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Last Updated: 04/29/2024

(Noonan/RR)
May 30, 1984
2:00 p.m.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: POINTE DU HOC
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 6, 1984

We are here to mark that day in history when the Allied armies joined in battle to reclaim this continent to liberty. For 4 long years, much of Europe had been under a terrible shadow. Free nations had fallen, Jews cried out in the camps, millions cried out for liberation. Europe was enslaved, and the world prayed for its rescue. Here, in Normandy, the rescue began. Here the West stood, and fought against tyranny in a giant undertaking unparalleled in human history.

We stand on a lonely, windswept point on the northern shore of France. As I speak, the air is soft and full of sunlight. But 40 years ago at this moment, the air was dense with smoke and the cries of men, the air was filled with the crack of rifle fire and the roar of cannon. At dawn on the morning of the 6th of June, 1944, 225 American Rangers jumped off a British landing craft and ran to the bottom of these cliffs. Their mission was one of the most difficult and daring of the Invasion: to climb these sheer and desolate cliffs and take out the enemy guns. The Allies had been told that the mightiest of those guns were here, and they would be trained on the beaches to stop the Allied advance.

The Rangers looked up and saw the enemy soldiers at the edge of the cliffs shooting down at them with machine guns and throwing grenades. And the American Rangers began to climb. They shot rope ladders over the face of these cliffs and they began to pull themselves up. And when one Ranger would fall another would take his place, and when one rope was cut a Ranger

would grab another and begin his climb again. They climbed and shot back and held their footing; and in time the enemy pulled back; in time the Rangers held the cliffs; and soon, one by one, the Rangers pulled themselves over the top -- and in seizing the firm land at the top of these cliffs they began to seize back the continent of Europe.

Forty years ago as I speak they were fighting to hold these cliffs. They had radioed back and asked for reinforcements. They were told: There aren't any. But they did not give up. It was not in them to give up. They would not be turned back; they held the cliffs.

Two hundred twenty-five came here. After a day of fighting only 90 could still bear arms.

I stand here today before the survivors of that battle. These are the boys of Pointe du Hoc. These are the men who took the cliffs. These are the champions who helped free a continent; these are the heroes who helped end a war.

Gentlemen, I look at you and I think of the words of Stephen Spender's poem. You are men who in your "lives fought for life . . . and left the vivid air signed with (your) honor."

And I think I know what you're thinking right now. You're thinking, "But we were just part of a bigger effort, and everyone was brave that day."

Everyone was. The heroism of all the Allies of D-Day was boundless, but there was another quality to it, not only of size but of spirit.

Do you remember Bill Millin of the 51st Scottish Highlanders? Forty years ago today, British troops were pinned

down near a bridge outside Caen. They were waiting desperately for reinforcements, when suddenly they heard the sound of bagpipes wafting through the air. Some of them thought it was a dream. But they looked up, and there was Bill Millin with his bagpipes, marching at the head of the reinforcements, ignoring the smack of the bullets into the sand around him. Lord Lovat was with him -- Lord Lovat of England, leading his commandos. When he got to the bridge Lord Lovat calmly announced, "Sorry I'm a few minutes late." As if he'd been delayed by bad weather or a traffic jam. When in truth he'd just come from the bloody fighting on Sword Beach, which he and his men had just taken.

There was the young Frenchman, Michel de Vallavielle, who had been confined by the Germans in his home. When the Invasion began he defied the enemy patrols, broke the curfew, and ran to the beach to tell the Allied troops where the enemy guns were hidden.

There was Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Vandervoort of the All-American 82nd Airborne, who broke his leg when he parachuted on to French soil. So he commandeered a small farm cart and ordered his men to wheel him on to the battlefield.

There was the impossible valor of the Poles, who threw themselves between the enemy and the rest of Europe as the Invasion took hold. And the unsurpassed courage of the Canadians, the only troops who knew exactly what they would face when they hit the beaches. Two years before, their countrymen had been slaughtered at Dieppe. They knew what awaited them here, but they would not be deterred, and once they hit Juno Beach they never looked back.

