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Let Reserve Officers Continue to Hold High the Torch

Strom Thurmond

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In a Broadway play about George Washington some years ago, the Father of our country said, "These liberties will seem easy, by and by, when nobody has to die to get them."

Fourteen years ago on a December 7th the United States paid a stiff price for a state of unpreparedness; a military situation warned against by President Washington on numerous occasions throughout his lifetime. That "Day of Infamy" will lodge in the memory of Americans as one never to be forgotten.

The long, hard road that ended with Japan's unconditional surrender was soaked with the blood of American boys. It was lined with milestones we'd never heard of before—places like Guadalcanal, Tulagi, Iwo Jima, Okinawa—where today rows of crosses and Stars of David mark the graves of men dear to us all.

Those markers are mute witness to the bravery of Americans. But they're also tokens of our shortsightedness and indifference. It took Pearl Harbor to make us realize that freedom is indivisible—that a dictator who starts by trampling human rights in Germany can eventually lead a young American to a grave in Saipan.

Now we know that aggression anywhere in the World can threaten the safety and security of a man and his family in Omaha, Providence or San Antonio. Consequently, we're building our strength to block the advance of communism—to defend ourselves from internal subversion and external attack.

This month we observe National Defense Week. As the nation emphasizes the necessity for active and reserve forces adequate to meet any type of emergency, our thoughts are centered also on those who have made the supreme sacrifice in the defense of freedom and justice. As we remember those relieved of their earthly responsibilities, the words of Washington's will ring like a bell above their graves. For within our time, more than half a million Americans have died defending the liberties which, in days of peace, too many take for granted.

Like the rest of their countrymen, reservists who fought in two World Wars and the Korean conflict were proud and alert to America's heritage of freedom. In the mud and filth as they considered the cause for which they were prepared to die, many saw the United States in a new dimension. America had become something more than the ad-writer's picture of baseball and Mom's hot apple pie. Reservists as typical Americans saw their country as a way of life composed of many wonderful ideas; and what's more, promised themselves if they came out alive to do something to achieve them, such as:

- Every man has a responsibility to the defense of his homeland and should have the opportunity to prepare himself accordingly.
- That Regulars and Reserves are members of one team—that neither occupies a privileged status over the companion component.
- That recognition, opportunity and advancement in the military forces must be on an equitable basis.
- That experience and maturity are paramount elements in guiding the youth of our nation in their military responsibilities.

And these ideas and symbols of our way of life became something to live and work for.

Those who came back remembered the new-found image of America—and remembered the hopes and ideas of those who fell in battle. That's why, today, ROA as the representative of Reserve Officers service-wide, is conducting its crusade toward objectives it believes imperative to the defense of the United States.

The poet of "In Flanders Fields" said, in the voice of a fallen World War I doughboy:

To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high;
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

So, as our nation renders its observance of National Defense Week, let Reserve officers continue to hold high the torch. Let us all rededicate ourselves to the vision of America as we see it now, for which so many have died—but not in vain!

FOR WHICH SO MANY HAVE DIED . . .