

Every person in the democracies pitched in. Every shipbuilder who built a landing craft. Every woman who worked in a factory. Every farmer who grew food for the troops. Every miner who carved coal out of a cavern. Every child who tended a victory garden. All of them did their part. All produced things with their hands and their hearts that went into this battle. And on D-Day, all across the free world, the peoples of democracy prayed that they had done their job right. Well, they had done their job right.

And here, you, the Army Rangers, did yours. Your mission was to scale these cliffs and destroy the howitzers at the top that threatened every Allied soldier and ship within miles. You fired grappling hooks onto the cliff tops. You waded to shore, and you began to climb up on ropes slick with sea and sand, up, as the Germans shot down and tried to cut your lines, up, sometimes holding to the cliffs with nothing but the knives you had and your own bare hands.

As the battle raged at Juno, Sword, and Gold, on Omaha and Utah, you took devastating casualties. But you also took control of these commanding heights. Around 9 a.m., two Rangers discovered the big guns hidden inland and disabled them with heat grenades. At the moment, you became the first Americans on D-Day to complete your mission.

We look at this terrain and we marvel at your fight. We look around us and we see what you were fighting for. For here are the daughters of Colonel Rudder. Here are the son and grandson of Corporal Bargmann. Here are the faces for whom you risked your lives. Here are the generations for whom you won a war. We are the children of your sacrifice. We are the sons and daughters you saved from tyranny's reach. We grew up behind the shield of the strong alliances you forged in blood upon these beaches, on the shores of the Pacific, and in the skies above. We flourished in the nation you came home to build.

The most difficult days of your lives bought us 50 years of freedom. You did your job; now we must do ours. Let us begin by teaching our young people about the villainy that started this war and the valor that ended it. Let us carry on the work you began here. The sparks of freedom you struck on these

beaches were never extinguished, even in the darkest days behind the Iron Curtain. Five years ago the miracle of liberation was repeated as the rotting timbers of communism came tumbling down.

Now we stand at the start of a new day. The Soviet empire is gone. So many people who fought as our partners in this war, the Russians, the Poles, and others, now stand again as our partners in peace and democracy. Our work is far from done. Still there are cliffs to scale. We must work to contain the world's most deadly weapons, to expand the reach of democracy. We must keep ready arms and strong alliances. We must have strong families and cohesive societies and educated citizens and vibrant, open, economies that promote cooperation, not conflict.

And if we should ever falter, we need only remember you at this spot 50 years ago and you, again, at this spot today. The flame of your youth became freedom's lamp, and we see its light reflected in your faces still and in the faces of your children and grandchildren.

We commit ourselves, as you did, to keep that lamp burning for those who will follow. You completed your mission here. But the mission of freedom goes on; the battle continues. The "longest day" is not yet over.

God bless you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:45 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. William A. Downing, USA, commander in chief, U.S. Special Operations Command, and D-Day veteran Richard Hathaway, president, Ranger Battalions Association of World War II, who introduced the President.

Remarks on the 50th Anniversary of D-Day at Utah Beach in Normandy

June 6, 1994

Thank you. Thank you very much, General Talbott, Secretary Perry, Secretary Brown. Let me begin by asking all the veterans here present, their families, their friends, the people from France who have been wonderful hosts to us, to acknowledge those who worked so hard to make these D-Day ceremonies a great success: General Joulwan, the SAC here, and his European command,

2,700 members of Armed Forces who worked to put these events together; and the Secretary of the Army's World War II commemorative committee, General Mick Kicklighter and all of his committee. Let's give them a big hand; they have done a wonderful job. [*Applause*]

My fellow Americans, we have gathered to remember those who stormed this beach for freedom who never came home. We pay tribute to what a whole generation of heroes won here. But let us also recall what was lost here. We must never forget that thousands of people gave everything they were, or what they might have become, so that freedom might live.

The loss along this coastline numbs us still. In one U.S. company alone, 197 of 205 men were slaughtered in just 10 minutes. Hundreds of young men died before they could struggle 20 feet into the red-tinged tide. Thousands upon thousands of American, Canadian, and British troops were killed or wounded on one brutal day.

But in the face of that mayhem emerged the confident clarity born of relentless training and the guiding light of a just cause. Here at Utah Beach, with the Army's 4th Division in the lead, the Allies unleashed their democratic fury on the Nazi armies.

So many of them landed in the wrong place; they found their way. When one commanding officer, Russell "Red" Reeder, discovered the error, he said, "It doesn't matter. We know where to go."

Here to help point the way were the fighters of the French Resistance. We must never forget how much those who lived under the Nazi fist did to make D-Day possible. For the French, D-Day was the 1,453d day of their occupation. Throughout all those terrible days, people along this coast kept faith. Whether gathering intelligence, carving out escape routes for Allied soldiers or destroying enemy supply lines, they, too, kept freedom's flame alive with a terrible price.

Thousands were executed. Thousands more died in concentration camps. Oh, the loved ones of all who died, no matter what their nationality, they all feel a loss that can-

not be captured in these statistics. Only one number matters: the husband who can never be replaced, the best friend who never came home, the father who never played with his child again.