The men of Normandy were part of a roll call of honor, with names that spoke of a pride as bright as the colors they bore: the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, Poland's 24th Lancers, the Royal Scots Fusiliers, the 2nd Ranger Battalion, the Yeomen of England's armoured divisions, the forces of Free France, the Regiment de Chars de Combat, the Screaming Eagles . . .

What inspired the men of the armies that met here? What impelled them to put all thought of self-preservation behind, and risk their lives to take these beaches and hold these cliffs?

It was faith and belief; it was loyalty and love. It was faith that what they were doing was right, faith that they fought for all humanity, faith that a just God would grant them mercy on this beachhead -- or the next. It was the deep knowledge (and pray God we have not lost it) that there is a profound moral difference between the use of force for liberation and the use of force for conquest. They were here to liberate, not to conquer, and so they did not doubt their cause. And they were right not to doubt.

They knew that some things are worth dying for -- that one's country is worth dying for and that democracy is worth dying for, because it is the most deeply honorable form of Government ever devised by man. They loved liberty and they were happy to fight tyranny. And they knew the people of their countries were behind them.

The Americans who fought here that morning knew that word of the Invasion was spreading through the darkness back home. And they knew in their hearts, though they could not know in fact, that in Georgia they were filling the churches at 4 a.m., and in

Kansas they were kneeling on their porches and praying, and in Philadelphia they were ringing the Liberty Bell.

Something else helped the men of D-Day. It was the rockhard belief that Providence would have a great hand in the events that would unfold here; that God was an ally in this great cause. And, so, the night before the Invasion, when Colonel Wolverton asked his parachute troops to kneel with him in prayer he told them: Do not bow your heads but look up so you can see God and ask His blessing in what we are about to do. And in another part of England that night General Mathew Ridgeway tossed on his cot and talked to his God and listened for the promise made to Joshua: "I will not fail thee nor forsake thee."

These are the things that impelled them; these are the things that shaped the unity of the West. And with that unity the West could not be stopped.

When the war was over there were lives to be rebuilt and governments to be returned to the people -- there were nations to be reborn and above all, there was a new peace to be assured. These were huge and daunting tasks. But the Allies summoned strength from the faith and belief and loyalty and love of those who fell here. And they rebuilt a new Europe together.

There was first a great reconciliation, not only of those who had been enemies in the war, but also of those nations which had been torn for centuries by rivalries of territory and religion and power. Those rivalries were interred on these beaches.

Inspired by the gallantry of the men who fought the war, the United States created the Marshall Plan to help rebuild our

allies and our former enemies. The Marshall Plan led to the Atlantic Alliance -- a great alliance that functions to this day as a shield for democracy and for prosperity.

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Because of this, Allied forces still stand on this continent. But our armies are here only to protect and defend democracy -- and never to take land that is not ours. The only land we hold is the graveyards where our heroes rest.

We in America have learned the bitter lessons of two world wars: that it is better to be here and ready to preserve and protect the peace, than to take blind shelter in our homes across the sea, rushing to respond only after freedom has been lost. We have learned that isolationism never was and never will be an acceptable response to tyrannical governments with expansionist intent.

But we try always to prepare for peace. That is why we maintain our defenses and that is why we have tried to negotiate the reduction of arms.

In truth there is no reconciliation we would welcome more than a reconciliation with the Soviet Union, so that together we can lessen the chance of conflict, now and forever.

I tell you from my heart that we in the United States do not want war. We want to wipe from the face of the Earth the terrible weapons man now has in his hands. I tell you we are ready to seize that beachhead -- but there must be some sign from the Soviet Union that they are willing to move forward, that they share our desire and love for peace, that they will give up the ways of conquest. There must be a changing there that will allow us to turn our hope into action.

We will pray forever that some day that changing will come. But for now -- and particularly today -- it is good and fitting for us to renew our commitment to each other, to our freedom, and to the alliance that protects it.

We are bound still by what bound us 40 years ago, bound by the same loyalties, traditions and beliefs. We are bound by reality: The strength of America's allies is still vital to the future of the United States. And the American security guarantee is still essential to the continued freedom of Europe's democracies. The Allies of 40 years ago are allies still. Your destiny is our destiny, and your hopes are our hopes.

