

*State*

SPEECH TO THE  
GRAFTON NATIONAL GUARD  
MEMORIAL DAY SERVICE

BY  
U.S. SENATOR  
ROBERT C. BYRD  
FROM  
WEST VIRGINIA

GRAFTON, WEST VIRGINIA  
MONDAY, MAY 26, 1975



*Rev. Roth*

*Capt. Barclay  
Father Klug*

THERE IS A WOODED HILL IN ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA, JUST ACROSS THE POTOMAC FROM WASHINGTON. IT IS A BEAUTIFUL PLACE, WITH A VIEW OF BOTH THE RIVER AND THE CITY, SURROUNDED BY GREAT AND ANCIENT OAK TREES. THERE, BENEATH A SIMPLE BLOCK OF STONE, REST THE MORTAL REMAINS OF THREE MEN; THE GREAT STONE BEARS AN INSCRIPTION AS SIMPLE AND BEAUTIFUL AS IT ITSELF IS:

"HERE RESTS IN HONORED GLORY AN AMERICAN SOLDIER KNOWN ONLY TO GOD"

THE TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER IS MORE THAN A MONUMENT COMMEMORATING THE DEAD OF THE FIRST AND SECOND WORLD WARS AND THE KOREAN CONFLICT. IT STANDS AS A SYMBOL AND REMINDER TO ALL AMERICAN CITIZENS THAT THEY OWE THEIR CURRENT



SAFETY AND WELL-BEING IN LARGE MEASURE TO THE COURAGE AND SACRIFICE OF THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES FOR THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

IN THIS CENTURY ALONE, IN FOUR HARD FOUGHT WARS AND COUNTLESS LESS WELL REMEMBERED CONFLICTS, MORE THAN FOUR HUNDRED THOUSAND AMERICANS HAVE BEEN CALLED ON TO MAKE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE.

WE HAVE SET ASIDE ONE DAY EACH YEAR -- THIS DAY -- TO COMMEMORATE THEM. IT HARDLY SEEMS ENOUGH TO ME. EVERY DAY WE SHOULD REMEMBER THEM AND THANK THEM FOR THEIR HEROISM WITH A SILENT PRAYER. YET, SO MANY OF US PASS THROUGH THE DAYS WITH LITTLE THOUGHT OF THE YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN WHO PERISHED IN SERVICE TO THEIR COUNTRY.



LET US REFLECT ON THEM AND THE  
TOTALITY OF THEIR SACRIFICE.

MOST OF THEM WERE YOUNG, SCARCELY OUT  
OF THEIR TEENS IN SO MANY CASES. THEY  
DID NOT GO TO WAR IN ANTICIPATION OF  
DEATH. THEY DID NOT GO TO WAR IN SEARCH  
OF THAT MOST ELUSIVE OF THINGS -- GLORY;  
FEW MEN EVER HAVE. THEY CERTAINLY DID  
NOT GO BECAUSE THEY WANTED TO.

THEY WENT WITH REGRET: THEY WERE  
LEAVING BEHIND THEM NEW LIVES, JUST GETTING  
UNDER WAY. THEY LEFT BEHIND THEM  
BUDDING CAREERS -- SOME GREAT, SOME  
ORDINARY, BUT EACH FILLED WITH THE  
OPPORTUNITY THAT PRESENTS ITSELF ONLY TO  
THE YOUNG AND THE EAGER.

THEY LEFT BEHIND THEM FAMILIES --  
LOVING PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS, BROTHERS,



SISTERS AND FRIENDS. SOME LEFT BEHIND  
YOUNG WIVES AND SOME LEFT INFANT  
CHILDREN WHO WOULD NEVER KNOW THEM.

THEY WERE MEN JUST LIKE YOURSELVES,  
WITH HUMAN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES, BUT  
WHEN CALLED UPON TO MAKE THE SUPREME  
SACRIFICE, THEY PUT ASIDE THEIR FEARS AND  
ROSE TO MEET THE CHALLENGE.

THEY LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES THAT  
OTHERS MIGHT LIVE IN PEACE AND SECURITY,  
IN FREEDOM AND IN JUSTICE. THEY LAID  
DOWN THEIR LIVES THAT THIS NATION, AND  
THE OTHER NATIONS OF THE FREE WORLD MIGHT  
SURVIVE.

BUT MOST IMPORTANT, THEY LAID DOWN  
THEIR LIVES IN DEFENSE OF A CREED -- A  
CREED OF LIBERTY, EQUALITY, ~~AND~~ JUSTICE, <sup>AND LAW,</sup>  
THAT HAS BEEN UNDER ASSAULT THROUGHOUT



HISTORY, WHEREVER AND WHENEVER IT HAS BEEN ABLE TO SPRING UP.

