

Luke Chapter MOAA Members Meeting **9 May 2019** at Briarwood Country Club

Guest speaker: **Colonel Winnie Fritz**, Army Nurse Corps

>> DENNIS: Good evening, everyone. At this time, it's my pleasure to introduce Colonel Winnie Fritz, our speaker tonight. During her tenure as a nurse in the Army, she earned her pilot's wings and held leadership positions in the U.S., Thailand, and Vietnam, and her commendations included the Bronze Star metal. She has served as an Assistant Professor at Georgetown University, the University of Maryland, the University of Missouri, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Her experience also includes serving as the Director of International Healthcare Operations for HCCA International, where she has worked in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. She was employed by His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan as the Dean of a School of Nursing and later as a network Clinical Operations Officer for 28 hospitals. For her success in strategic and financial planning and in improved clinical performance in Jordan's hospitals, she was awarded His Majesty's Medal of Honor. Currently, she is the COO/Senior Vice President of Clinical Operations and Services for HCCA Management out of Nashville, Tennessee, Tennessee, and I'd like to mention that this is Nurses Week, from May 6 -- how many nurses do we have here? May 6 to the 12th is Nurses Week. So welcome.

>> COL. FRITZ: Is it okay if I stay here and walk around? Will people see me if I stay here instead of getting up on the stage? Is that okay? Can you hear me all right? Very good. I think we'll do that, then, instead of trying to stand up on the platform. We'll get our slide deck up here on the screen and go.

I enjoyed meeting many of you before dinner started this evening. I am honored and in awe at all the experience that's sitting here before me, and in no way am I here to gloat on war stories. I just returned from the University of Missouri, Columbia, and was working there. I was working with them in their five hospitals in the Sinclair School of Nursing on curriculum development on how to prepare nurses for today and tomorrow and not curriculum for yesterday, so still busy with that.

My mother shortly before her passing, she gave me her address book and said, you realize I've written you at 23 different addresses, so we all, I think, have busy passports and addresses. I will get into some of that in a little bit.

I grew up on Fritz Farms in Illinois. It's still there, been in our family for generations. I still get home and get in that green John Deere tractor. There's never been red or yellow on that farm. We raise Angus cattle. We had four babies this spring. Doing well. I have one brother. We were always a team of four. I was used to parents getting up at 4:30 in the morning, fixed breakfast together and milked our herd together and got in their tractors and worked the fields together. My parents got us in 4H and all of those activities.

As a child, the only thing I learned that mommies and daddies do differently is that mommies wash dishes and daddies dry. That was my first androgynous lesson. If we look that up in Webster, androgynous is a plant that has both male and female characteristics. And that has served me well. I had tutoring with my parents on that.

Like most of us in this room, honors students striving hard, Honor Society, I went to ask Mr. Stuckey, the counselor, should I go to the University of Illinois? My understanding is I'll be on Champagne campus, and then I have to go to Chicago to the medical center. I didn't want to go to

Chicago, not because I'm against Chicago, but I wanted a campus experience for four years. This was pre-internet, and I was trying to figure out the cost if I went to Mizzou, the University of Missouri, so I went to talk to Mr. Stuckey, and we knew he liked counseling the cheerleaders more than he did the first clarinetist, and I asked him to give me advice on the cost of being an out-of-state student to go to Mizzou. And he looked at me, and he said, "You know, Winona, I don't think you're college material."

I went home, and here my dad is a college grad, my mom was a college grad, my grandmother was a college grad, and they said, "We don't care what Mr. Stuckey said. You're going to college."

So along the way I had these positive mentors that said: Let your words be encouraging, not discouraging. My father said this is the first lesson in encouragement: Try to keep your compliments to your criticisms at a 10:1 ratio and you would be better served in life. That's not to point out things that are wrong, but we do find ourselves in whatever roles we are, it's easier to walk around, why can't you do this faster, why didn't you do this better, rather than you get the behavior that you stroke. That which you pay attention to, you get more of.

So I would say Lesson Number 1, have your words encourage; not discourage, and mentor somebody with your compliments.

