

Remarks at the Dedication Ceremony for the Korean War Veterans Memorial

July 27, 1995

Thank you. Thank you very much, President Kim, for your fine remarks on behalf of all the people of Korea and for your leadership and for your defense of democracy in your country, proving that these sacrifices of the Americans and others were not in vain.

Thank you to all the distinguished guests who are here. I'd like to say also a special word of thanks for those who are responsible for this memorial, for those who designed and built it and conceived it, and those who operate it. It is a magnificent reminder of what is best about the United States, and I thank you all for your contribution.

I also believe that everyone in this crowd, indeed everyone in this country, owes a special debt of gratitude to General Davis and to his predecessor, General Stilwell, for their 8-year dream to make this day a reality. General Davis served our country with great distinction in World War II and went on to win the Congressional Medal of Honor in Korea. But he had 8 more long years of combat to make this day happen. And all of us who are here owe it to him to say thank you for all of that service.

Today, we are surrounded by monuments to some of the greatest figures in our history while we gather at this, our newest national memorial, to remember and honor the Americans who fought for freedom in Korea. In 1950, our Nation was weary of war, but 1.5 million Americans left their family and friends and their homes to help to defend freedom for a determined ally halfway around the world or, as the monument says, a place they had never been and a people they had never met.

Together with men and women from 20 other nations, all of whom are represented here today, they joined the first mission of the United Nations to preserve peace by fighting shoulder to shoulder with the brave people of South Korea to defend their independence, to safeguard other Asian nations from attack, and to protect the freedom that remains our greatest gift.

The Korean war veterans endured terrible hardships—deathly cold, weeks and months crammed in foxholes and bunkers, an enemy of overwhelming numbers, the threat of brutal

imprisonment and torture—defending the perimeter at Pusan, braving the tides at Inchon, confronting the world's fastest fighter jets in Mig Alley, enduring hand-to-hand combat on Heart-break Ridge and Pork Chop Hill, fighting the way back from Chosin Reservoir. They set a standard of courage that may be equaled but will never be surpassed in the annals of American combat.

If I might recount the deeds of just two men, so as to bring to life today, so many years later, the dimensions of this conflict. One from my home State, 26-year-old Lloyd Burke was trying to lead his company to high ground outside of Seoul. Pinned down by enemy fire, he wiped out three enemy bunkers in a lone assault. Handgrenades were thrown at him, so he caught them and threw them back. Later, he knocked out two enemy mortars and a machine gun position. Despite being wounded, he led his men in a final charge and took the hill. For his extraordinary courage and leadership, Lloyd Burke was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Corporal Ronald Rosser was a forward observer in the hills near Pangil-ri when his platoon came under fire from two directions. With just a carbine and a grenade, he charged the enemy position and knocked out two bunkers and cleared a trench. Twice he ran out of ammunition and twice he crossed through enemy fire to resume his attack. Later, even though he was wounded, Ronald Rosser repeatedly dodged enemy fire to bring other injured soldiers to safety. And for his exceptional bravery, he, too, was awarded the Medal of Honor.

These two great Americans, Lloyd Burke and Ronald Rosser, are with us here today. I ask them to stand and be recognized on behalf of all the veterans of the Korean war.

In this impressive monument, we can see the figures and faces that recall their heroism. In steel and granite, in water and earth, the creators of this memorial have brought to life the courage and sacrifice of those who served in all branches of the Armed Forces from every racial and ethnic group and background in America. They represent, once more, the enduring American truth: From many we are one.

Tens of thousands of Americans died in Korea. Our South Korean allies lost hundreds of thousands of soldiers and civilians. Our other U.N. allies suffered grievous casualties. Thousands of Americans who were lost in Korea to this day have never been accounted for. Today, I urge the leaders of North Korea to work with us to resolve those cases.

President Kim and I are working together to open the door to better relations between our nations and North Korea. Clarifying these MIA cases is an important step. We have not forgotten our debt to them or to their families, and we will never stop working for the day when they can be brought home.

This memorial also commemorates those who made the ultimate sacrifice so that we might live free. And I ask you on this hot, summer day to pause for a moment of silence in honor of those from the United States, our U.N. allies, and from our friends in the Republic of Korea who lost their lives in the Korean war.

[At this point, a moment of silence was observed.]

Amen.

On this day, 42 years ago, President Dwight Eisenhower called the end of hostilities an armistice on a single battleground, not peace in the world. It's fair to say that when the guns fell silent then, no one knew for sure what our forces in Korea had done for the future of our Nation or the future of world freedom. The larger conflict of the cold war had only begun. It would take four decades more to win.

In a struggle so long and consuming, perhaps it's not surprising that too many lost sight of the importance of Korea. But now we know with the benefit of history that those of you

who served and the families who stood behind you laid the foundations for one of the greatest triumphs in the history of human freedom. By sending a clear message that America had not defeated fascism to see communism prevail, you put the free world on the road to victory in the cold war. That is your enduring contribution. And all free people everywhere should recognize it today.

And look what you achieved in Korea. Today, Korea is thriving and prosperous. From the unbelievable poverty and ruin at the aftermath of the war, this brave, industrious, strong country has risen to become the 11th largest economy in the entire world, with a strong democratic leader in President Kim. In Asia, peace and stability are more firmly rooted than at any time since World War II. And all around the world, freedom and democracy are now on the march.

So to all the veterans here today, and to all throughout our land who are watching, let us all say, when darkness threatened, you kept the torch of liberty alight. You kept the flame burning so that others all across the world could share it. You showed the truth inscribed on the wall: that freedom is not free.

We honor you today because you did answer the call to defend a country you never knew and a people you never met. They are good people. It's a good country. And the world is better because of you.

God bless you, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 3:20 p.m. on The Mall. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. Raymond G. Davis, USMC (Ret.), chairman, and Gen. Richard G. Stilwell, USA (Ret.), former chairman, Korean War Veterans Memorial Advisory Board.

Statement on Senate Action on the Reauthorization of the Ryan White CARE Act *July 27, 1995*

I am very pleased to see the Senate moving ahead in a strong bipartisan manner on approval of the reauthorization of the Ryan White CARE Act. This vital program provides primary care to hundreds of thousands of Americans living

with HIV and AIDS. As I said in a letter to Majority Leader Dole and Speaker Gingrich, it is imperative that we move quickly to approve this important legislation. Senator Kassebaum deserves high praise for her important leader-