

MILITARY RECORDS AND THE PRESIDENCY

“It is erroneous to think that military service is somehow a qualification for the presidency,” said Dr. Steven Porter, independent candidate for Congress in the third district of Pennsylvania. “We have had great presidents and poor presidents who have served in the military and great presidents and poor presidents who have not.

“Military service is to be honored by all who have served. But it is not the only way to measure service to one’s nation. Teachers who work a lifetime at substandard pay also serve. Doctors who save patients also serve. Mothers who sacrifice every day for their kids serve. Artists who allow us to see more clearly and to feel the emotions which we can’t express for ourselves serve. Every citizen who does a good job serves in some way.

“John McCain’s service in Vietnam was great. His sacrifices were heroic. But that doesn’t make him any more an expert on foreign policy or national security than it made my father who was severely wounded in the Second World War. My father was a terrific writer, but he would hardly have made a good president with or without his war wounds.

“McCain has been on the wrong side of the Iraq conflict from the get-go, and his prescription for peace is to me as daffy as his support of Bush’s lunacy. Saying that doesn’t detract a bit from his heroism or service. But heroism is not insight and service alone is not a guarantor of profound leadership.

“The time that the media and the candidates are spending on these irrelevant issues detracts from the time they ought to be spending discussing real plans for solving the many crises we face. How are we going to make Social Security solvent? How do we combat the root causes of terrorism? How do we meaningfully address our energy problems? How do we deal with global warming? How do we get affordable health care to all of our citizens? How do we stop illegal immigration? Aren’t these more pressing than discussions of military credentials?

“I think they are. I hope you do, too.”