Lesson Number 2, train hard to fight easy. I went to Mizzou, tried out for marching band. We started -- I was an Army student in the nursing program. We started with 136. We graduated 38 from the program. I remember Mrs. Poundstone expected me to be there at 4:00 in the morning to go over my care plans and take care of my patients for the day, and she just kept saying, "Good care plan, but what are you going to do if his pressure drops, what if he starts to bleed? What's going on here?" She said, "I have to develop someone who is more than technical. I need to develop a critical thinker."

Now, if we translate that to military language -- Dennis and I had this conversation earlier today -- I said I'll be over there about 4:00, and Dennis said I will be, too. I said the military used this same concept; train hard to fight easy. But they kept asking me about the 5 Ps. Anytime I went on a mission, they said: Ma'am, have you covered the 5 P's? Prior planning prevents piss-poor performance. So I learned the 5 P's, and Dennis and I came at 5:00 to make sure it prevented problems with our laptop. Good advice.

Another thing I learned at that particular time was, again, the issue of training hard to fight easy. I learned to journal every day. I really encourage people to journal every day. I have done that every day since 1972, writing down everything from whatever is striking you in the day, the weather that is of the day, the issues on the news, writing it down, this I'm glad I did, I'm proud of. This I need to do better.

It even serves you well in tax audits. I'll get to the Jordan story in a moment, but I was being paid by the Jordan Armed Forces and the Palace in Jordan, and I told his Majesty, I won't pay taxes in Jordan; I'll pay it in the U.S. because I want it for Medicare and Social Security benefits in the future. So all of my pay stubs I was getting said Royal Jordanian Army, or the King, the Palace. So you can imagine the IRS was wondering what's this all about. And the gentleman said, "We're going to conduct an audit. There's a lot of non-reimbursed expenses."

And I said, "I'm giving a lot."

He said, "I'm seeing this big entry here on April the 18th. Tell me about this."

I opened up the journal, and I said, "Well, let's see" -- this was three years after the fact "it was 58 degrees, and I was wearing a yellow wool shirt-laced dress, and I had a brown scarf on and I was using projectors" -- and some of you in the room won't know what I'm talking about -- "but transparency, and I was teaching the following content with the following outline," and he was folding his manual and he said, "Never mind," and he left. (Laughter)

Third lesson: Travel light. I was to graduate May 1968. Again, I was in the Army student nurse program. The military contacted me in the middle to early fall of 1967 and said: We need you to double up your coursework. We are needing you in service. So we need you to get out of Mizzou January/February, and they'll get you your diploma, but you've got to get going and get to Officer Basic. So now I'm at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. I'm in an Army basic and Vietnam jungle training. In addition to the night map course, in addition to dropping us out in the desert needing to find your way back and weapons qualification, debriding goats and so forth, one of the things they taught us was as a military officer, understand you're going to be moving with a big duffle bag, and you will be better off if you can pack up everything into four or five one-ton cargo pallets and have a mover move them. Don't collect Hummel figures. Don't collect rare China. Right? Many heads are nodding. We suggest you collect rugs or maybe pictures that can be packed and then shipped pretty easily. Don't collect excess items and breakables.

So what do we do with that now? For me, in life, it's don't collect baggage. Get over stuff. Don't collect baggage. Right? An event down in -- I was the CEO of a hospital in Tucson, and I asked for the director of med surg and director of the lab to come into my office. We had a major issue going on. This was a Monday or Tuesday morning, and I said, let's spend some time talking about this. And as the two of them sat there, one of the phones, the pagers went off, and those interruptions were okay if it was a physician about a change in patient condition or if it was a patient or family that needed something. So the phone goes or the pager goes off, and the director of med surge said, excuse me, ma'am, can I step out and take this? You bet.

Now I'm talking to the director of lab, and I said, help me learn what is going on here. I need the two of you to work together, and I need this issue resolved by Friday.

The person said, well, I understand your concern, but I don't know if I can work with Pat. You know, I don't like her.

And I said, you know, I don't care. I don't like 80% of you.

And she said, you don't like 80% of us? She said, you're always here at 5:30 in the morning, making rounds. You know everybody's names. We have 1,700 employees. You know everybody personally. Am I on the 20% list?

And I said, see, people will never know. It's not the point. I want people to respect me. But going to back to your words, this is a team of people that have been called together to serve. It's not a team called together for a social event. We may choose to go to dinner with people, but we get these false things, I can't work with people because I don't like them. Well, probably most of us in the room have worked with a lot of people we really didn't like. So the message would be, I guess the lesson is learning to travel light.

