

Remarks at the Presentation of  
the Order of the Long Leaf Pine

Wilmington City Hall - February 7, 2023

Thank you Mayor Saffo, and the City Council for this presentation. An extra special thanks to the Mayor for his wholehearted support of my history preservation efforts over the years.

I am a proud Wilmington native, grew up here during World War II, graduated from New Hanover High and the University of North Carolina. My memoir subtitle reads: A Born and Bred Carolina Tar Heel. This award represents my payback.

I need to thank four other people dear to my heart who are unable to be with us tonight.

First, my late wife of 54 years, Carroll Jones, who steadfastly encouraged and stood by my passion for public service to our country, my state, community, and World War II history, and perhaps tolerated my many projects and hours.

Second, to my late sweetheart and best friend of the last 9 years, Ann LaReau, who enthusiastically supported my efforts, and shared in their successes.

Next, my parents.

Oh how I appreciate their positive impact and influence on my life, the Christian ideals and work ethic they taught me. But, they never lived to see the accomplishments embodied in this award. My mother, a Wilmington native, was raised on “the wrong side of

the tracks” downtown.

My father, a World War I Navy veteran, was born and raised on a tenant farm in Onslow County.

In their early years, both were considered lower middle class, but they loved North Carolina. Neither were educated past the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, yet their works helped to shape Wilmington.

They would be immensely proud tonight, and to their memory and love for me, I dedicate this award. They rest in Oakdale Cemetery, but I feel them here.

As you know, the long leaf pine is our state’s tree and titles this award. My father loved its poem, and kept it on his office desk. The opening goes:

“Here’s to the land  
of the long leaf pine,  
The summer land  
where the sun doth shine,  
Where the weak grow strong  
and the strong grow great,  
Here’s to “down home”,  
the Old North State!”

Thank you, and good evening.