

EULOGY REMARKS DELIVERED BY ROBERT S. BEIGHTLER, JR.,  
AT GENERAL SWING'S MEMORIAL SERVICES AT THE PRESIDIO  
(COINCIDING WITH BURIAL OF GENERAL SWING AT  
ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY)

Thank you, Chaplain Gogl. General Arter, honored guests, fellow troopers of the 11th Airborne. I see a lot of you here today. I know our beloved General Swing is pleased. My name is Bob Beightler. I was a wet-behind-the-ears lieutenant, mostly platoon leader, in the 511th Parachute Inf, 11th ABN Div, throughout World War II.

I'd like to start by reading the Paratrooper's Prayer. If you listen carefully, you old troopers here will recognize in the words of this prayer some of the commands with which we all became very familiar 40 years ago. [Type in prayer]

The great man we honor here today lived a very long, full life--and he had an exceptionally long and distinguished military career--but although he went on to higher rank and higher position, the absolute highlight of that career was his command of the 11th ABN Division throughout World War II. At no time in his life did he have a greater responsibility: The lives of some 15,000 troopers were in his hands. Nor a greater challenge: A formidable, fanatic enemy was determined that he should fail.

Joe Swing was one of just a handful of pioneers in airborne warfare--along with Matt Ridgway, Maxwell Taylor, Jim Gavin--all men of extraordinary daring and imagination. He had the genius and vision to know the special kind of hardship that was ahead for his men, and he got us ready for it. Throughout those long months of training at Camp Mackall, Camp Polk, Camp Stoneman and Dobodura, New Guinea, he made it really tough--and he made us really tough, physically and mentally. When combat finally came --in Leyte and Luzon--we were ready for it, thanks to Joe Swing. We acquitted ourselves well. No division in the war fought better than we did. No division in the war was better led than we were.

Throughout those years of training and combat we all saw a lot of General Swing--he was never one to sit in the office and run his division from a desk--he seemed to be constantly out in the field with us, with the troops. We saw him as a tall, bronzed, handsome, silver-haired, almost godlike man who could do anything we could do, and do it better. He was demanding. We respected him, we feared him, we grew to love him.

I wish all you troopers out there could get up here and talk about your feelings--I know you'd like to, but our time is limited. But I think it is very fitting that one of us, a former private first class in the 11th Airborne, is with us here today and is going to say a few words. I think our beloved General is listening, and I know he's pleased. That PFC is now himself a major general. General Keith.