

Remarks at a Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia, Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Landing on Guadalcanal

August 7, 1992

Thank you all very much. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, Senator Chafee, and the other Members of Congress that are with us who are veterans of Guadalcanal. May I salute the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Colin Powell; Commandant of the Marines, Carl Mundy; General Sullivan, Commandant of the Army, is with us; the Acting Secretary of the Navy, Sean O'Keefe; distinguished Commandant of the Coast Guard, William Kime; and of course, the Medal of Honor recipient, Mitchell Paige, but most important, you marines. I would like to open—[*applause*—]—I thought they had a little life left in them.

I'd like to open if I may with a story. It's a story of heroism, a story of courage, sacrifice. It's a story from Guadalcanal. Kenneth Bailey was commanding officer of Company C, 1st Marine Raider Battalion, when his men were called upon to defend Henderson Field during the Japanese assault, September 12th and 13th of 1942. The enemy had penetrated our main line of defense, their number superior to ours. Only a miracle, it seemed, could defend that airfield.

Major Bailey and his men provided the miracle, turning back the flank attack, then covering the withdrawal of our main force. In the fighting, Major Bailey sustained severe wounds to his head, and even so, for 10 hours he and his men engaged the enemy in vicious hand-to-hand combat. The attack was repulsed, and Henderson Field was secured. Major Bailey died 2 weeks later from machine-gun fire in yet another battle on Guadalcanal. He received the Congressional Medal of Honor for his gallantry on Bloody Ridge.

Major Bailey's story serves as a summation for thousands of other stories, tales that could be told by the brave men gathered here who survived the hell that was Guadalcanal. Secretary Cheney mentioned the lesson of those battles, and I'm struck, recounting Major Bailey's story, of one lesson in particular.

Kenneth Bailey was from Pawnee, Okla-

homa, in a town of 2,000 near the Arkansas River in the north central part of the State. In the months and years before the great war in the Pacific, who could have predicted that a son from Pawnee, Oklahoma, or the sons of Raritan, New Jersey, or Sioux Falls, South Dakota, or Rutland, Vermont, who could have foretold that these young men from every corner of America would be called upon to defend freedom 6,000 miles away on an obscure Pacific island called Guadalcanal? It's safe to say that few, if any, had ever heard of the island. None could have predicted what would transpire there. But it was on Guadalcanal that the forces of freedom began their long march, a march that wouldn't end until 3 years later in Tokyo Bay on the deck of the U.S.S. *Missouri*.

No one can foretell when or where freedom will be challenged. That is one of the lessons of Guadalcanal. How many Americans in 1947 had heard of Inchon or Pusan or Chosen? How many of us 15 years later had heard of Da Nang or Khe Sahn? How few Americans in the summer of '90 had yet heard of Khafji or Safwan. Yet today, these names are indelibly part of the rollcall of honor, places where Americans made their stand and offered up their sweat and blood to a cause greater than themselves.

We honor the dead, not merely for their sake, but for our own sake as well. In commemoration and remembrance, we learn again that freedom, in the deepest sense, always hangs in the balance; that we earn it day by day in hot wars and cold; that its price, as Jefferson said, is eternal vigilance, an endlessly renewed dedication to keeping our great country strong, our defenses second to none, our leadership unquestioned and unchallenged.

There was a rhyme passed around during those dark 6 months that I'm sure many marines here today out front remember, 6 months, as the battle raged on, when freedom hung by the unbreakable thread of American bravery and resolve. Every

marine who wasn't fighting on the island knew the lines, "Say a prayer for your pal on Guadalcanal."

This morning, in this place—and thank you, Pastor, for your loving invocation—this morning and in this place, we remember those words and the men who inspired them. With hearts full of pride and awe and thanksgiving, we once again say a prayer for those who fought and died in a place

few had known of but which all of us will never forget.

May God bless them. May God bless you. And may God bless our great country, the United States of America. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Note: The President spoke at 11:11 a.m. at the Marine Corps War Memorial.

Statement on Signing the Pacific Yew Act

August 7, 1992

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 3836, the "Pacific Yew Act." This Act ensures that Federal lands will be managed to provide for the sustainable harvest and long-term conservation of the Pacific yew. The bark of this tree is currently the only reliable source of taxol—an experimental drug used to treat cancer. By signing this bill into law today, we ensure that Pacific yew bark is made available to companies to produce a drug that has the potential to benefit thousands of patients.

It is very important that the collection of Pacific yew bark proceed with as little delay as possible, because taxol has shown very promising results in combating ovarian and breast cancer. In fact, the National Cancer Institute considers it to be the most important new cancer treatment drug discovered in the past decade. The Administration realizes the importance of taxol and is working to make sure that Pacific yew bark is available for taxol production.

The potential value of taxol for treating ovarian and other cancers was not known until 1989. By September 1991, 900,000 pounds of Pacific yew bark were collected on Federal lands. This quantity of bark will yield enough taxol to treat more than 12,000 patients, or about the same number of women who die from ovarian cancer each year.

As the demand for Pacific yew bark in-

creases, we realize that we have to ensure a continuing supply of Pacific yew, while not threatening the resource's long-term existence. The Administration has already initiated a comprehensive Pacific yew management program involving the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, other Federal agencies, local governments, and the private sector.

Our efforts have provided an opportunity for the Federal Government and private industry to work cooperatively for the public good. Additionally, our efforts to collect bark from the Pacific yew have brought in millions of dollars to local economies and provided numerous jobs in these local economies.

The Federal Government is already meeting many objectives of H.R. 3836. This Administration is committed to ensuring a continuous supply of yew bark to help cancer patients, while sustaining the Pacific yew for future generations. H.R. 3836 will help us do even more to meet this commitment.

GEORGE BUSH

The White House,
August 7, 1992.

Note: H.R. 3836, approved August 7, was assigned Public Law No. 102-335.