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### Memorial Day, May 29, 1978

Vern Riffe

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SPEECH  
MEMORIAL DAY, 1978  
BEAVER, OHIO

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OVER ONE MILLION AMERICAN MEN AND WOMEN <sup>HAVE</sup> ~~HAS~~ DIED IN WARS AND  
CONFLICTS FROM THE BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL TO THE BEACHES AT NORMANDY  
TO THE JUNGLES OF VIETNAM. AND MANY MORE AMERICANS HAVE DIED AND  
NEVER BEEN ACCOUNTED FOR. / IN OUR OVER TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF  
EXISTENCE AS A NATION WE HAVE HAD TO FIGHT TO SURVIVE. / WE COULD  
NOT TAKE OUR FREEDOM FOR GRANTED. / WE COULD NOT REST CARELESSLY. / WE  
HAD TO SACRIFICE AND WORK -AND, YES, AT TIMES DIE. /

THE COST TO BE FREE IS VERY HIGH. PRESIDENT HARRY TRUMAN ONCE  
SAID,

"FREEDOM IS STILL EXPENSIVE. IT STILL COSTS MONEY. IT

STILL COSTS BLOOD. IT STILL CALLS FOR COURAGE AND ENDURANCE,

NOT ONLY IN SOLDIERS, BUT IN EVERY MAN AND WOMAN WHO IS FREE AND

WHO IS DETERMINED TO REMAIN FREE. FREEDOM MUST BE FOUGHT FOR

TODAY, JUST AS OUR FATHERS HAD TO FIGHT FOR FREEDOM WHEN THE

NATION WAS BORN."

YES, THE COST OF FREEDOM IS QUITE HIGH, BUT FREEDOM IS WORTH  
THE HIGH PRICE.

FREEDOM ALLOWS US TO GATHER HERE -BECAUSE WE WANT TO.   

FREEDOM ALLOWS US TO WORK WHERE WE WANT TO.

FREEDOM ALLOWS US TO TRAVEL WHERE WE WANT TO. A

FREEDOM ALLOWS US TO CRITICIZE OUR GOVERNMENT LEADERS

-WITHOUT FEAR OF GOING TO PRISON. A

FREEDOM ALLOWS US TO HAVE A SAY IN OUR COMMUNITY EVENTS. A

AS THE SAYING GOES, HOWEVER, FREEDOM IS NOT FREE. A

MEMORIAL DAY IS A SPECIAL DAY FOR OUR REFLECTION ON THE  
COST OF FREEDOM.

IT IS A BITTER-SWEET DAY BECAUSE, WHILE OUR HEARTS SWELL WITH  
PRIDE WHEN WE RECALL THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF OUR ARMED FORCES, WE HAVE  
TEARS AND SORROW FOR THOSE WHO WERE NEVER ABLE TO RETURN HOME

-HOME TO A MOTHER

-HOME TO A FATHER

-HOME TO A SPOUSE AND FAMILY

-HOME TO A JOB OR AN EDUCATION

-HOME TO OPPORTUNITY AND PROSPERITY

-AND HOME TO BE FREE.

LET'S NEVER FORGET THAT OUR FREEDOM IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR,

IT IS WORTH DYING FOR.



UNFORTUNATELY FREEDOM IS NOT LIKE A FAMILY HEIRLOOM THAT IS

EASILY PASSED ON FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION. MAYBE SOMEDAY

IT WILL BE LIKE THAT, BUT TODAY WE STILL HAVE TO BE PREPARED TO

FIGHT FOR OUR FREEDOM. IT SEEMS THAT EVERY NEW GENERATION FACES

A NEW CHALLENGE TO ITS FREEDOM AND HAS TO FIGHT TO RETAIN IT.

FOR ME AND MY GENERATION, IT WAS WORLD WAR II.

FOR OTHERS IT WAS KOREA.

FOR LATTER GENERATIONS IT WAS VIETNAM.

HOPEFULLY, THE FUTURE WILL NOT RESULT IN BATTLEFIELDS FOR

US LIKE ANGOLA -OR CHINA.

TODAY, ALL ACROSS OHIO, AND ACROSS THE UNITED STATES, THERE

ARE PARADES, SPEECHES, AND CEREMONIES IN COMMEMORATION OF OUR WAR

DEAD. THIS PAGENTRY IS MEANINGLESS UNLESS WE REFLECT UPON THE TRUE

VALUE OF OUR FREEDOM. WE MUST REMEMBER THAT FREEDOM HAS A HIGH  
COST -BOTH TO WIN IT AND TO RETAIN IT. |

WE MUST BE PREPARED TO DEFEND OUR FREEDOM IF IT IS NECESSARY  
TO DO SO AGAIN. | WE MUST NEVER FORGET THAT OVER A MILLION AMERICANS  
DIED TO PROTECT THIS NATION, ITS GOVERNMENT, AND ITS WAY OF LIFE.

TAKE A FEW MOMENTS. LOOK AROUND AT WHAT IS HERE.

<sup>VALLEY</sup>  
THIS ~~VALLEY~~ AND ITS HOLLOWES ARE HOME FOR FREE MEN AND WOMEN. |

THE STEAM RISING FROM THE A-PLANT, OFF TO THE WEST AND SOUTH,  
IS A SIGN OF STRENGTH.

