

Broadside Blog

The heart of a Governor

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Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter and First Lady Lori Otter

There are a few times in life when you realize you are experiencing a rare and special moment. Last night was one of those times.

The Governor of Idaho, Governor Butch Otter, spoke to a gathering of Wyakin Warriors – wounded and injured veterans who have received scholarships as part of the **Wyakin Warrior** program – for their monthly professional training.

We asked him to speak about leadership and ethics, and to speak from the heart. To tell us what core beliefs he relied on to make the tough decisions that come with the job. He did not disappoint.

A little background. Governor Otter is a veteran, having served during the Vietnam years, and ever since has been a huge advocate of veteran issues. During a recent meeting of the Western Governors' Association, Governor Otter scheduled only one topic on the first and arguably most important day of the conference: veterans. He caught some flak for that, but stood firm. He said that veteran issues were his number one priority and he backed it up with action (see **Governors and Veterans**).

Last night he spoke from the heart.

He told us of his epiphany, a moment of truth when he came face-to-face with himself. A moment when he was confronted with a pivotal decision that would affect the rest of his life. His moment came during basic training in the late 60s, and he wanted to quit. The war had become unpopular and many Soldiers were dropping out. He could have too, but he didn't. At 0230 in the morning he made the personal decision to keep going, to serve his country. To follow through with the commitment he had made, and hold true to the core values he held within himself.

He stayed and he served.

That decision in the late 1960s put him on a path that led to success in business, state and federal congressional office, and eventually Governorship of his native state where he has served two terms as a popular Governor, known for his steadfast dedication to the Constitution.

Speaking of which, during a question and answer session following his talk, he recited passages from the Constitution from memory. He knew the articles and amendments and never looked at a note. He talked about the Cowboy Code of Ethics and could list each of the tenets from memory. His knowledge of American history and constitutional law impressed everyone in the room. But the fire with which he spoke was what mesmerized us all. No one doubted his passion or conviction.

When making a tough decision as Governor, he told us that he falls back on the three 'C's:

Conscience
Constitution
Constituency

When he is convinced a decision satisfies all three, he knows it is the right one.

It was a rare and candid view inside the heart of one of our nation's leaders, and we all came away with an appreciation not only for Butch Otter the Governor, but also – and especially – for Butch Otter the man.



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