Here, in this place where the West stood together, let us make a vow to our dead. Let us show them by our actions that we understand what they died for; let our actions say to them the words for which Mathew Ridgeway listened: "I will not fail thee nor forsake thee."

Strengthened by their courage, heartened by their valor and borne by their memory, let us continue to stand for the ideals for which they lived and died.

Thank you all very much.

(Noonan/RR)
May 30, 1984
2:00 p.m.

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Strengthened by their courage, heartened by their valor and borne by their memory, let us continue to stand for the ideals for which they lived and died.


Thank you all very much.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 30, 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR BEN ELLIOTT

FROM: PEGGY NOONAN 
SUBJECT: Pointe du Hoc changes

Here is the final version of the Pointe du Hoc address. Most of the changes suggested by State and NSC had to do with points of style (such as changing "millions cried out for liberation" to "millions sought liberation"). I incorporated those suggestions I judged to be an improvement and rejected the rest. In all, I'd say I accepted 50 percent.

Bob Kimmit, who seems to speak for both State and NSC on these matters, suggested two changes dealing with substance. He suggested we add a graph at the end of page six, saying: "It is fitting here to remember also the great sacrifices made by the Russian people during World War II. Their terrible loss of 20 million lives testifies to all the world the necessity of avoiding another war."

I have not incorporated this suggestion because it is irrelevant (the subject here is Normandy, and the Russians weren't at that party), unneeded (brings up the whole new topic of what losses each nation suffered in the war when we don't talk about the millions of French, British, German and American dead), and . . . it has that egregious sort of special pleading ring that just stops the flow; it sounds like we stopped the speech dead to throw a fish to the bear.

Kimmit also asks that we add a line at the end of full paragraph two, page 6: "D-Day marked the beginning of an enduring American commitment to European security." I did not incorporate this because of time considerations and also because I feel the passage already makes that point.

Finally, Bud McFarlane suggested a number of stylistic changes. I accepted four of them (things like changing the "boom" of the cannon to the "roar" of the cannon) and rejected one. Bud wants us to change the last sentence of the speech from "borne by their memory" to "sustained by their sacrifice". I prefer "borne . . ." because it is more personal, more lyrical and more positive. Better to be borne that sustained, I always say.

That's it.

(Noonan/BE)
May 25, 1984
12:30 p.m.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: POINTE DU HOC
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 6, 1984

We are here to mark that day in history when the Allied armies joined in battle to reclaim this continent to liberty. For 4 long years, much of Europe had been under a terrible shadow. Free nations had fallen, Jews cried out in the camps, millions cried out for liberation. Europe was enslaved, and the world ~~waited~~^{prayed} for its rescue. Here, in Normandy, the rescue began. Here the West stood, and fought against tyranny in a giant undertaking unparalleled in human history.

We stand on a lonely, windswept point on the northern shore of France. As I speak, the air is soft and full of sunlight. But 40 years ago at this moment, the air was dense with smoke and the cries of men, the air was filled with the crack of rifle fire and the ~~boom~~^{roar} of cannons. At dawn on the morning of the 6th of June, 1944, 225 American Rangers jumped off a British landing craft and ran to the bottom of these cliffs. Their mission was one of the most difficult and daring of the Invasion: to climb these sheer and desolate cliffs and take out the enemy guns. The Allies had been told that the mightiest of those guns were here, and they would be trained on the beaches to stop the Allied advance.

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would grab another and begin his climb again. They climbed and shot back and held their footing; and in time the enemy pulled back; in time the Rangers held the cliffs; and soon, one by one, the Rangers pulled themselves over the top -- and in seizing the firm land at the top of these cliffs they began to seize back the continent of Europe.

Forty years ago as I speak they were fighting to hold these cliffs. They had radioed back and asked for reinforcements. They were told: There aren't any. But they did not give up. It was not in them to give up. They would not be turned back; they held the cliffs.

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And I think I know what you're thinking right now. You're thinking, "But we were just part of a bigger effort, and everyone was brave that day."

Everyone was. The heroism of all the Allies of D-Day was boundless, but there was another quality to it, not only of size but of spirit.

