

Well , the moment for which the Department of Defense has long awaited is finally here. They have been begging me to leave for almost twelve years; Sending me letters annually telling me I was “Considered” but not selected for promotion but never fear the smartest and brightest assured me, I should still consider myself a valuable part of the team.

They were right! I WAS considered and not selected.

So I have decided to start this 12 hour speech (one hour for each time I was passed over for Lt Col) the same way I started yours, Mark and Joy, by giving thanks to God who gives each of us our very breath from moment to moment.

In the book of James, God Says:

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the **Father of Lights**, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow **of** turning.

Can I say that I am so very glad that in Him there is no ‘shadow of turning’ –which means not even a hint of changing His mind-for, if God were faithless like myself, I would have received no good and perfect gifts.

What are these good and perfect gifts I have received?

A mother and father that, through their imperfections, strove to ensure me I was loved by God and that I have been saved, I am being saved, and I will be saved by His grace.

A sister, who has always been “Johnny on the spot” during many critical times that life brings and is sharing life’s struggles with me as I go and learning to trust God along the way.

A wife, who puts up with me and took me in after a long and bitter divorce, who welcomed my two older children, Nicholas and Gio’annah, when the FBI delivered them to the door and who continues to have the family’s best interest in mind through the struggle that is ‘our life’.

6 beautiful children whom I love and continue to be consistently impatient with no matter how I try to like mayhem.

Great friends who are willing to travel long distances to stand with me as I retire and start wearing an oversized ball cap and carrying a clip board to all the air-shows, vigorously copying tail numbers of every plane in the US inventory.

By name

Jimmy Boswell, fellow graduate of USNA and flight school room-mate who has supported me through many unacceptable decisions and the repercussions associated with them. Who has remained a faithful friend for over 25 years.

Mark and Joy Mayerske, who while I was basically homeless in Oklahoma City treated me like part of their family and continue to do the same to this very day.

Michael Duane Deshazo, who give me a roof over my head while I virtually had only the clothes on my back. Who helped keep me moving down the road to the final goal and helped me see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Travis Burdine, who has been a loyal friend and made it a point to drag me along for the ride-who got me out of Vegas and into scenic Knob Gobbler. Who gave me a fictitious job title and let me feel important on the upper 18 inches.

There are no better examples of the good and perfect gifts that God has given me than these people along with a host of other friends and comrades that have helped shape the last 23 years both in the Navy and the Air Force.

Now I know everyone was looking forward to my meritorious promotion to Lite Colonel in charge of certain things, but I have decided to forgo this formality since I no longer wish to be in charge of anything specific except my lawn mower, my woman, and my motorcycle. Don't be discouraged though, all of you have the "chosen" ones to guide you through multiple changes for the betterment of the unit and the Air Force. And you have more frank and open SAPR discussions just ahead.

Now I was going to go through several hours of one way discussion on the evils of our government. My dad and I stayed up to the wee hours of the morning writing a huge list (bring up stack of paper); but, I will just add it to the book I am writing and you can order on Amazon later.

Instead I want to talk about the importance of this day. What significance does it really hold? I assert that it holds no real significance at all. No one will remember what has transpired here. My shadow box as I have mentioned, will be sold at some estate auction a few years down the road for \$3. Some guy will

put it in his man cave and make up lies about it like-You see all those air medals this guy got. He must have done something way harder than land on a carrier at night in stormy seas.

Now, why am I saying this? Because we are here for such a short time. Just yesterday I was young, had Elvis hair and gold chains and girls named Lucy who liked me. Today I am closing quickly on 50, and if I blink, I will be in my 70's. Life will be at an end and there is no stopping it. It won't make a difference what I did when I was young, how many landings or approaches I flew. How many ribbons or medals I have. None of that perseveres. It is all just the shadow of the past. Think, for a moment, about how many men and women have lived and died before us. They are like the sand on the seashore, uncountable. Many accomplished great or horrible things, things that have made our lives better or worse but in the end they passed into eternity.

I have observed that most people go through life ignoring the obvious end state that lies before them. They do their best to avoid conversations that go too deep or probe the recesses of their mind. They all keep the same shared secret quiet and down deep inside using platitudes from a convenient list they keep stored away for such awkward moments. Things like, 'Well at least she is no longer in pain AND Well he is in a better place now. These things mean nothing and are just meant to fill space until the weird moment is over.

But we are not going to fill the time allotted for me on this day with empty words. Not today, my friends. Not today. I am not going to talk about how great I am. What a wonderful and prosperous career I have had because in the end, it will mean nothing. It won't be remembered, not even a single word. Instead I am going to talk about something that will be with each and every one of you until you take your last breath. I am going to talk about my favorite subject ...death.

Why would I talk about such a morbid subject today, of all days? Because each of you have been tricked by me to be here and because it is my great desire to spend an eternity with each of you. This doesn't mean we are going steady or I have mushy feelings I have kept secret until today. I don't hide in the shadows like Saks. Instead, it means that I feel driven to share with you how important it is to consider your death. ...for it is coming and is almost upon each of us.

Now what happens when you die? This is an interesting subject. One to which people don't want to apply the same logic they apply to their everyday lives. I doubt anyone would take me up to the Sears tower in Chicago and tell me that they don't believe in gravity. They know it doesn't matter what they believe, gravity exists and they will look like a smashed pumpkin if they dare to prove otherwise. But these same people will tell you that you can believe whatever you want to about what happens after you die and that belief will be their reality. So, to make application, if I believe I am going to be a flying

monkey when I die, then that is the reality that is true for me. It may not apply to everyone, but if I believe it, then that makes it true as far as my afterlife is concerned.

This is the type of thinking that causes me to have a Candela Head Explosion. We all know this is not how this life works so why do we pretend that the same type of logic or wishful thinking will work for our trip over the rainbow? It will not. Every one of us sitting in this room knows there will be an accounting for what we have done while we lived. As a matter of fact, we demand and believe in this same justice when a man molests a two year old baby. We all know what is in store for this individual and we even hope it upon him.

Let me tell you something. I deserve the same hell as much as that man. I have done many many vile and corrupt things through-out my life and God is no respecter of persons. I have thought thoughts that are unacceptable and performed acts or said things which are disgraceful. Only you know what goes on in your own mind and soul. I am confessing to you the truth of mine. I venture to say that if we each had a Marquee which constantly scrolled our thoughts, we would want it covered up most of the time.

But I thank God that He has made of way for me and a way for you. He has made a way through the man Christ Jesus. What I cannot do, Jesus did. He lived a life that was without corruption and I am counting on the fact that God has replaced my Unfavorable Information File with the file of His son so that when I take my last breath, which is very close, I will not be found wanting. Instead I will be found guiltless. Guiltless of all the things I have done, said and thought. The same is available to each of you and I am encouraging you to consider it heavily. Do not pass it off. I am expecting and wanting to see each one of you and it is my sincere desire to spend eternity with you.

Now that is true retirement.

I want to conclude with this final thought. My friend, James Boswell's father died last month. I know that you and your mom miss him greatly. But I want to encourage you today in everyone's hearing; your husband and father knew the man Jesus Christ and was depending solely on this trust, no matter how weak it may have been in the times of doubt before his death, to gain him entrance into the kingdom of God, which happens to be as real as this room we sit in.

Retirement would mean nothing unless I can spend eternity with those of you for whom I care.

May the LORD Bless and keep you, may HIS face shine upon you and be gracious to you and your family, may the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.