

## Earning a Desk

### What a humbling lesson to be a reminder to all of us...

#### EARNING A DESK

Back in September of 2005, on the first day of school, Martha Cothren, a social studies school teacher at Robinson High School in Little Rock, did something not to be forgotten. On the first day of school, with the permission of the school superintendent, the principal and the building supervisor, she removed all of the desks out of her classroom. When the first period kids entered the room they discovered that there were no desks. Looking around, confused, they asked, 'Ms. Cothren, where're our desks?'

This is a true story.... If you can read this – thank a teacher! If you can read it in English – thank a soldier! If you can understand the message – Thank God!

A veteran – whether active duty, retired, national guard or reserve – is someone who, at one point in their life, signed a blank check made payable to 'The United States of America', for an amount of 'up to and including my life.' That is Honor, and there are way too many people in this country who no longer understand it.

She replied, 'You can't have a desk until you tell me what you have done to earn the right to sit at a desk.' They thought, 'Well, maybe it's our grades.' 'No,' she said. 'Maybe it's our behavior.' She told them, 'No, it's not even your behavior.'

And so, they came and went, the first period, second period, third period, still no desks in the classroom.

By early afternoon television news crews had started gathering in Ms. Cothren's classroom to report about this crazy teacher who had taken all the desks out of her room.

The final period of the day came and as the puzzled students found seats on the floor of the deskless classroom, Martha Cothren said, 'Throughout the day no one has been able to tell me just what he/she has done to earn the right to sit at the desks that are ordinarily found in this classroom. Now I am going to tell you.'

At this point, Martha Cothren went over to the door of her classroom and opened it. Twenty-seven (27) U.S. Veterans, all in uniforms, walked into that classroom, each one carrying a school desk. The Vets began placing the school desks in rows, and then they would walk over and stand alongside the wall. By the time the last Soldier had set the final desk in place those kids started to understand, perhaps for the first time in their lives, just how the right to sit at those desks had been earned

Martha said, 'You didn't earn the right to sit at these desks. These heroes did it for you. They placed the desks here for you. Now, it's up to you to sit in them. It is your responsibility to learn, to be good students, to be good citizens. They paid the price so that you could have the freedom to get an education. Don't ever forget it.'