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down near a bridge outside Caen. They were waiting desperately for reinforcements, when suddenly they heard the sound of bagpipes wafting through the air. Some of them thought it was a dream. But they looked up, and there was Bill Millin with his bagpipes, marching at the head of the reinforcements, ignoring the smack of the bullets into the sand around him. Lord Lovat was with him -- Lord Lovat of England, leading his commandos. When he got to the bridge Lord Lovat calmly announced, "Sorry I'm a few minutes late." As if he'd been delayed by bad weather or a traffic jam. When in truth he'd just come from the bloody fighting on Sword Beach, which he and his men had just ~~taken~~ ^{staken}.

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We will pray forever that some day that changing will come. But for now -- and particularly today -- it is good and fitting for us to renew our commitment to each other, to our freedom, and to the alliance that protects it.

We are bound still by what bound us 40 years ago, bound by the same loyalties, traditions and beliefs. We are bound by reality: The strength of America's allies is still vital to the future of the United States. And the American security guarantee is still essential to the continued freedom of Europe's democracies. The Allies of 40 years ago are allies still. Your destiny is our destiny, and your hopes are our hopes.

Here, in this place where the West stood together, let us make a vow to our dead. Let us show them by our actions that we understand what they died for; let our actions say to them the words for which Mathew Ridgeway listened: "I will not fail thee nor forsake thee."

Strengthened by their courage, heartened by their valor and borne by their memory, let us continue to stand for the ideals for which they lived and died.

Thank you all very much.

(Noonan/BE)
May 25, 1984
12:30 p.m.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: POINTE DU HOC
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 6, 1984

We are here to mark that day in history when the Allied armies joined in battle to reclaim this continent to liberty. For 4 long years, much of Europe had been under a terrible shadow. Free nations had fallen, Jews cried out in the camps, millions cried out for liberation. Europe was enslaved, and the world ~~waited~~^{prayed} for its rescue. Here, in Normandy, the rescue began. Here the West stood, and fought against tyranny in a giant undertaking unparalleled in human history.

We stand on a lonely, windswept point on the northern shore of France. As I speak, the air is soft and full of sunlight. But 40 years ago at this moment, the air was dense with smoke and the cries of men, the air was filled with the crack of rifle fire and the ~~boom~~^{roar} of cannons. At dawn on the morning of the 6th of June, 1944, 225 American Rangers jumped off a British landing craft and ran to the bottom of these cliffs. Their mission was one of the most difficult and daring of the Invasion: to climb these sheer and desolate cliffs and take out the enemy guns. The Allies had been told that the mightiest of those guns were here, and they would be trained on the beaches to stop the Allied advance.

The Rangers looked up and saw the enemy soldiers at the edge of the cliffs shooting down at them with machine guns and throwing grenades. And the American Rangers began to climb. They shot rope ladders over the face of these cliffs and they began to pull themselves up. And when one Ranger would fall another would take his place, and when one rope was cut a Ranger

would grab another and begin his climb again. They climbed and shot back and held their footing; and in time the enemy pulled back; in time the Rangers held the cliffs; and soon, one by one, the Rangers pulled themselves over the top -- and in seizing the firm land at the top of these cliffs they began to seize back the continent of Europe.

Forty years ago as I speak they were fighting to hold these cliffs. They had radioed back and asked for reinforcements. They were told: There aren't any. But they did not give up. It was not in them to give up. They would not be turned back; they held the cliffs.

Two-hundred twenty-five came here. After a day of fighting only 90 could still bear arms.

I stand here today before the survivors of that battle. These are the boys of Pointe du Hoc. These are the men who took the cliffs. These are the champions who helped free a continent; these are the heroes who helped end a war.

Gentlemen, I look at you and I think of the words of Stephen Spender's poem. You are men who in your "lives fought for life . . . and left the vivid air signed with(your) honor."

And I think I know what you're thinking right now. You're thinking, "But we were just part of a bigger effort, and everyone was brave that day."

Everyone was. The heroism of all the Allies of D-Day was boundless, but there was another quality to it, not only of size but of spirit.

