



The Panetta Institute for Public Policy

May 2, 2016

Mr. Victor Backer  
Media-Special Events Coordinator  
Valor Games Far West  
[Publicrelations@fwvaa.org](mailto:Publicrelations@fwvaa.org)

Dear Mr. Backer and Participants in the Valor Games Far West:

Thank you for inviting me once again to write the welcome letter for the 2016 *Valor Games Far West*. I am privileged to have this opportunity to thank you for your service to our great nation and to cheer you on as you rise above the challenges of your injuries to compete against your fellow heroes in the spirit of camaraderie and mutual support.

One of the greatest honors during my fifty-year career in public service was to serve as Secretary of Defense and to witness firsthand the dedication and courage of men and women like you who were willing to put their lives on the line in America's armed forces to insure the safety of our great nation. Each day I was able to witness incomparable examples of the type of leadership and character that it takes to be recognized as exceptional in an arena where so many are exceptional.

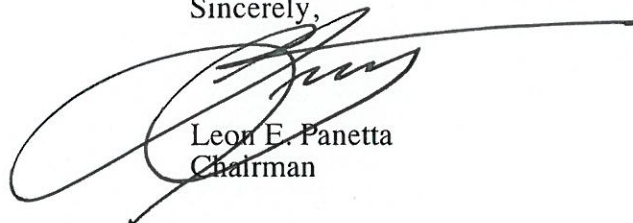
Most people think of courage as a warrior virtue, associated with battle where endurance, grit and determination are required and one's life is at stake. And, this is correct. However, you are exemplars today of the truth that courage is also demonstrated, as the great Roman statesman Seneca wrote, "when merely to live is itself an act of courage." In your lives you daily demonstrate the extraordinary perseverance that matches what you accomplished on the battlefield or in training exercises. The fact that you have not allowed grief, illness, disappointment, pain, struggle and loss to stop you from excelling is a tribute beyond words to express.

In fact, your resolve offers a resounding answer to that ultimate philosophical question: what is the meaning of life? The meaning of life is what each individual gives it! It consists in what you create through the identification and pursuit of endeavors that fit your talents, together with the relationships you form in the process.

You are gathered today to reveal a small portion of those talents along with the friendships that have provided you with the motivation to excel. May these games and the cherished memories they offer further enrich your lives and the lives of those you love.

Good luck and may God bless you!

Sincerely,



Leon E. Panetta  
Chairman

LEP:rk