

REMARKS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

VETERANS' BICENTENNIAL OBSERVANCE

Fort Snelling, Minnesota

May 15, 1976

We stand here in a year of peace for the American people. The thunder and tumult of war seem far behind us today -- here along the quiet of the river and among these grassy fields.

But while we have the leisure to remember harder times, we do not have the luxury to forget -- to forget that peace is always hard-earned, and that the security of our people has been bought with the blood of our soldiers since the turbulent birth of our nation.

We do not have the luxury to forget that the liberty we enjoy, the safe conduct of our daily lives and yes, the solid ground we walk upon have been vouched safe for us over the years by an American serviceman.

He may have been crouched in a gulley with his musket as the Redcoats attacked -- or he may have lain in a foxhole in the south of France where the enemy stood entrenched before him.

But wherever he was, and however he served, he was part of the sacred tradition borne by every citizen who ever shouldered arms to keep this nation free.

We are here today to recall that tradition. And we are here to honor those who spent their energy and their very lives to preserve our union, our way of life, and the glorious vision on which this nation was founded two centuries ago -- and which still illumines our course in this historic year, and will continue to do so, undiminished, from generation to generation in the future.

But we also have another honorable task here today. We have the privilege to dedicate a portion of this ground to those who distinguished themselves -- whose bravery and selfless devotion beyond the call of duty has been so great that the entire nation has taken note -- so great that the entire united American people, acting through their representatives, have paused in their labors to honor the achievements of these people.

The Congressional Medal of Honor is not awarded lightly. Nor should it be.

The fighting men of this nation have always been brave and have never failed to give their best to a challenge. And the American people, in their wisdom, have devised suitable awards and decorations to commemorate those deeds.

But one award, above all, is reserved for nothing less than the most heroic effort a serviceman is capable of. It is reserved for those acts which not only display a conspicuous valor, but are performed at the risk of life and beyond what even his duty demands.

So extraordinary are the sacrifices which this medal awards -- and so stringent are the criteria for consideration -- that barely more than a handful have been awarded in the 104 years that the decoration has been in existence.

Because the Medal of Honor represents the highest standards which our armed forces are capable of achieving, and because it stands alone as a tribute to the fighting spirit of the greatest democracy on earth, we must never allow its recipients to be forgotten.

That is why ceremonies like this one today are not mere exercises, not mere formalities or routine observances. They are living proof that, even in the most comfortable times of peace, this nation remembers those who cut their lives short so that ours might be prolonged and prosperous -- those who gave up their most precious possession so that we might keep our liberty and ensure it to those who come after us.

We are here because we forget the cost of our freedom only at our peril. Freedom is man-made -- and like any other work of human beings, its future is never secure. Like any other creation of men and women, it is never finished, once and for all.

We live whether we like it or not, in a tense world with the ever-present threat of armed conflict. And when one generation keeps our freedom safe in their lifetime, they do not esteem the work finished -- but only pass it on to the next generation, to be protected and nourished in a sacred trust.

Those whom we honor here today have passed on that responsibility. Joined in their spirit, and strengthened by their example, we will do our best to keep that trust.

# # # #

Colalillo

- Col-ä-lillo -

(Mike Colalillo  
- Duluth -)

REMARKS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

VETERANS' BICENTENNIAL OBSERVANCE

~~Lunch~~

FORT SNELLING, MINNESOTA

✓ Nathaniel De Sue Jr. (Nate)

MAY 15, 1976

Chairman

✓ Marvin Berdesmeier

✓ Rev clergy.

(- Mrs Aubin  
Gold Star mother)

Donald Skinder

WE STAND HERE IN A YEAR OF PEACE FOR THE AMERICAN  
PEOPLE. THE THUNDER AND TUMULT OF WAR SEEM FAR BEHIND US  
TODAY -- HERE ALONG THE QUIET OF THE RIVER AND AMONG THESE  
GRASSY FIELDS,

BUT WHILE WE HAVE THE LEISURE TO REMEMBER HARDER TIMES,  
WE DO NOT HAVE THE LUXURY TO FORGET -- TO FORGET THAT PEACE  
IS ALWAYS HARD-EARNED, AND THAT THE SECURITY OF OUR PEOPLE  
HAS BEEN BOUGHT WITH THE BLOOD OF OUR SOLDIERS SINCE THE  
TURBULENT BIRTH OF OUR NATION.

WE DO NOT HAVE THE LUXURY TO FORGET THAT THE LIBERTY WE  
ENJOY, THE SAFE CONDUCT OF OUR DAILY LIVES AND, YES, THE SOLID  
GROUND WE WALK UPON HAVE BEEN VOUCHERED SAFE FOR US OVER THE  
YEARS BY AN AMERICAN SERVICEMAN.

HE MAY HAVE BEEN CROUCHED IN A GULLEY WITH HIS MUSKET AS  
THE REDCOATS ATTACKED -- OR HE MAY HAVE LAIN IN A FOXHOLE IN THE

~~SOUTH~~ OF FRANCE WHERE THE ENEMY STOOD ENTRENCHED BEFORE HIM.

*or he may have fought and died in the Cold War in Korea  
or in the Rice Paddy of Vietnam*

BUT WHEREVER HE WAS, AND HOWEVER HE SERVED, HE WAS PART OF

THE SACRED TRADITION BORNE BY EVERY CITIZEN WHO EVER SHOULDERED

ARMS TO KEEP THIS NATION FREE.

