

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

May 31, 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR BEN ELLIOTT

FROM: ROBERT M. KIMMITT ^{Bob}
SUBJECT: Omaha Beach Remarks

The NSC concurs with the latest draft of the Omaha Beach remarks. However, given the time guidelines (3-5 minutes) for the speech, we have indicated where we feel the remarks could be trimmed, including a suggested revised and shortened conclusion.

Tab A - Omaha Beach Remarks w/suggested revisions

cc Dick Darman

(Dolan/RR)
May 30, 1984
4:00 p.m.

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: OMAHA BEACH MEMORIAL REMARKS
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 6, 1984

Mr. President, Distinguished Guests:

We stand today at a place of battle, one that 40 years ago saw the worst of war. Men bled and died here for a few feet or inches of sand as bullets and shellfire cut through their ranks. About them, General Omar Bradley later said: "Every man who set foot on Omaha Beach that day was a hero."

Words do not do them justice. Speeches cannot portray their suffering, their sacrifice, their heroism. President Lincoln once reminded us that -- through their deeds -- the dead of battle have spoken more eloquently for themselves than any of the living ever could, that we can only honor them by rededicating ourselves to the cause for which they gave a last full measure of devotion.

Today, we do rededicate ourselves to that cause. And in this place of honor, we are humbled by the realization of how much many have given to the cause of freedom and to their fellow man.

Some who survived the battle on June 6, 1944 are here today. Others who hoped to return never did so.

"Someday, Lis, I'll go back," said Private First Class Peter Robert Zanatta of the 37th Engineer Combat Battalion of the first assault wave to hit Omaha Beach. "I'll go back and I'll see it all again. I'll see the beach, the barricades, and the graves. I'll put a flower on the graves of the guys I knew and on the grave of the unknown soldier -- all the guys I fought with."

Those words of Private Zanatta come to us from his daughter, Lisa Zanatta Henn, in an essay written about an event her father spoke of often: "the Normandy Invasion would change his life forever," she said.

She tells some of his stories of World War II, but says for her father "the story to end all stories was D-Day."

"He made me feel the fear of being on that boat waiting to land. I can smell the ocean and feel the seasickness. I can see the looks on his fellow soldiers' faces, the fear, the anguish, the uncertainty of what lay ahead. And when they landed, I can feel the strength and courage of the men who took those first steps through the tide to what must have surely looked like instant death."

[Private Zanatta's daughter says: "I don't know how or why I can feel this emptiness, this fear, or this determination, but I do. Maybe its the bond I had with my father. (I was really lucky -- we never got tired of talking to each other.) All I know is that it brings tears to my eyes to think about my father as a 20 year old boy having to face that beach."]

She went on to say how the anniversary of D-Day for her and her family was always special; and like all the families of those who went to war, she describes how she came to realize her own father's survival was a miracle.

"So many men died. I know that my father watched many of his friends be killed. I know that he must have died inside a little each time. But his explanation to me was 'You did what you had to do and you kept on going.'"

["My dad won his share of medals. He was a good soldier and fought hard for his country. He was just an ordinary guy, with immigrant Italian parents who never really had enough money. But he was a proud man. Proud of his heritage, proud of his country, proud that he fought in World War II and proud that he lived through D-Day."]

When men like Private Zanatta and all our allied forces stormed the beaches of Normandy 40 years ago, they came not as conquerors, but as liberators. When these troops swept across the French countryside and into the forests of Belgium and Luxembourg, they came not to take, but to restore what had been wrongly taken. When our forces marched into a ruined Germany, they came not to prey on a brave and defeated people, but to nurture the seeds of democracy among those who yearned again to be free.

We salute them today; we also salute those who were already engaging the enemy inside this country -- the French Resistance -- whose valiant service for France did so much to cripple the enemy in their midst and assist in the advance of the invading armies of liberation. These French Forces of the Interior will forever offer us an image of courage and national spirit, and will be a permanent inspiration to those who are free and all those who would be free.

This day, we celebrate the triumph of democracy. This day, we reaffirm the unity of democratic peoples who fought a war and then joined with the vanquished in a firm resolve to keep the peace from that time on.

From a terrible war, we learned that unity made us invincible; now, in peace, that same unity can make us secure. We sought the inclusion of all freedom-loving nations in a community dedicated to the defense and preservation of our sacred values. Our alliance, forged in the crucible of war, tempered and shaped by the realities of the post-war world, has succeeded in this end. In Europe, the threat has been contained. The peace has been kept.

* Recommend drop last three paragraphs, substitute shorter paragraph [see inset]

[Today, the living here assembled -- officials, veterans, citizens -- are a tribute to what was achieved here 40 years ago. This land is secure. We are free. These things were worth fighting -- and dying -- for.]

[Lisa Zanatta Henn began her essay with a quote from her father, who frequently promised he would return to Normandy. She ended her essay with a quote from herself, promising her father, who died eight years ago of cancer, that she would go in his place and see the graves and the flowers and the ceremonies honoring the veterans of D-Day. She promised him, " . . . I'll feel all the things you made me feel through your stories and your eyes."

"I will never forget what you went through, Dad, nor will I let anyone else forget -- and Dad, I'll always be proud."

Through the words a loving daughter -- who is here with us today -- a D-Day veteran has given us the meaning of this day far better than any President can. It is enough for us to say about Private Zanatta and all the men of honor and courage who fought beside him four decades ago: We will always remember. We will always be proud.

(Insert for Page 4)

As I look out on the sea of gravestones, my final thoughts dwell on the heroism, patriotism and supreme sacrifice of our men and women buried here. They are fittingly honored by this memorial. For those, such as Private Zanatta, who bravely fought and returned from these shores, we rejoice in their return to the hopes and dreams they had left behind. Yet, I cannot help to look into the faces of the living here assembled -- officials, veterans, citizens -- and say this is the greatest tribute of all. We are free. This land is secure. And our peoples are enriched because democracy was worth fighting -- and dying -- for.