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REMARKS OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)

DEDICATION OF EAST COAST MEMORIAL

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

May 23, 1963

It was not a long time ago, as time goes. It was scarcely twenty years ago when it all took place.

In the dawn and in the dusk and through the day, men and women went forth from this nation--to Africa, to Asia, to Europe, to the South Pacific, and to all the far places of the world. Week after week, they went, and month after month, and year after year.

Before it was done, eight million men and women in battle dress were outside the borders and, within, millions more were ready to go. And behind them, there was a nation with a whole people united in common purpose.

They came, these men and women in the Armed Forces, from the farms, the mines, the desks and the work benches. They came from slum and suburb, from country and town. They came from Utah and New York, from Puerto Rico and Georgia, from all the States and places in the land. They came from the long-rooted strains of Americans and from those so new that even the English language was still halting on the tongue. They came in all colors, all faiths, all creeds. And they were welcome in all colors, faiths and creeds.

Some came with fierce anger. Some came with cold hate. And some came with neither hate nor anger. Some knew why they came and some did not. Some came because they were told; and some because they told themselves.

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In the end, it did not matter who they were, what they were, what they did, where they had come from, or why. They became--all of them--the sinew and bone and muscle of a mighty arm of a nation. The nation's purpose was their purpose and it was they who bore the great costs and dangers of that purpose through the long years of the war.

A common human hope joined these Americans with ~~those of~~ others, with the English, with Russians, with Chinese, with Frenchmen and many more. And, in the end, this massive force swept, as a great wave, over the ramparts of the tyrants. It tore loose a deadly weight from the minds and backs of hundreds of millions and flung it into the cesspools of history.

And when this force had spent itself, for a brief moment, men and women throughout the world drank deeply of the meaning of peace and freedom. Many clutched that moment and held it. Many soon forgot or were compelled soon to forget.

And millions of those who had done so much to forge the moment were not there to live it when it came. Some had fought and died years before and some the day before. They had died in their homes or down the street or on the edge of town, against a wall, in a ditch, a courtyard or an open field. And others had died a long way from home, in an alien land, or against a vast sky or in the pitch-dark of the sea's depths.

Countless Americans were among those who did not see the bright flash of freedom and peace which swept the earth when the conflict ended. They died in all the places and in all the ways of war's death. Today, most of them lie here in the earth of America or in a plot apart in other

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nations which is of this nation because they are there. But for others, we are not able to provide even a grave with a cross or a star to mark their last traces.

These are the missing. And it is they who have summoned us.

How much do we know of these missing men, we who stand here today? We know their names. We know the numbers they bore in the Army and Air Force, the Coast Guard, in the Navy and the Marines. But what do we really know of them? Do we know them as a wife, a mother, a father, a sister, brother or friend might know them? For those close to them, each life lost was as a star in a human universe, a star whose light was bright for awhile and then, in a moment, ceased to burn.

We cannot know that world, we who stand here, that closed but infinite world of each man's circle. What we can know, what all in this nation can know, and all the world's people should know, is that these deaths are a debt yet to be redeemed. And those whom we could not even bury are of its pledge.

Let us not delude ourselves. We do not pay the debt with these words today. We do not end it with these steles of granite pointed towards the sky nor with names struck upon stone.

We seek the words to praise these men and they are wanting. We search to express our thanks to these men and even the genius of the sculptor is not enough.

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The debt remains unpaid. What we do and say here today is not needed by these men whom we honor. It is needed by ourselves. It is needed to remind us that the debt is unpaid. For these men whose names we record, and the countless others throughout the world whose passing was marked or unmarked, did not die for words of praise or memorials of stone. They died that those who lived might have a chance to build this nation strong and wise in justice and in equity for all, in a world free, at last, from the tyrants of fear, hate and oppression.

It was a long time ago, as time goes, that they died. It was not twenty years but fifty years ago or a century or a millenium. For they died, not only on the Normandy Beachhead but at Verdun, at Gettysburg, at Valley Forge and in all the places and in all the times that the human right to be human has been redeemed.

If we would honor these dead, then--all of them--if we would praise them, if we would repay them, let us ask ourselves what we have done with this chance which they have given us. And let us ask ourselves again and again what we have done until there is, in this nation and in this world, the need to ask it no longer.