WE IN THE UNITED STATES ARE THE CUSTODIANS OF THIS CREED IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. WE HAVE, BECAUSE OF OUR GREAT STRENGTH AND UNIQUE HERITAGE OF LIBERTY, BECOME THE KEEPERS OF THE FLAME OF LIBERTY.

WE CANNOT ALWAYS HOPE THAT FREEDOM, ONCE ESTABLISHED IN A COUNTRY, WILL CONTINUE TO BLESS THAT COUNTRY WITHOUT FURTHER SACRIFICE. BUT FREEDOM CALLS FOR DEDICATION AND SACRIFICE IN EACH NEW GENERATION.

THAT IS BECAUSE FREEDOM, WHEREVER AND WHENEVER IT EXISTS, IS ALWAYS LIABLE TO ATTACK AND SUBVERSION BY THE FORCES OF OPPRESSION. IN ONE GENERATION,



OPPRESSION MAY BE EPITOMIZED BY PRINCE METTERNICH AND THE CONCERT OF NATIONS, IN ANOTHER BY ADOLPH HITLER AND FASCISM, IN ANOTHER, BY SOVIET RUSSIA AND MARXIST-LENINISM. THE FACE CHANGES, BUT THE ENEMY IS ALWAYS THE SAME -- THE ENEMY AGAINST WHOM THE MEN AND WOMEN WE HONOR TODAY STRUGGLED IN WARS WAGED IN EVERY CORNER OF THE WORLD.

WAR, ANY WAR, IS THE ULTIMATE OF HUMAN FOLLY. NO ONE KNOWS THIS BETTER THAN THE MEN WHO HAVE FOUGHT, AND WHO MUST BE CONSTANTLY READY TO FIGHT TO DEFEND THIS NATION. BUT THESE SAME MEN, AMERICAN FIGHTING MEN OF ALL GENERATIONS, HAVE KNOWN AND STILL KNOW THAT IF WAR IS A MISTAKE, THEN DEFEAT IS A TRAGEDY.



THERE ARE VOICES IN THIS LAND WHICH ADVOCATE, WITH THE BEST OF INTENTIONS AND THE GREATEST SINCERITY, A NATIONAL COURSE OF ACTION THAT WOULD, IN TIME, BRING US TO DEFEAT. THEY URGE THAT AMERICA ABDICATE HER POSITION IN THE WORLD AND WEAKEN HER DEFENSES AT HOME.

I CAN UNDERSTAND WHY, IN THE AFTERMATH OF OUR EXPERIENCES IN INDOCHINA, THIS POLICY MAY BE ATTRACTIVE TO SOME. BUT IT IS, IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE, A FLAWED POLICY, ONE WHICH WOULD BETRAY THE SACRIFICE OF THOSE WHO REST "BETWEEN THE CROSSES ROW ON ROW" IN AMERICAN MILITARY CEMETERIES ALL OVER THE WORLD.

IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, OUR HONORED WAR DEAD HAVE AN UNMISTAKABLE MESSAGE



FOR US THIS MEMORIAL DAY, 1975: "DO NOT BETRAY OUR SACRIFICE; WE, IN OUR OWN TIME, DID NOT DIE IN VAIN."

THE BOOK OF ECCLISIASTES SAYS:

"FOR EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON, AND A TIME TO EVERY PURPOSE UNDER THE HEAVEN...

...A TIME OF WAR AND A TIME OF PEACE. WHAT PROFIT HATH HE THAT WORKETH IN THAT WHEREIN HE LABORETH?"

THOSE MEN AND WOMEN WHO MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE, MET THE NEEDS OF THEIR TIME AND HAVE GIVEN US THE GAIN FROM THEIR TOIL. LET US IN OUR TIME RESOLVE TO KEEP OUR NATION IN OUR SISTER STATE OF VIRGINIA, IN THE CITY OF HARRISONBURG, THERE IS A HANDSOME MONUMENT, THE FIGURE OF A YOUNG

*S. K. ...*



WOMAN, WHICH REPRESENTS LIBERTY,  
MOURNING FOR HER DEAD, WHOSE NAMES ARE  
INSCRIBED ON THE STATUE'S BASE. THE  
BASE OF THAT STATUE BEARS A LEGEND THAT  
IN A FEW SHORT WORDS EPITOMIZES BOTH THE  
SORROW AND THE GLORY OF MEMORIAL DAY:

"THEY TASTED DEATH IN YOUTH, THAT  
LIBERTY MIGHT GROW OLD."