THE PERSON STANDING NEXT TO YOU -SAY HELLO, SHAKE HIS HAND,  
SAY I'M GLAD TO BE FREE.

7-5-  
~~TRUTH OF THE INALIENABLE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE  
PEOPLE."~~

~~TODAY IS A MEMORABLE DAY~~ THE PRECIOUS RIGHTS  
PROCLAIMED ON THIS DAY ~~TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO~~ SEALED  
IN BLOOD BY PAST GENERATIONS IN WARS AGAINST THOSE WHO  
WOULD THREATEN THESE RIGHTS, REPRESENT TO THE WORLD  
TODAY THE LOFTY AND UNCOMPARED IDEALS WHICH ALL AMERICANS  
AND THOSE IN THE WORLD WHO LOVE FREEDOM MUST DEFEND  
AND PROTECT AGAINST ANY WHO WOULD SEEK TO DENY THESE  
TRUTHS. A

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE HERE, TODAY, ~~ON~~ ON THIS  
MEMORIAL  
INDEPENDENCE DAY, LOOK INTO OUR HEARTS AND OUR MINDS  
AND WEIGH THE TREMENDOUS ADVANTAGES WE HAVE IN THIS  
COUNTRY. A IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE WEIGH AND REFLECT



UPON THE PRECIOUS BUT FRAGILE LIBERTIES OF FREE GOVERN-  
MENT. THIS NATION HAS, ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS, DISPLAYED  
ITS ~~INDISPENSIBLE~~ <sup>GREAT SUBDUED</sup> COURAGE TO PROTECT THESE LIBERTIES. IT  
IS FITTING, THEN, THAT WE PAUSE TODAY TO REDEDICATE  
OURSELVES TO THOSE IDEALS FOR WHICH SO MANY HAVE DIED  
THAT OTHERS MIGHT REMAIN UNFETTERED.

PRAY GOD, THAT WE SHALL ALWAYS KEEP THE FAITH  
WITH THOSE BRAVE AMERICANS WHO, IN SACRIFICING THEIR LIVES,  
HAVE HELPED OUR COUNTRY THROUGHOUT THE PAGES OF HISTORY  
TO KEEP FOREVER BURNING THE ETERNAL TORCH OF FREEDOM.

PRAY THAT THROUGH DIVINE LOVE AND AN ABIDING  
FAITH IN ALMIGHTY GOD THAT OUR NATION WILL REMAIN UNITED  
AND FREE -- AND THAT THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER AS THE  
SYMBOL OF THE ~~INDISPENSIBLE~~ <sup>PROTECTED</sup> RIGHTS OF ALL MANKIND, AS

EXPRESSED IN THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, SHALL  
CONTINUE TO WAVE IN TRIUMPH OVER THE LAND OF THE FREE  
AND THE BRAVE -- AS IT HAD SO GLORIOUSLY WAVED AT  
GETTYSBURG, OMAHA BEACH, GUADACANAL.

IT IS APPROPRIATE THEN THAT WE GATHER ~~TO~~ TODAY  
TO RENEW THE SPIRIT OF OUR FOREFATHERS AND BE MADE AWARE  
OF OUR GREAT HERITAGE, ~~ON THIS DAY OF CELEBRATION AND~~  
~~REJOICING, LET US FEEL SOMETHING OF GRATITUDE WITH OUR~~  
~~JOY AS WE WITNESS THE FIREWORKS BURSTING IN AIR, LET~~  
*LET* US GIVE THOUGHT TO OUR DUTY AS A CITIZEN OF THIS GREAT  
STATE AND NATION -- ~~AS WE THRILL TO THE SOUNDS AND COLORS~~  
~~OF THE BELLS RUNG IN THE CHURCHES AND THE STRIKING DISPLAY~~  
~~OF LIGHT, NOISE, AND SMOKE OF THE ROCKETS,~~ LET US RENEW  
AND STRENGTHEN OUR FAITH IN THOSE PRINCIPLES WHICH ARE

FOUND IN THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE. OTHER NATIONS  
MAY RISE AND CRUMBLE -- NEW TYRANTS MAY ARISE TO THREATEN  
THE PEACE OF THE WORLD --YET SO LONG AS MEN EXIST WHO REVERE  
THE PRICIPLES UPON WHICH THIS NATION WAS FOUNDED..."LIFE,  
LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS", WE SHALL REMAIN  
STRONG. DESTINED TO GREATNESS AND RENOWN THE FLAG OF  
THIS REPUBLIC SHALL WAVE ON ITS PRIDE AND GLORY.

IN CLOSING, I WOULD LIKE TO READ TO YOU SEVERAL  
VERSES FROM ONE OF MY FAVORITE POEMS, THE AUTHOR IS  
UNKNOWN, BUT HIS WORDS AND FEELINGS BELONG TO EACH OF US  
AND TO ALL AMERICANS YET UNBORN. THESE THRILLING LINES  
DESCRIBE VIVIDLY THE GIVING OF THE SIGNAL WHICH TOLLED  
THE NEWS THAT THE DECALRATION OF INDEPENDENCE HAD BEEN  
SIGNED.