Four, now, one of our activities down there at Officer Basic, again, I mentioned the night map course. They dropped us -- as I remember, there were 15 or 20 of us, and they dropped us out in the desert in Texas, each individually with a compass, a map, and a flashlight and said, your goal is you are to get yourself back to Point A, and whoever gets back to Point A first out of the group gets to ride back in a helicopter and you're going to get some sleep. All of the rest of you get back second, and you have to wait for the truck to come pick you up and wait until everybody's back.

I thought, okay, I've grown up on a farm in a rural area. I didn't live at 123 Maple Street. I'm used to turning left at the silo and go past the red barn. I can get back first. And I got back first. And there's Captain Casey, and he said, go on in. You get to get some sleep. Have you ever flown a helicopter? No. Take right seat, and I'll teach you what it's about. And those of you in the room who flew helicopters will know your feet are doing this, and that moves your helicopter this way, and you've got a joystick with, let's say, your left hand between your knees, and that's banging you left and right, and you've got a collective that you're rolling like this like a motorcycle handle, and you've got your right hand doing this and left hand is doing this, and your feet are doing that.

So he said, try it. He said, I'll take off and now it's yours. Crash us, if you want. You take it.

So I took it; I took the controls, and we went on our way back to Officer Basic there at Fort Sam. And we landed, and he said, I don't know if you're the typical female, but your eye/hand coordination is very good, and I hope you enjoyed the flight. I said, thank you.

For me, that was the end. Officer Basic was finished. We were told to stay in country for a few weeks, get used to the pumps, routines and orders in the military before going to Vietnam. We all put in our request, maybe you put in -- I was not from a military family, so I didn't know anyplace to put. I had no idea. Maybe you said I want to go to Walter Reed at Washington. I had no idea what to put. When I opened up my orders, mine said Fort Rucker, Alabama. I said, why am I going to Fort Rucker, Alabama? Captain Casey spoke up and said, well, you've been selected for a pilot program. We're having issues in Vietnam where when the pilots are shot, nobody in the front knows what to do, and when people in the front are shot, nobody in the back knows what to do, so we're cross-training you all so no matter who is shot, the other ones can pick up the slack.

So there I was learning aerodynamics, the weather, the regs, and always learned to file a flight plan, which includes emergency landing, right, emergency landing sites. So the lesson then becomes to plan your flight and fly your plan. You walk out under an arch that says, "Through this archway walks the best pilots in the world." That was an awesome thing to walk through. Number one, it was like, wow, but even more awesome was I have to live up to that and be safe and effective.

So the lesson I learned from that in general that I still use in life is to plan. I plan in pencil. I plan well in advance, back to these 5 Ps. If my husband were here tonight, he would say, God, she knows when her hair is going to be cut in December. But the lesson in leadership and hospital and healthcare and in your situations is for God's sake, take off. We've all worked in situations where we planned and we planned and we planned, and we never took off.

Those in the room who are pilots, probably at least for me 85% of the time I called a change in my flight plan when I took off. Hail wind was better than I thought, had a little more headwind, I wanted to get around clouds, storms coming in, work my way around it, but the point being, let's execute. Let's take off.

Now, then I'm to report to McGuire Air Force Base for my flight to Vietnam. I was to report to this hanger, and there were 200 of us. This is in the New Jersey area, and this is the uniform I was told to report in, Class A uniform. I said, I'm to go to Vietnam in a skirt, a jacket, pantyhose, and pumps; not my fatigues and boots? So there I am, ready to go. Went to McGuire Air Force Base. I think my boarding pass number -- we got numbers -- mine was 186, I think, and we were told to stay abreast in the big hanger. So we all took our place, and I'm looking left and right, number one, I'm the only female in the room. I'm the only officer in the room. I'm probably 23, nudging 23, me with my pantyhose and pumps, and everybody else is a wonderful grunt, private, PSE, in their combat boots and fatigues.

We all came to attention, and he gave preliminary remarks about the plane is coming. You're going to be going to Vietnam, et cetera. I raised my hand, sir, am I in the right line? (Laughter) Yes, ma'am, you're in the right line. They told me there is only one officer on board today. You have troop command. These are your men. Take them to Vietnam.