One of those fathers who died on D-Day had written a letter home to his wife and their daughter barely a month before the invasion. He said, "I sincerely pray that if you fail to hear from me for a while you will recall the words of the Gospel: 'A little while and you shall not see me, and again a little while, and you shall see me.' But in your thoughts I shall always be, and you in mine." He was right. They must always be in our thoughts. To honor them, we must remember.

The people of this coast understand. Just beyond this beach is the town of Ste. Mère Église. There brave American paratroopers floated into a tragic ambush on D-Day, and there the survivors rallied to complete their mission. The mayor's wife, Simone Renaud, wrote the families of the Americans who had fought and died to free her village. And she kept on writing them every week for the rest of her life until she died just 6 years ago. Her son, Henri-Jean Renaud, carries on her vigil now. And he has vowed never to forget, saying, "I will dedicate myself to the memory of their sacrifice for as long as I live."

We must do no less. We must carry on the work of those who did not return and those who did. We must turn the pain of loss into the power of redemption so that 50 or 100 or 1,000 years from now, those who bought our liberty with their lives will never be forgotten.

To those of you who have survived and come back to this hallowed ground, let me say that the rest of us know that the most difficult days of your lives brought us 50 years of freedom.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:12 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. Orwin C. Talbott, USA (Ret.), president, Society of 1st Infantry Division, and Gen. George A. Joulwan, USA, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe.

Remarks on the 50th Anniversary of D-Day at the United States Cemetery in Colleville-sur-Mer, France

June 6, 1994

Mr. Dawson, you did your men proud today. General Shalikashvili, Mr. Cronkite, Chaplain, distinguished leaders of our Government, Members of Congress, members of the armed services, our hosts from France, and most of all, our veterans, their families, and their friends:

In these last days of ceremonies, we have heard wonderful words of tribute. Now we come to this hallowed place that speaks, more than anything else, in silence. Here on this quiet plateau, on this small piece of American soil, we honor those who gave their lives for us 50 crowded years ago.

Today, the beaches of Normandy are calm. If you walk these shores on a summer's day, all you might hear is the laughter of children playing on the sand or the cry of seagulls overhead or perhaps the ringing of a distant church bell, the simple sounds of freedom barely breaking the silence, peaceful silence, ordinary silence.

But June 6th, 1944, was the least ordinary day of the 20th century. On that chilled dawn, these beaches echoed with the sounds of staccato gunfire, the roar of aircraft, the thunder of bombardment. And through the wind and the waves came the soldiers, out of their landing craft and into the water, away from their youth and toward a savage place many of them would sadly never leave. They had come to free a continent, the Americans, the British, the Canadians, the Poles, the French Resistance, the Norwegians, and others; they had all come to stop one of the greatest forces of evil the world has ever known.

As news of the invasion broke back home in America, people held their breath. In Boston, commuters stood reading the news on the electric sign at South Station. In New York, the Statue of Liberty, its torch blacked out since Pearl Harbor, was lit at sunset for 15 minutes. And in Newcastle, Pennsylvania, a young mother named Pauline Elliot wrote to her husband, Frank, a corporal in the Army, "D-Day has arrived. The first thought of all of us was a prayer."

Below us are the beaches where Corporal Elliot's battalion and so many other Americans landed, Omaha and Utah, proud names from America's heartland, part of the biggest gamble of the war, the greatest crusade, yes, the longest day.

During those first hours on bloody Omaha, nothing seemed to go right. Landing craft were ripped apart by mines and shells. Tanks sent to protect them had sunk, drowning their crews. Enemy fire raked the invaders as they stepped into chest-high water and waded past the floating bodies of their comrades. And as the stunned survivors of the first wave huddled behind a seawall, it seemed the invasion might fail.

Hitler and his followers had bet on it. They were sure the Allied soldiers were soft, weakened by liberty and leisure, by the mingling of races and religion. They were sure their totalitarian youth had more discipline and zeal.

But then something happened. Although many of the American troops found themselves without officers on unfamiliar ground, next to soldiers they didn't know, one by one they got up. They inched forward, and together, in groups of threes and fives and tens, the sons of democracy improvised and mounted their own attacks. At that exact moment on these beaches, the forces of freedom turned the tide of the 20th century.

These soldiers knew that staying put meant certain death. But they were also driven by the voice of free will and responsibility, nurtured in Sunday schools, town halls, and sandlot ballgames, the voice that told them to stand up and move forward, saying, "You can do it. And if you don't, no one else will." And as Captain Joe Dawson led his company up this bluff, and as others followed his lead, they secured a foothold for freedom.

Today many of them are here among us. Oh, they may walk with a little less spring in their step, and their ranks are growing thinner, but let us never forget; when they were young, these men saved the world. And so let us now ask them, all the veterans of the Normandy campaign, to stand if they can and be recognized. [*Applause*]

The freedom they fought for was no abstract concept, it was the stuff of their daily lives. Listen to what Frank Elliot had written