Viet Cong.

When Rocky was tortured and left for dead in a three-by-six-foot cage—he sang “God Bless America.” When he was dragged from

village to village with a rope around his neck, he cursed his captors in English and French and Vietnamese. His will could not be broken.

A fellow captive recalled that for Rocky, “as a West Point grad, it was duty, honor, country. There was no other way. He was brutally murdered because of it. He valued that one moment of honor more than he would have a lifetime of compromises.”

Rocky Versace exemplified honor and courage. Forty years after his death, his life, his determination, his patriotism, and his courage call out for recognition. If Congress agrees, we will answer that call and recommend to President Bush that Captain Rocky Versace, class of 1959, be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Like Rocky, like Generals McCaffrey and Shinseki, you that know your profession is about leadership. To lead soldiers, you must first become one—in body, mind and spirit.

You must know your job, set the example, lead from the front. Most of all you must be a model of moral courage and integrity for your soldiers, the way your role models at West Point were for you.

Yours will not be a life of personal gain, but it is noble work. You will man the walls behind which democracy and freedom flourish. Your presence will reassure our allies

and deter the enemies of freedom around the world. Be prepared to be surprised. Have courage. And remember what General Eisenhower said to those American and Allied troops before they were about to land on the beaches of Normandy. “You are about to embark on a great crusade,” he told them. “The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty loving people everywhere march with you.”

Today, as you, the Class of 2001, go forth on your own crusade, our hopes and prayers go with you. Thank you, God bless the Class of '01, and God bless America.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MICHAEL M. HONDA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 5, 2001

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall Nos. 148 and 149, I was unavoidably detained, as I was the keynote speaker at my daughter's graduation. Had I been present, I would have voted “Nay” on both votes.