So I raised my hand, and I said, sir, they told me I would have hospital command but never troop command. And he said, ma'am, with all due respect -- I'm going to modify his response -- with all due respect, I don't give a dang what they told you in basic. These are your men. Take them. And I was younger and cuter then, and the boys are going, yo, mama, this is good. And he was saying to me, ma'am, life's an adventure, step up to the plate. Life's an adventure, step up to the plate. It was a lesson in saying yes.

In different roles I've taken in my career, colleagues have come up and said I'm so lucky. I'm lucky to have the parents I had for sure, and I have many lists I could make of luck, but one thing is I asked you to go with me to Jordan, or I asked you to go with me on this assignment and you said no, so a part of it is learning to say yes to something different, something that's new. Life's an adventure, just step up to the plate.

The second, I guess, message that comes from that is also to take care of this job, and it will take care of the next. Take care of this job, and it will take care of the next.

Back at Fort Rucker, we had General Odom, the Post Commander, he had a heart attack, and at that time when you had a heart attack your flying career was over. He was very upset. They said, who do we assign to him? Heck, give it to her. I asked General Odom if he would help me become a better pilot. That was his career. Now I'm on my way to Vietnam and now later -- I'll preempt the story a bit, but later they needed somebody to travel with Bob Hope and be his nurse in Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam, and they said Odom wrote a beautiful letter in your 201 file, so now you can travel with Hope. And eventually Mr. Hope wrote a beautiful letter, and it was in my file, so when they needed someone to manage the Presidential Suite, they said if you can take care of Odom and Hope, you certainly can take care of this group. My point being, my father and mother kept saying, "Take care of this job, and it will take care of the next."

Now, then we're on our way to Vietnam. Took us a long time to get there. When we took off in New Jersey at McGuire Air Force Base, another plane clipped our wings. Of course, we were full of fuel, we had to make an emergency landing, stay overnight in a hotel that they opened up for us. Had another breakdown in Anchorage, Alaska. By the time we got to Okinawa, I was now getting 707 time in their cockpit. Now it had been three days in the journey. I had my shoes off for three days, so I couldn't get

my pumps on. I looked like a raccoon with my makeup. Now, to the front of the aircraft we're approaching Vietnam, and these are my boys for three days. The boys came up to me. I was sitting in the front row, as would be expected. They came up, and no one was trying to be smart, but they came up and said, Mom, we're worried about you going to war. You, a woman, going into a war zone.

And I said, well, we have prepared as much as we can. You're in as much danger, so forth, and we talked. And they said, well, we're concerned, like what are you going to do for Tampax? And I said, well, they told us -- they weren't being silly -- and I said, well, they told us to bring a two months' supply, and they would make sure we got additional supplies.

And they said, well, we've been so concerned back there thinking about how are we going to take care of Mom. We have gotten this trash bag and gone to every bathroom in the plane and packed every Kotex, bar of soap, roll of toilet paper, put it in this bag and, they said, we would like you to have this as our gift. The pilots were concerned about the monsoon rain, and they were telling us, as soon as you land, run off of the plane quickly, get to the hanger, the red chairs and the blue chairs are going to be filled with people that are going to run. We're a big target. We're concerned, though, you're going to get drenched, so they cut a trash bag with a neck and two arms for me to wear. I reported into Vietnam wearing a trash bag, carrying a trash bag of Tampax, carrying my shoes, and reporting, yes, Captain Fritz. And he said, God dang, you-all look worse than the people that had been here for a year.

(Laughter)

The boys were taken in trucks to their spots. Mom, we're going to stay in touch with you. We have to protect and defend you. The Colonel that received us, we were in a Jeep and it's pouring; sandbags top side, and he said, I'm going to lock you in there, and unless you take a direct hit, you should be okay. All right. That was the longest night of my life, probably.

But, again, an infantry colonel said to me, can I just offer you advice on your priorities? I said, you sure can. He was third tour. I said, what would you want me to know? He said, your first priority is to save your own butt. Don't do anything stupid. Don't fly with a first-time pilot. He'll get you killed because he'll be showing off. And, two, then save as many other butts as you can, and, ma'am, the rest is crap. Stay focused on the two priorities.