Do you remember Bill Millin of the 51st Scottish Highlanders? Forty years ago today, British troops were pinned

down near a bridge outside Caen. They were waiting desperately for reinforcements, when suddenly they heard the sound of bagpipes wafting through the air. Some of them thought it was a dream. But they looked up, and there was Bill Millin with his bagpipes, marching at the head of the reinforcements, ignoring the smack of the bullets into the sand around him. Lord Lovat was with him -- Lord Lovat of England, leading his commandos. When he got to the bridge Lord Lovat calmly announced, "Sorry I'm a few minutes late." As if he'd been delayed by bad weather or a traffic jam. When in truth he'd just come from the bloody fighting on Sword Beach, which he and his men had just ~~taken~~ taken.

There was the young Frenchman, Michel de Vallavielle, who had been confined by the Germans in his home. When the Invasion began he defied the enemy patrols, broke the curfew, and ran to the beach to tell the Allied troops where the enemy guns were hidden.

There was Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Vandervoort of the All American 82nd Airborne, who broke his leg when he parachuted on to French soil. So he commandeered a small farm cart and ordered his men to wheel him on to the battlefield.

There was the impossible valor of the Poles, who threw themselves between the enemy and the rest of Europe as the Invasion took hold. And the unsurpassed courage of the Canadians, the only troops who knew exactly what they would face when they hit the beaches. Two years before, their countrymen had been slaughtered at Dieppe. They knew what awaited them here, but they would not be deterred, and once they hit Juno Beach they never looked back.

The men of Normandy were part of a roll call of honor, with names that spoke of a pride as bright as the colors they bore: the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, Poland's 24th Lancers, the Royal Scots Fusiliers, the 2nd Ranger Battalion, the Yeomen of England's armoured divisions, the forces of Free France, the Regiment de Chars de Combat, the Screaming Eagles . . .

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They knew that some things are worth dying for -- that one's country is worth dying for and that democracy is worth dying for, because it is the most deeply honorable form of Government ever devised by man. They loved liberty and they were happy to fight tyranny. And they knew the people of their countries were behind them.

The Americans who fought here that morning knew that word of the Invasion was spreading through the darkness back home. And they knew in their hearts, though they could not know in fact, that in Georgia they were filling the churches at 4 a.m., and in

Kansas they were kneeling on their porches and praying, and in Philadelphia they were ringing the Liberty Bell.

Something else helped the men of D-Day. It was the rockhard belief that Providence would have a great hand in the events that would unfold here; that God was an ally in this great cause. And, so, the night before the Invasion, when Colonel Wolverton asked his parachute troops to kneel with him in prayer he told them: Do not bow your heads but look up so you can see God and ask His blessing in what we are about to do. And in another part of England that night General Mathew Ridgeway tossed on his cot and talked to his God and listened for the promise made to Joshua: "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

These are the things that impelled them; these are the things that shaped the unity of the West. And with that unity the West could not be stopped.

When the war was over there were lives to be rebuilt and governments to be returned to the people -- there were nations to be reborn and above all, there was a new peace to be assured. These were huge and daunting tasks. But the Allies summoned strength from the faith and belief and loyalty and love of those who fell here. And they rebuilt a new Europe together.

There was first a great reconciliation, not only of those who had been enemies in the war, but also of those nations which had been torn for centuries by rivalries of territory and religion and power. Those rivalries were interred on these beaches.

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Because of this, Allied forces still stand on this continent. But our armies are here only to protect and defend democracy -- and never to take land that is not ours. The only land we hold is the graveyards where our heroes rest.

We in America have learned the bitter lessons of two world wars: that it is better to be here and ready to preserve and protect the peace, than to take blind shelter in our homes across the sea, rushing to respond only after freedom ^{has been lost,} ~~is threatened.~~ We have learned that isolationism never was and never will be an acceptable response to tyrannical governments with expansionist intent.

But we try always to prepare for peace. That is why we maintain our defenses and that is why we have tried to negotiate the ^{reduction} ~~control~~ of arms.

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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS: POINTE DU HOC
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 6, 1984

We are here to mark that day in history when the Allied armies joined in battle to reclaim this continent to liberty. For 4 long years, much of Europe had been under a terrible shadow. Free nations had fallen, Jews cried out in the camps, millions cried out for liberation. Europe was enslaved, and the world waited for its rescue. Here, in Normandy, the rescue began. Here the West stood, and fought against tyranny in a giant undertaking unparalleled in human history.

