

Twenty-three years ago, the tragic events of September 11th changed our country and the rest of the world forever. Terrorists attacked the United States causing a massive amount of death and destruction in New York City, Arlington, Virginia, and Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Not only did Americans die in those attacks, but so did citizens of many other countries. September 11, 2001, was one of the darkest days in our nation's history. It was a dark day indeed, but not dark enough to hide our light from the rest of the world. America may have stumbled but she didn't fall. On that day, all the things that divided us from one another disappeared and we were all Americans. We were all one. It was that strength of unity and spirit of Americanism that preserved the freedom our enemies worked so hard to take from us but ultimately failed to do so.

In the twenty-three years that have passed, our men and women in the armed forces have stood in harm's way to fight evil and tyranny. Thousands have lost their lives and suffered heinous injuries on foreign soil to protect us. We owe them a debt we cannot ever repay. Thousands have returned, many of them different from when they left home. The Sons of The American Legion are here to help veterans who need assistance. That assistance can take many different forms such as providing information of services available, offering transportation to medical appointments, delivering food, or simply inviting a veteran to your Post or Squadron for steak night and a cold beverage. Ask them to bring their sons with them. Instill the spirit of Americanism and mutual helpfulness in them. Tell them about our many programs. Create a positive image of our organization in their eyes. Make them welcome. Make them part of our family. Invite them to become a part of something bigger than each of us. Hand them a membership application and then mentor them. Keep them engaged and active.

On September 11th take a few minutes to reflect on the safety, freedom, and liberty we take for granted in this great country we are privileged and blessed to call home. Talk to your children about the events that affected their lives long before they were born. Remember the hundreds of heroic first responders who were killed in New York, and the military men and women who died in the attack on the Pentagon. Remember the passengers in the ill-fated airplanes, and the innocent people in the buildings. If you are inclined to do so, pray for the families of the victims and survivors. And pray for The United States of America.

George Alva
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