And I don't mean that to sound rude. My apologies if it does. But the lesson for leadership is that's real critical. We've all worked in places, in organizations, where somebody puts 15 priorities on the table, and we're all pushing them ineffectively a little bit at a time rather than saying, we've got 15 on the board, but let's take two at a time, push them over the goal line, celebrate; and then let's take the next two so that we can really achieve and celebrate. So for me, the power of this has been a team of people can accomplish so much if you get your priorities clear.

Seven, now, I left Vietnam on a stretcher ten days before my year was up, and I was AirEvaced to Japan and then back to Walter Reed where I recovered, and then I was asked to manage the Presidential Suite. There, it was eight suites. Each suite was like a one-bed intensive care unit, and it had a living room, dining room, and patients were President, Vice President, Congressmen, Senators, Three, Four and Five-Star Generals, and foreign Heads of State. I thought, this is a renowned group of leaders; some that maybe politically, ideologically I would disagree with, but I'm going to do a research paper and ask

my patients at the right time what leadership lesson would they want me to learn if I were to be an effective leader.

One of my patients was Five-Star Omar Bradley. We know the name, wonderful man, known as "the soldier's soldier." I asked him that question one day, and he said, "Ma'am, the answer is easy. Leadership implies followership. If you turn around and nobody's there, you have a problem." And using military language, he said, "If they don't have the rations they need, the uniforms they need, the ammunition they need, the enemy is going to overrun your headquarters either, one, because they can't defend you; or, more sadly, they don't care to defend you." Powerful message: Leadership implies followership.

So for me in practice through these years it's been in whatever leadership role, take the troops along. Try to inspire, not drive. I always believe in hospitals I've done lots of rounding, because I think the front line knows the issues, and the front line knows how to solve them rather than us sitting up in the tower.

Eight, another patient that came to us was King Hussein of Jordan. I asked him that question. And he said, "I would want you to be wise, Captain Fritz. I would want you to be wise."

I said, how would I know that? Wisdom is knowing how to take two steps forward, one backward and still knowing you made progress. Don't be discouraged. I've had practice doing that here in the Middle East. Don't make anything a big deal. Patiently persevere knowing you are making progress.

Nine, now going to Jordan, this was a transition that His Majesty said, I want you to live and work in Jordan. This was negotiated with the State Department, the Department of Defense. He wanted me in a military spot. That was all negotiated, and he said, it's important to me that we have a star on your shoulder. I want to put you in a General slot. And I said why? And he said, well, there are three Arabic words you must know, and one of them, if you ask somebody to do something it's (speaking Arabic) "Never mind." And another one is (speaking Arabic) God willing. And another one is (speaking Arabic) "Tomorrow." So if I ask you to do something and you say (speaking Arabic) you would never have a shot of getting it done. And I want you to say (speaking Arabic) "I need it done now."

But first I did the assessment of the health status of families and worked on the systems at schools of nursing and assessment and development of 28 hospitals, and the focus all the time was make a difference. I was trying to talk with His Majesty about why do you have me do so many things? I'm a one-person band, and how can I get all of this done and have people feel that we're making -- and we are -- making a difference, and his suggestion, a powerful suggestion was "focus on each interaction, and be present."

Sometimes we meet people, and it's like before you answer, you're already to the next person; rather than, am I really present for you? When I'm a faculty member, am I present for you as a student? When I'm a hospital leader, am I present to the staff member that's trying to talk to me? I always suggest to people, make a difference one life at a time. Be present. And finally, make a difference -- and we can add on this one -- leave a legacy.

Since I've returned from Jordan, I still have a home there, but the full-time commitment in '89 as I mentioned and as Dennis mentioned, I've been teaching at four universities, have been the CEO or chief clinical officer at hospitals in the U.S., and now I'm back internationally. I'm frequently asked, why do you

still do this? Sometimes the question is: Do you plan to retire? And my response is always, every place I've ever been I could make a list of things I wish I had done differently, of lessons I wish I learned. And at this point I'm thinking, God, I just figured out how to do it. Why stop now at this point?

And I also think of the message that my parents sent me away from home with, and that was, "Go Where There is No Path and Leave a Trail."

Probably sounds dramatic as little kids, but my family back on the farm as we ended the day, my parents would sit with the two of us, and we would always have a short devotional and a prayer of the blessings of the day, and then one of my parents would look around to the four of us and say: What did you do today? Some of us know the prayer, "Now I lay me down to sleep. I play the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." And the question was, what did you do today that would make this world a better place? And for a little girl in fourth or third grade, maybe it was, I helped Susie find her sweater. But the point was, if we died tonight, did we make a difference?