We stand on a lonely, windswept point on the northern shore of France. As I speak, the air is soft and full of sunlight. But 40 years ago at this moment, the air was dense with smoke and the cries of men, the air was filled with the crack of rifle fire and the boom of cannons. At dawn on the morning of the 6th of June, 1944, 225 American Rangers jumped off a British landing craft and ran to the bottom of these cliffs. Their mission was one of the most difficult and daring of the Invasion: to climb these sheer and desolate cliffs and take out the enemy guns. The Allies had been told that the mightiest of those guns were here, and they would be trained on the beaches to stop the Allied advance.

The Rangers looked up and saw the enemy soldiers at the edge of the cliffs shooting down at them with machine guns and throwing grenades. And the American Rangers began to climb. They shot rope ladders over the face of these cliffs and they began to pull themselves up. And when one Ranger would fall another would take his place, and when one rope was cut a Ranger

would grab another and begin his climb again. They climbed and shot back and held their footing; and in time the enemy pulled back; in time the Rangers held the cliffs; and soon, one by one, the Rangers pulled themselves over the top -- and in seizing the firm land at the top of these cliffs they began to seize back the continent of Europe.

Forty years ago as I speak they were fighting to hold these cliffs. They had radioed back and asked for reinforcements. They were told: There aren't any. But they did not give up. It was not in them to give up. They would not be turned back; they held the cliffs.

Two-hundred twenty-five came here. After a day of fighting only 90 could still bear arms.

I stand here today before the survivors of that battle. These are the boys of Pointe du Hoc. These are the men who took the cliffs. These are the champions who helped free a continent; these are the heroes who helped end a war.

Gentlemen, I look at you and I think of the words of Stephen Spender's poem. You are men who in your "lives fought for life . . . and left the vivid air signed with your honor."

And I think I know what you're thinking right now. You're thinking, "But we were just part of a bigger effort, and everyone was brave that day."

Everyone was. The heroism of all the Allies of D-Day was boundless, but there was another quality to it, not only of size but of spirit.

Do you remember Bill Millin of the 51st Scottish Highlanders? Forty years ago today, British troops were pinned

down near a bridge outside Caen. They were waiting desperately for reinforcements, when suddenly they heard the sound of bagpipes wafting through the air. Some of them thought it was a dream. But they looked up, and there was Bill Millin with his bagpipes, marching at the head of the reinforcements, ignoring the smack of the bullets into the sand around him. Lord Lovat was with him -- Lord Lovat of England, leading his commandos. When he got to the bridge Lord Lovat calmly announced, "Sorry I'm a few minutes late." As if he'd been delayed by bad weather or a traffic jam. When in truth he'd just come from the bloody fighting on Sword Beach, which he and his men had just taken.

There was the young Frenchman, Michel de Vallavielle, who had been confined by the Germans in his home. When the Invasion began he defied the enemy patrols, broke the curfew, and ran to the beach to tell the Allied troops where the enemy guns were hidden.

There was Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Vandervoort of the All American 82nd Airborne, who broke his leg when he parachuted on to French soil. So he commandeered a small farm cart and ordered his men to wheel him on to the battlefield.

There was the impossible valor of the Poles, who threw themselves between the enemy and the rest of Europe as the Invasion took hold. And the unsurpassed courage of the Canadians, the only troops who knew exactly what they would face when they hit the beaches. Two years before, their countrymen had been slaughtered at Dieppe. They knew what awaited them here, but they would not be deterred, and once they hit Juno Beach they never looked back.

The men of Normandy were part of a roll call of honor, with names that spoke of a pride as bright as the colors they bore: the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, Poland's 24th Lancers, the Royal Scots Fusiliers, the 2nd Ranger Battalion, the Yeomen of England's armoured divisions, the forces of Free France, the Regiment de Chars de Combat, the Screaming Eagles . . .

What inspired the men of the armies that met here? What impelled them to put all thought of self-preservation behind, and risk their lives to take these beaches and hold these cliffs?

It was faith and belief; it was loyalty and love. It was faith that what they were doing was right, faith that they fought for all humanity, faith that a just God would grant them mercy on this beachhead -- or the next. It was the deep knowledge (and pray God we have not lost it) that there is a profound moral difference between the use of force for liberation and the use of force for conquest. They were here to liberate, not to conquer, and so they did not doubt their cause. And they were right not to doubt.