WE ARE HERE TODAY TO RECALL THAT TRADITION AND WE ARE

HERE TO HONOR THOSE WHO SPENT THEIR ENERGY AND THEIR VERY LIVES

TO PRESERVE OUR UNION, OUR WAY OF LIFE, AND THE GLORIOUS VISION

ON WHICH THIS NATION WAS FOUNDED TWO CENTURIES AGO -- ~~AND WHICH~~ *That Vision*

*of a free people graced by the gifts of life, liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness*

STILL ILLUMINES OUR COURSE IN THIS HISTORIC YEAR, AND WILL

CONTINUE TO DO SO, UNDIMINISHED, FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION,

~~IN THE FUTURE.~~

L BUT WE ALSO HAVE ANOTHER HONORABLE TASK HERE TODAY. WE HAVE  
THE PRIVILEGE TO DEDICATE A PORTION OF THIS GROUND TO THOSE WHO  
DISTINGUISHED THEMSELVES -- WHOSE BRAVERY AND SELFLESS DEVOTION

BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY HAS BEEN SO GREAT THAT THE ENTIRE NATION

HAS TAKEN NOTE ~~SO GREAT THAT THE ENTIRE UNITED AMERICAN PEOPLE,~~

*and*  
ACTING THROUGH ~~THEIR~~ *the elected* REPRESENTATIVES, ~~HAVE PAUSED IN THEIR LABORS~~ *of the people, have*

~~HONOR THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THESE PEOPLE.~~ *Honored them appropriately honored them.*

L THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR IS NOT AWARDED LIGHTLY,

L NOR SHOULD IT BE. *It is the award of a grateful people*  
~~to bestowed upon those whom we know as~~ *to be bestowed upon those whom we know as* Heroes.

THE FIGHTING MEN OF THIS NATION HAVE ALWAYS BEEN BRAVE AND

HAVE NEVER FAILED TO GIVE THEIR BEST TO A CHALLENGE. L AND THE

AMERICAN PEOPLE, IN THEIR WISDOM, HAVE DEVISED SUITABLE AWARDS

AND DECORATIONS TO COMMEMORATE THOSE DEEDS.

BUT ONE AWARD, ABOVE ALL, IS RESERVED FOR NOTHING LESS THAN  
THE MOST HEROIC EFFORT A SERVICEMAN IS CAPABLE OF. IT IS RESERVED  
FOR THOSE ACTS WHICH NOT ONLY DISPLAY A CONSPICUOUS VALOR, BUT ARE  
PERFORMED AT THE RISK OF LIFE AND BEYOND WHAT EVEN HIS DUTY DEMANDS.

SO EXTRAORDINARY ARE THE SACRIFICES WHICH THIS MEDAL HONORS  
AWARDS -- AND SO STRINGENT ARE THE CRITERIA FOR CONSIDERATION --  
THAT BARELY MORE THAN A HANDFUL HAVE BEEN AWARDED IN THE  
104 YEARS THAT THE DECORATION HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE.

BECAUSE THE MEDAL OF HONOR REPRESENTS THE HIGHEST STANDARDS  
WHICH OUR ARMED FORCES ARE CAPABLE OF ACHIEVING, AND BECAUSE  
IT STANDS ALONE AS A TRIBUTE TO THE FIGHTING SPIRIT OF THE  
GREATEST DEMOCRACY ON EARTH, WE MUST NEVER ALLOW ITS RECIPIENTS  
TO BE FORGOTTEN.

↳ THAT IS WHY CEREMONIES LIKE THIS ONE TODAY ARE NOT MERE  
EXERCISES, NOR MERE FORMALITIES OR ROUTINE OBSERVANCES. ↳ THEY  
ARE LIVING PROOF THAT, EVEN IN THE MOST COMFORTABLE TIMES OF  
PEACE, THIS NATION REMEMBERS THOSE WHO CUT THEIR LIVES SHORT  
SO THAT OURS MIGHT BE PROLONGED AND PROSPEROUS -- THOSE WHO  
GAVE UP THEIR MOST PRECIOUS POSSESSION SO THAT WE MIGHT  
KEEP OUR LIBERTY AND ENSURE IT TO THOSE WHO COME AFTER US. •

~~WE ARE HERE BECAUSE WE FORGET THE COST OF OUR FREEDOM~~

~~ONLY AT OUR PERIL.~~ ↳ FREEDOM IS MAN-MADE -- AND LIKE ANY  
OTHER WORK OF HUMAN BEINGS, ITS FUTURE IS NEVER SECURE. ✓

↳ LIKE ANY OTHER CREATION OF MEN AND WOMEN, IT IS NEVER  
FINISHED, ONCE AND FOR ALL.

WE LIVE, WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT, IN A TENSE WORLD WITH THE EVER-PRESENT THREAT OF ARMED CONFLICT. AND WHEN ONE GENERATION KEEPS OUR FREEDOM SAFE IN THEIR LIFETIME, THEY DO NOT ESTEEM THE WORK FINISHED -- BUT ONLY PASS IT ON TO THE NEXT GENERATION, TO BE PROTECTED AND NOURISHED IN A SACRED TRUST.

THOSE WHOM WE HONOR HERE TODAY HAVE PASSED ON THAT RESPONSIBILITY. JOINED IN THEIR SPIRIT, AND STRENGTHENED BY THEIR EXAMPLE, WE WILL DO OUR BEST TO KEEP THAT TRUST.

"Armed Forces Day" reminds us that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. To be prepared, strong and secure in our military power, is a responsibility and duty second to none. Peace through strength - the ~~strength~~ <sup>power</sup> of our armed forces, the ~~strength~~ <sup>productivity</sup> of our economy, the faith & confidence of our people - these are the True Power of America.



# Minnesota Historical Society

Copyright in this digital version belongs to the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, link to, or email content, however, for individual use.

To request permission for commercial or educational use, please contact the Minnesota Historical Society.



[www.mnhs.org](http://www.mnhs.org)