Six gifts -- we'll wrap it up here -- six gifts that I have gained from being in the military -- and you'll notice I did have to do green boxes. I mean, I was in the Army after all. (Laughter)

The first one is a gift of Lifelong Learning. In five years from being an Army student nurse, I was suddenly a captain, military officer, a pilot and a combat veteran, to then eventually becoming a highly prepared RN. Before I went to Jordan, again, those 5 P's clicked in, prior planning, so I studied Arabic language, Islam, so through the G.I. Bill that paid not only for my bachelor's but also my master's and doctoral degree, the learning continues today.

The second gift is Lifelong Leader, from my command of my 199 men to learning from role models like General Bradley and King Hussein, I watched them as role models and good servant leaders. Three, Lifelong Colleagues, every one of us in this room that has been in the military, we know if we see someone with a service cap or some insignia or a decal on a car, there is an immediate shared experience.

The other evening I was at a restaurant, and a gentleman walked in and sat down just next to me with his wife and had on a cap that said "Vietnam Veteran." And I just leaned over and touched his arm and said, "So am I. Thank you for your service." And he began to cry. He said, "That's the first time anybody has ever said that to me."

Now, we all came in different eras, so I'm not claiming extra attention here at all, but when I was on that bus going as a patient on a stretcher going from Andrews Air Force Base to Walter Reed, people in Washington were throwing garbage cans at our bus, yelling, "Baby killers." That was my welcome home to the U.S. after serving. So in the Jordan Armed Forces when I went to work there, they said, this is a combat veteran. You are immediately welcome into our ranks.

Fourth, Lifelong Adventure. As I was walking around saying hello to people, we have many here who, just like me, have had 23, 24 addresses in their lives, 18, 24, whatever the number, and we've all been a part of a lifelong adventure. We've learned not to fear, sometimes to our own detriment. My boss, there's a colleague I worked with, Ron Marston was in Vietnam with me. We didn't know each other at the time, and Ron is in Nashville. Said, I love it, I can drop you off in any country, and it doesn't make a difference. My husband is frequently asked, aren't you worried about her going in Nigeria with ISIS or ISIL? I was on my way to the Philippines and a missionary had just been beheaded, and my husband

swims faithfully 45 minutes every day and sits in the jacuzzi with his buddies and they solve the problems of the world, which is good; we can all rest more comfortably (laughter) and they were asking him, aren't you worried about her being kidnapped? He said, she was in the military, has combat experience, she is weapons qualified, all of this; and if they captured her, she would go on this rant in Arabic, lecturing them about the Islamic religion and that their mothers would be disappointed. God knows, she wouldn't shut up. I think after 18 hours they would call me to take her back. (Laughter)

And in each of those places where they drop me off what I try to think is, what can I see and learn here that I couldn't in previous settings? And I know many of you have moved all over the world, and I bet with that same perspective.

Getting to the end, five, is Lifelong Calm. I came back, and you would have seen me just like this. I could start IVs where people didn't know there were vessels, but I wasn't going to hurt anymore. I was prepared at some level for death and for trauma, but I was not prepared for the mutilation. Received many casualties, went to villages where the Vietnamese had mutilated people leaving them to die, and I didn't feel at an emotional level for five years because that meant loss if you feel. I was part of 1,500 nurses, if you recall, 1,500 infantry, we were part of a study at the Harvard Physiological Lab. I cried; I cried easily, and people said, I'm so sorry. I said something, and you cried. Not a work-related thing, but like the flag. And I said, don't worry about me talking about these events or the flag. It's better to feel and to cry than not to feel. So my internal tape when things go wrong in a hospital or wherever I'm working is my own little internal tape, is this as bad as Vietnam? And so far, the answer is, no, we can figure this out.

Finally, a Lifelong Patriot. I am a flag-waver. If you ask me, what will you do on the 4th of July? We will be in Jordan at my second home there. But if we were here, my husband would say, we'll watch the Boston Pops. We may go over to the Surprise Fireworks, then we'll turn on Capitol Fourth, and we'll hear the Anthem and Winnie will cry.

