

## VETERANS' TOWN HALL 2017

### OPENING REMARKS

In the tradition of warrior storytelling today, veterans will describe the pride, grief, rage, or quiet appreciation of life that war bestowed upon them. Each veteran will be given up to 10 minutes to speak about what his or her service means to them. This event is solemn and non-political. There will be no question-and-answer period. There will be no debate on the merits or justifications of war. There will be no recriminations or accusations. This is simply a chance for veterans to tell their community what it felt like to go to war.

*[The Host can and should add his or her own personal remarks to the Opening Remarks.]*

### GROUND RULES

First, to our friends in the press, thank you for attending. We'd greatly appreciate your respecting the intent of this event by remembering that all veterans' comments are deeply personal. While this is an open press event, I would ask that you please respect the privacy of these veterans by asking either a member of our staff or the veterans themselves if they want to be on the record.

*[If there are cameras present, the MC should make it clear at the beginning – and from time to time thereafter – that cameras will be turned off for anyone who does not wish to be recorded.]*

Today, there are many vets who would like to speak, and many non-veterans in attendance. In order for the town hall to be successful, my role is to ensure that the event honors the following agreements and expectations. A number of veterans have already indicated to us that they'd like to speak. I'll introduce each by name, branch, occupation, and years of service. Once all the predetermined veterans have gone, I'll open up the floor for other veteran attendees to speak. Each veteran will have 10 minutes to speak about what their service means to them; while you do not need to use the full 10 minutes, I will ask that you do not go over ten minutes. This is an opportunity for veterans to tell their stories with honesty, and the stories may express pride, grief, anger, or any combination of feelings.

Non-veterans also have an important role. As witnesses, non-veterans will be listeners. Actively listening without judgment or interruption is one of the most powerful and supportive roles a community can offer to returned warriors. Throughout the event, you may hear something you agree or disagree with. You may have a question. Or you may want to say encouraging words with the intention to help. However, we ask that you please refrain from responding to any speaker at any time.

Having laid out these ground rules, I'd like to introduce our first veteran speaker here at Contois.

## INTRODUCING SPEAKERS

“[First name] [Last name] would like to speak to the community. [First name] is a [branch] veteran, who served as a [occupation] between [start year] and [end year], during [era].”

## OPENING THE FLOOR

*[Once you've gone through the list of speakers, thank them for telling their stories and open it up to other veterans in the audience who would like to speak. Direct them to the podium. Remind them that each veteran has a maximum of 10 minutes to speak and that we will need to begin wrapping up the town hall at 5pm. ]*

## CLOSING REMARKS

*[If there are no more speakers prior to 5pm, that will mark the end. Otherwise, if a speaker crosses 5pm, let him or her finish, and then close.]*

Today, veterans of all wars had a chance to address their community directly and without intermediaries. As a guest or speaker, you took part in a community ceremony that returns the experience of war to our entire community, rather than just leaving it to the people who fought. Not only is this vets town hall tremendously beneficial to veterans, but it may help bring communities and even the entire country together as well.

*[Thank the veterans—both speakers and those who merely attended—thank the non-veterans for coming. The Host can and should add their own personal remarks to the provided closing remarks. End by reminding folks to feel free to stay and chat, but we only have the space until 5:30pm.]*