Speech at Memorial Dedication
IHO SGT Preston Tribble,Jr., 21 May 2009
(Millennium Gate at Atlantic Station)

"I am an American Soldier
I am a warrior and member of a team
I serve the people of the United States
and live the Army values.
I will always place the mission first
I will never accept defeat
I will never quit
I will never leave a fallen comrade....

I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life.
I am an American Soldier."

"Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?
Then, I said, *Here am I; Send me."*

To the family and friends of SGT Tribble, Gen. Brandenburg, Tuskegee Airmen, Vietnam Veterans, citizens, members of the Atlanta Vietnam Veterans Business Association and distinguished guests…

"My name is 'Donald' and I am a soldier..!"

Perhaps you recognize the my opening quotes from the 'Soldier's Creed' and the book of Isaiah.

Both thoughts… I think you'll agree, captures the essence of the American Hero, SGT Preston Tribble, Jr., whose life, personal sacrifice and great legacy we celebrate today.

Indeed, today we gather to pay tribute to a "fallen Comrade…" A soldier who when asked to do a second tour in Vietnam, "will you go?" 'then… said,' "Here am I, send me!"

He did not succumb the popular debates of period, asserting perhaps, why as a Black man from the 'Jim Crow" South should I go...?

Or pontificate on the merits of his Commander-In-Chief's decision to defend democracy thousands of miles away in the rice paddies of Vietnam…

Like the millions of others, soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen and coast guardsmen who served, and the 35k that perished during that war…

Like those at Gettysburg, Normandy, Iwo Jima, Chosin Reservoir …like Tuskegee airmen.

SGT Tribble was led by his core values to serve the people of the United States, compelled as all soldiers are the haunting reminder of "duty, honor, and country."

And indeed, it is fitting and proper that we are here to celebrate his legacy and his sacrifice.

When *General John Logan, wrote General Order No. 11, 5 May 1868 that established Memorial Day tributes such as these, he proclaimed:*

"...gather around their sacred remains and garland the passionless mounds above them with choicest flowers of springtime....let us in this solemn presence renew our pledges to aid and assist those whom they have left among us as sacred charges upon the Nation's gratitude..."

To the family and friends of SGT Tribble who have joined us today, we pay tribute to you and the memory of your love one and his sacrifice. At this moment, your mind perhaps recalls a scrapbook of memories--a kaleidoscope of life experiences, from

the cradle to his last trip to Vietnam. While some of you were too young to remember, we, nonetheless, say a belated 'thank you' for your personal sacrifice.

SGT Preston Tribble who was born and raised right here is Atlanta and attended Howard High School. He is indeed an American hero in the finest tradition. The plaque that is being placed here today *in such a beautiful place* will provide a permanent reminder of his noble sacrifice.

To the members of the Vietnam Veterans Business Association, we all thank you for your faithfulness to the Soldier's Creed to "not leave a fallen comrade" behind. Through your efforts over the last 30 years, you have help ensure the survival of the nation, as you recognize those who have given so much for freedom. This represents the 23d time you have that you have paid tribute to our war heroes in such a spectacular manner. For it is said, that a nation that does not honor its fallen heroes will not long survive! On behalf of the family and all of us here, we want to thank

you for making this possible.

As General Hal Moore best described all of you who served in Vietnam in his epic account of the war, <u>We Were Soldiers Once, And Young</u>:

"You share a common bond forged in the crucible war as few can understand. Your bond transcends time as you returned home to rebuild lives, to find jobs or professions, get married, raise families, and waited patiently for America to fulfill its ideals."

With SGT Tribble, you have indeed as Shakespeare wrote, become "a band of brothers."

As former Deputy, Commanding General U.S. Army Pacific who has travelled extensively in the region, I am convinced that the final Chapter in the history of the brave men and women who fought in Vietnam has yet to be written. America continues to be free today primarily because of the dogged determination and resolve of men and women

Like SGT Tribble and members of this Association.

The Vietnam War continues to teach us lessons about the Art of War and about ourselves. Famed Cold War historian, T.R. Ferenbach reminds us even today as hundreds of thousands of our men and women are deployed today in places like Iraq, Afghanistan, at sea and other far flung capitols of the world that the mission of protecting our country simply cannot be done without soon or later "putting boots on the ground" and placing our sons, daughters and love ones in harm's way.

Finally, today we gather not only to pay tribute to SGT Tribble, but also honor the all of men and women who have sworn an oath to defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic- a transcendent ideal that calls out to people the world over who yearn to be free. SGT Tribble believed in what he was doing and gave all to America.

His life though too short, is an inspiration for the living

as well as an epitaph for all those who have fallen.

As we close, we remember the comforting words:

"They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, not the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them."

SGT Tribble life was 'well-lived' and inspires this old soldier to proudly state:

"My name is Donald and I am a soldier…!"

May God bless the Tribble Family and friends; all of our military, past and present; this wonderful Association; and most importantly, may God bless America!!