I do. I get on the plane, no matter where I'm coming from, that can be Europe, Nigeria, Philippines, wherever, and I know how blessed I am to be coming back to this country. These are the precious gifts.

Finally, those are the lessons and the gifts that I offer to you. And to you that are receiving scholarships, congratulations. And as my parents sent me, I send you, "Go Where There is No Path and Leave a Trail." Thank you.

(Applause)

>> MIKE: Colonel Fritz, thank you so much for this inspiring message and the inspiring life you have led and continue to lead. All of our young people and not-so-young people here take your lessons to heart, as I have. We'd like to present you with a coin -- you probably have a bucket of these coins -- from the Luke Chapter. A token of appreciation. Thank you.

>> COL. FRITZ: Thank you very much.

>> MIKE: We have time for just a couple of questions. We do need to move on with the award presentations to the students, but would anyone like to ask a question or two of Colonel Fritz about her life or her lessons learned? Yes, sir, over here.

>> Have you recorded your story to the Library of Congress?

>> COL. FRITZ: I haven't. I haven't.

>> I urge you to do this. You have an unusual history, and historians need to know that story.

>> COL. FRITZ: Thank you. Okay. I will do that. Can I just mention one story? I was -- I don't know how that comment caused me to think about this. I mentioned the androgynous, remember that? When I went out to do the research, he said absolutely, go out there. The tent is about 40 by 60 feet and it's big, curtain in the middle, and one is the public side that you and I see in the movies with the carpet and the pillows and so forth, and on the other side is the mats for sleeping, kind of the tub for bathing, and the cooking ware.

And so here we were going to have this feast, and you sit on the floor, and you eat with your right hand. So like a circle table like this, and we're facing that way with your right hand; that's your clean hand, if you will. And so you're eating the rice and the meat, and the lamb's head is on the top of that, and there's a little yogurt sauce on that. I'm with another pilot, we land with the helicopter, and I'm in my flight suit and boots and we go in for the feast, sitting there. I happen to be the only female, and I am across from the Sheikh who has three families, and I'm talking to him in Arabic, and he's responding to his son on his right. Ask her, tell her, because I'm going to be doing physicals and asking questions of the men like, does it burn when you pee, and how many miscarriages, and I want him to know what is she asking this for and can I trust her with the information, and eventually he's looking at me and now talking to me. So as we proceeded in this meal, he finally says, my lady, (in Arabic) you look like a woman, but you act like a man. I'm going to call you "The Neutered General," and you can go on either side of the tent. And I'm known as "The Neutered One." Because I just wanted to be Winnie doing the job. So over there in certain areas I'm known as "The Neutered One."

>> MIKE: Question?

>> Did you ever go back and talk to the person who told you you weren't college material?

>> COL. FRITZ: Oh, yes, I did. Well, the question was: Did I ever talk to the person that said I wasn't college material? Actually, my high school in southern Illinois, they asked me to come back. They were establishing a charity in my honor for scholarships, and they said, we would like you to come back and speak. We have raised tens of thousands of dollars in your honor for scholarships, and would you come back and speak? And I went back and presented that evening, and it was a room like this with about 300 people or so in the room. And along the way in the question-and-answer period, somebody's question was: Who in the world at our school ever told you that?

And Mr. Stuckey was back there. Now, with great respect for this man, he stood up and he said, I have to tell you, I was the fool that said that. And look at what -- I mean, look at the mistake I made, and thankfully she has parents that ignored my counsel. And I was kind of surprised and impressed that he stood up and said: I am the fool that said that.

>> MIKE: Well, thank you again. We're going to need to move on, but thank you, Colonel Fritz. I hope the students here in particular will come around and say hello to Colonel Fritz after the evening is concluded and ask you questions. I know of a nurse with roots, family roots in Vietnam in your era, who has a student who intends to go to nursing school, and some others here would like to talk to you.

I also want to note that, as you can see, we're continuing the closed caption program. Kim is here doing a great job getting it all down. We're going to continue it next year. We took a survey of our members, and you all overwhelmingly supported continuation of this program that we have, so we will be

doing it again next year. Let me also add to that the closed caption summary, the dialogue that is being taken down, will be posted on our web page, along with Colonel Fritz' charts, with your permission, for anyone that wants to take a deeper dive into some of the lessons learned that she gave us tonight.