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Ladies and gentlemen, America will pause on this Memorial Day to honor the men and women who died in their country's wars so that this nation and this society, founded as they are upon freedom, might endure these 193 years...and more.

In deep gratitude and in deep reverence, we shall pay tribute to these heroes by patriotic programs, by decorating their graves with flowers and by other public events such as this held today to honor their memory.

Important as these public events are in honoring their memory and sacrifices, the silent tribute we pay them in our minds and hearts must remain the most meaningful.

Memorial Day, 1969 comes at a moment in our lives that is filled with poignant reminders that give this patriotic holiday deepest meaning.

Just days from now there will be observed the 25th anniversary of D-Day when allied forces two and a half million strong stormed the beaches of Normandy and Southern France to launch the Crusade in Europe.

On that particular June day in 1944, the men who died in those landings met with their lives the threat to freedom and human decency that came from a cruel onslaught of a power-mad despot. The barbarian that history will remember as Adolph Hitler who nearly brought the world to its knees and to the brink of another dark age.

This event is from a distant year...a time mentioned in your history books... for you young people. But this Memorial Day also gives harsh...even brutal emphasis to the toll of war...to the price of freedom.

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PAMPHLET FILE

For just weeks ago this nation saw her casualties in the Vietnam War surpass the 33,629 Americans who gave their lives in the Korean War. We must note with sadness that the Vietnam War is now the fourth **costliest** in American lives in this country's history.

The American Legion...from which I come as a speaker on this occasion... reflects through its membership the sacrifices that this 20th century alone has demanded of those who have lived through this period.

The Legion was formed in Paris in the wake of World War I by doughboys who had fought the war often referred to in our history books as "the war to end all wars." But the organization that they formed in 1919 was destined before reaching this current 50th anniversary observance to open its ranks to the veterans of three other major wars. The latest group joining is the new generation of veterans who served during the current Vietnam Period.

Just weeks ago The American Legion by its 50th anniversary Gift to the Nation...a permanent and intricate system of lighting for the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington National Cemetery...paid a lasting tribute to the heroes of all wars and their sacrifices.

This gift at the national shrine in Washington also is an expression of this organization and this nation's hope for peace...a hope that there can come an end to the human and material sacrifices that wars have demanded. The hope and the need for peace were the themes of the message that President Nixon delivered when he formally accepted this gift for the Nation.

This is the same prayer that this Memorial Day expresses...in ceremonies in villages and cities across this land.

Those who have fought the wars of this nation, as American Legionnaires have, can testify that there is no harvest of glory...only a harvest of sacrifices... in wars.

Our experiences in war prompts our dedication and our labors for peace and our support of this nation's efforts in behalf of peace with freedom and dignity for all men. These experiences have made us all the more appreciative...all the more grateful...for the men and women who have earned our homage on this day.

On this day let us remember that these men and women made it possible for this nation to endure on its solid foundation of freedom.

They have made it possible for you as a new generation to find all the opportunities and hopes that a free society offers all of us. This is not, I emphasize, to suggest that our society is perfect. It is not, but each of us must work to achieve its greatest promise. Each of us must have faith in America and her institutions. Each of us must work to build America and her institutions even stronger by our personal example and good and unselfish citizenship.

All that we have achieved as a nation and a society has depended, in the final analysis, on the value we have given to freedom.

All that you, as a new generation, will achieve in your turn at the helm of American affairs will, likewise, depend on the value that you place on freedom... on freedom in its broadest sense and with its deepest meaning.

Your success at America's helm also will depend on how you use that freedom, wisely or unwisely, and how willing you are to make it meaningful to others here and in the larger world.

History often holds simple but eloquent truths for us if we are willing to search them out with mind and heart. Let this day be one that opens our eyes to this truth on freedom.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for your kind attention. It has been an honor for me to share these moments with you as a speaker from The American Legion.

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