

The President. I appreciate you and—do you have all your children there?

Mr. Maggio. All here.

The President. And a lot of grandchildren there?

Mr. Maggio. I got grandchildren and a great-grandchild here. It's the fifth generation.

The President. That's great.

Mr. Maggio. They come from Fort Lauderdale just to celebrate my birthday.

The President. I bet you're proud of that.

Mr. Maggio. I sure am.

The President. You've been very fortunate, haven't you?

Mr. Maggio. I've been very fortunate with my family. Got a beautiful family. And all—all of the boys that were servicemen—ex-servicemen—all have been servicemen.

The President. I know you're proud of them.

Mr. Maggio. And I'm proud of them. The whole six of them.

The President. Well, I just wanted to wish you a happy birthday, and I wanted to tell you that I'm proud of you, and I'm very grateful that our country has had someone like you—

Mr. Maggio. Thank you.

The President. —living here throughout the 20th century, seeing all the changes you've seen, and making the sacrifices you've made so that we could stay a free country and—

Mr. Maggio. I've seen plenty.

The President. You have seen a lot, haven't you.

Mr. Maggio. Yes, good and bad.

The President. Yes. But we can still bring immigrants to our shores and give them a shot at a better life because of people like you. And I really thank you for it.

Mr. Maggio. Thank you.

The President. And you have a wonderful day.

Mr. Maggio. Have a beautiful day, too. Thank you.

The President. Tell your family I said hello.

Mr. Maggio. Mr. President says hello to the family.

The Maggio Family. Hello, Mr. President.

The President. [Laughter] They sound great! Thank you, sir, and God bless you.

Mr. Maggio. Thank you, sir.

The President. Bye-bye.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:21 p.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks at the Dedication of the World War II Memorial Site November 11, 1995

Thank you, Dr. Encinias, for that introduction and for your truly remarkable service to our Nation. General Woerner, Governor Carey, Chairman Wheeler, Congresswoman Kaptur, I thank you all for what you have done to bring us to this day. I want to thank Mr. Durbin for his idea and for the triumph of his idea today and the triumph of the idea that an American citizen can have a good idea and take it to the proper authorities and actually get something done. To all the Members of Congress, and especially to Congressman Montgomery on his retirement, for all of his service to our veterans; to Mrs. Boyajian, thank you for your wonderful remarks today; General Shalikashvili, Secretary Perry, Secretary Brown, my fellow Americans.

I would like to begin by asking on the occasion of this last observance of the 50th anniversary

of World War II that all of us express our appreciation to those who served on the World War II Commemorative Commission, and especially to its leader, General Kicklighter, for a magnificent job. Thank you all, and thank you, General.

On this Veterans Day, we gather in special memory of World War II, and we dedicate this site to ensure that we will never forget. That war claimed 55 million lives, soldiers and civilians, children, the millions murdered in the death camps. It engulfed more of the Earth than any war before it or any war since. It was, as Governor Carey said, the coming of age not only for many Americans but for America, the moment that we understood that we could save the world for freedom and only we could save the world for freedom, and so we had to do it.

Today, we honor those who did just that, the fighting men and women who wore our uniform all around the world and the millions of civilians on our Nation's homefront who did the remarkable things embodied by Mrs. Boyajian. For all they did for our troops and for all they did without, all the sacrificing at home to help the cause abroad, we thank them, too.

My fellow Americans, the World War II generation emerged from the darkness of global war to strengthen our economy, to enlighten our society, and to lead our world to greater heights. More than 16 million women worked in our factories and cared for our soldiers. After the war, they began to play a larger role in our economy and, over time, a remarkable role in our military.

Many thousands of African-Americans served their country with courage and distinction as Tuskegee Airmen and Triple Nickel paratroopers and Sherman tank drivers and Navy Seabees. After the war, we began slowly to act on a truth too long denied, that if people of different races could serve as brothers abroad, surely, surely, they could live as neighbors at home.

I cannot let this moment pass without expressing my gratitude to all those of other ethnic and racial groups, who themselves knew discrimination, who also served in World War II, and the especially brave and heroic Japanese-Americans who served in World War II, many of them with their own relatives in internment camps.

All these people took a fuller and larger and more meaningful role in American life after the war, and we were stronger for it. And instead of turning its back on the world the way the previous generation did after World War I, the World War II generation stood with its allies and reached out to its former adversaries to cement the partnerships and create the institutions that secured a half-century of unparalleled prosperity in the West, no return of world war and victory in the cold war. We owe that generation a very great deal. And this monument will tell us we must never forget that either.

This memorial whose site we dedicate today will be a permanent reminder of just how much we Americans can do when we work together, instead of fighting among ourselves. It will honor those who served and those who made the ultimate sacrifice. It will pay tribute to the millions of civilians who supported the war ef-

fort in spirit and action. It will stand as a monument to the values that joined us in common cause, that are worth defending and that make our life worth living. All these things we must never forget.

Here in the company of President Lincoln and President Jefferson, the White House in which every President but George Washington has lived, and the monument to George Washington just behind you, with the stately Capitol dome beyond, the World War II Memorial will join the ranks of our greatest landmarks because it was one of the greatest and most important periods in our history.

We will seal this plaque soon with the earth of 16 World War II cemeteries, and so, in our small way, infuse this place with the spirit and the souls of those who died for freedom.

I want to thank all of those who have worked so hard to raise the funds for this project, including my good friend Jess Haye from Dallas. I want to thank Secretary Perry and the Department of Defense for making an initial contribution. And to all of you in the future who will give to make sure that this project is done and done right, I thank you.

America must never forget the debt we owe the World War II generation. It is a small downpayment on that debt to build this monument as magnificently as we can.

From this day forward, this place belongs to the World War II generation and to their families. Let us honor their achievements by upholding always the ideals they defended and by guarding always the dreams they fought and died for, for our children and our children's children.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:40 p.m. on The Mall. In his remarks, he referred to Miguel Encinias, World War II veteran and prisoner of war; Gen. Fred Woerner, USA (Ret.), chairman, and Hugh L. Carey, vice chairman, American Battle Monuments Commission; Peter Wheeler, chairman, World War II Memorial Advisory Board; Roger Durbin, World War II veteran and activist for the memorial; and Helen Boyajian, Home Front Representative. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.