They knew that some things are worth dying for -- that one's country is worth dying for and that democracy is worth dying for, because it is the most deeply honorable form of Government ever devised by man. They loved liberty and they were happy to fight tyranny. And they knew the people of their countries were behind them.

The Americans who fought here that morning knew that word of the Invasion was spreading through the darkness back home. And they knew in their hearts, though they could not know in fact, that in Georgia they were filling the churches at 4 a.m., and in

Kansas they were kneeling on their porches and praying, and in Philadelphia they were ringing the Liberty Bell.

Something else helped the men of D-Day. It was the rockhard belief that Providence would have a great hand in the events that would unfold here; that God was an ally in this great cause. And, so, the night before the Invasion, when Colonel Wolverton asked his parachute troops to kneel with him in prayer he told them: Do not bow your heads but look up so you can see God and ask His blessing in what we are about to do. And in another part of England that night General Mathew Ridgeway tossed on his cot and talked to his God and listened for the promise made to Joshua: "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

These are the things that impelled them; these are the things that shaped the unity of the West. And with that unity the West could not be stopped.

When the war was over there were lives to be rebuilt and governments to be returned to the people -- there were nations to be reborn and above all, there was a new peace to be assured. These were huge and daunting tasks. But the Allies summoned strength from the faith and belief and loyalty and love of those who fell here. And they rebuilt a new Europe together.

There was first a great reconciliation, not only of those who had been enemies in the war, but also of those nations which had been torn for centuries by rivalries of territory and religion and power. Those rivalries were interred on these beaches.

Inspired by the gallantry of the men who fought the war, the United States created the Marshall Plan to help rebuild our

allies and our former enemies. The Marshall Plan led to the Atlantic Alliance -- a great alliance that functions to this day as a shield for democracy and for prosperity.

In spite of our great efforts and our great successes, not all of what followed the end of the war was happy, or planned. Some of the countries that had been liberated were lost. The great sadness of that fact echoes down to our own time in the streets of Warsaw, Prague, and East Berlin. The Soviet troops that came to the center of this continent did not leave when peace came. They are there to this day, uninvited, unwanted, and unyielding almost 40 years after the war.

Because of this, Allied forces still stand on this continent. But our armies are here only to protect and defend democracy -- and never to take land that is not ours. The only land we hold is the graveyards where our heroes rest.

We in America have learned the bitter lessons of two world wars: that it is better to be here and ready to preserve and protect the peace, than to take blind shelter in our homes across the sea, rushing to respond only after freedom is threatened. We have learned that isolationism never was and never will be an acceptable response to tyrannical governments with expansionist intent.

But we try always to prepare for peace. That is why we maintain our defenses and that is why we have tried to negotiate the control of arms.

In truth there is no reconciliation we would welcome more than a reconciliation with the Soviet Union, so that together we can lessen the chance of conflict, now and forever.

I tell you from my heart that we in the United States do not want war. We want to wipe from the face of the Earth the terrible weapons man now has in his hands. I tell you we are ready to seize that beachhead -- but there must be some sign from the Soviet Union that they are willing to move forward, that they share our desire and love for peace, that they will give up the ways of conquest. There must be a changing there that will allow us to turn our hope into action.

We will pray forever that some day that changing will come. But for now -- and particularly today -- it is good and fitting for us to renew our commitment to each other, to our freedom, and to the alliance that protects it.

We are bound still by what bound us 40 years ago, bound by the same loyalties, traditions and beliefs. We are bound by reality: The strength of America's allies is still vital to the future of the United States. And the American security guarantee is still essential to the continued freedom of Europe's democracies. The Allies of 40 years ago are allies still. Your destiny is our destiny, and your hopes are our hopes.

Here, in this place where the West stood together, let us make a vow to our dead. Let us show them by our actions that we understand what they died for; let our actions say to them the words for which Mathew Ridgeway listened: "I will not fail thee nor forsake thee."

Strengthened by their courage, heartened by their valor and borne by their memory, let us continue to stand for the ideals for which they lived and died.

Thank you all very much.