

The world is changing rapidly, and if you do not work to make change our friend, then it can become our enemy. You represent the very best of the American people. It will be your understanding of our Nation's challenges and your embodiment of our Nation's values, enriched by what you have learned here, leavened by the experiences to come, bound by your commitment to "Duty, Honor, Country" which will permit you to make our greatest contribution to the Nation: continuing service. You have earned your turn to lead, to follow in the footsteps of those who have been on the Plain before you.

Over the past 4 years, your Nation has invested heavily in you. The skills and dedication you now bring to the defense of our Nation

are more than ample repayment. I am proud of the work you do, honored to serve as your Commander in Chief, confident that all Americans join me in saluting your achievement, and very, very optimistic about the future of our Nation in your hands.

Good luck. God bless you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. in Michie Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. Howard D. Graves, USA, Superintendent, U.S. Military Academy; Gen. Gordon R. Sullivan, USA, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army; and Pat Malcolm, who kicked the winning field goal in the 1992 Army-Navy football game.

## Remarks on the Observance of the 50th Anniversary of World War II May 31, 1993

Good morning. Please be seated. It's a great honor for the First Lady and for me to have all of you here in the White House today. I want to welcome all of you, and a few by name, beginning with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jesse Brown; the Deputy Secretary of Defense Dr. William Perry; Marvin Runyon, the Postmaster General; Lt. General Claude Kicklighter, the Executive Director of the World War II Commemoration Committee; Mr. Roger Durbin, a World War II veteran and the initiator of the World War II Commemorative Coin legislation. Also here with me, representing all World War II veterans, is Admiral Eugene Fluckey. I'd like to welcome Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur from Ohio, an ardent supporter of veterans' cause who heeded the call of her constituent, Mr. Durbin, and took the lead on the legislation to issue the World War II 50th Anniversary Commemorative Coin, to fund a building of the World War II Memorial here in Washington with no net cost to the United States Treasury. I wonder if we might undertake some other programs with that device. *[Laughter]*

I'd like to thank our good friend, Senator Jay Rockefeller from West Virginia, another great advocate for veterans, for being here with us; Secretary Shannon from the Army; Admiral Kelso, wearing both his Chief of Naval Oper-

ations and Navy Secretary hats today; Secretary Donley from the Air Force; Admiral Jeremiah, the Vice Chair of the Joint Chiefs; General Sullivan, the Army Chief of Staff who took me to West Point on Saturday for one of the better days of my life, thank you, General; General McPeak, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force; General Mundy, the Commandant of the Marine Corps; and Admiral Kime, the Commandant of the Coast Guard. I'm delighted to welcome the many representatives of veteran service organizations who are here with us today.

I want to say a special word of thanks to the veterans organizations, and the VA particularly, for working with the health care task force that the First Lady is chairing so closely on health care. Hillary visited the Washington, DC, VA medical centers on May 29th, and she talked to me in our brief stay at Camp David for 30 or 40 minutes about how impressed she was about what she saw there. And we are very, very hopeful that we can work with the active military health operations and with the VA in working through this health care issue. I think you have a major role to play.

I'd also like to say a special word of thanks to the people who were involved in the May 28th kickoff of this weekend's Memorial Day remembrances. There I had the opportunity to

speak with three VA medical centers, a telephone conversation that initiated a program replacing the old system of isolating veterans in these hospitals from their families and friends by replacing it with a system where telephones are placed alongside their beds and are usable by veterans even with severe disabilities. We now are having five hospitals so equipped, but eventually will have 174 veterans hospitals where veterans will be able to call from their bedside to their families and friends.

This is an important issue. One of the men I talked with in Queens has three children; two of them are in the service and are overseas. And now, even though he is quite ill, he'll be able to talk on this day to both of his children who, like him, are serving in the armed services.

In just a few moments I'm going to sign a resolution and a proclamation designating this May 31st through June 7th as a period of national observance, as part of the 50th anniversary of World War II. But before I do that, and before Postmaster General Runyon and I unveil this year's additions of the World War II Commemorative Stamps, I'd like to say just a few things about the debt that all of us owe to our veterans.

Fifty years ago, the United States and its allies were engaged in a monumental struggle to defeat a totalitarian Axis bent on controlling the world, to preserve the dignity of mankind and to protect individual freedom. Americans from every walk of life were called upon to sacrifice their freedoms and their comforts, to undergo great danger to shore up our Nation's future, and to fight for democracy.

As we observe the 50th anniversary of World War II, our country must remember and honor the million who defended democracy and defeated aggression. We learned from those early defeats in World War II that we must remain vigilant and always prepared to resist future aggression and that all nations dedicated to freedom must stand together. The freedoms we enjoy today are results of our victory over aggression, and the efforts the United States makes today to work with all other nations who love and believe in freedom are a testimony to the wisdom of the lessons learned then.

We must be committed now to leave our children a world free of the horrors of war: hatred, violence, and inhumanity. Franklin Roosevelt once said, "We must cultivate the science of human relationships, the ability of all people

to live and work together in the same world at peace." I think Admiral Fluckey, a courageous man, would agree that while courage and deeds of warriors are indeed heroic, the ultimate goal of this courage is to make it unnecessary for future generations.

President Kennedy once said, "It is an unfortunate fact that we can secure the peace only by preparing for war." Our Nation stands committed to defend itself and our allies by remaining strong and vigilant and ready. And therefore, it is very fitting that this week-long period of national observance of the 50th anniversary of World War II begins on Memorial Day, a day when we remember and honor our Nation's war dead. As we work toward a more peaceful future, it is appropriate that we remember and thank the brave and selfless patriots who served our Nation 50 years ago.

During this commemoration, Americans of all ages must also remember those who gave their lives and dedicated themselves in other wars so that our Nation could remain free and strong, so that the deeds, the commitment, and the sacrifice of those who made this commitment will not have been in vain.

I have asked the Secretary of Defense Les Aspin, who is in Brussels today, in conjunction with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jesse Brown, to continue coordinating the commemorative events of the 50th anniversary of the Second World War. I want to urge all the veterans, the Government, the civic, the business, and the patriotic organizations to join together in expression so that a grateful Nation will remember. Our Nation will rededicate itself during this time to studying the lessons of the past.

I want to say in closing, again, how grateful I am to have all of you here in the White House today. This is your house. You have paid the price for it, and those whom you represent made the fact that it is still standing possible. We are all very, very grateful to you.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:15 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. H.J. Res. 80, approved May 31, was assigned Public Law 103-34. The proclamation on the national observance of the 50th anniversary of World War II is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.