

## Memorial Day, 2002 Stan Stahl, Ph.D.

Today is the first Memorial Day since the atrocities of 9-11. Two hundred and fifty seven days ago America was put on notice by the totalitarian enemies of freedom and liberty that they seek the destruction of our way of life. We are once again engaged in a great battle for freedom. As the world has gotten smaller, this battle will not be concluded until the blessings of freedom and liberty are extended throughout the globe.

Speaking at Gettysburg, one hundred and thirty-nine years ago, in an earlier battle for freedom, Abraham Lincoln challenged us to be “dedicated to the great task remaining before us--that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion--that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.”

Today it is our turn, a time for us to take increased devotion to the great cause of freedom, a cause for which so many have given their last full measure of devotion.

Today it is our turn, as we confront the opportunity of a new birth of freedom, extending the fundamental human right of government of the people, by the people, for the people throughout the earth.

An unknown author wrote: *“The growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life and rest in unvisited tombs.”*

It is these men and women we remember on this Memorial Day. These men and women whose memory we honor. These men and women, whose unfinished work it is our duty to carry on.

Our obligation, our duty, our responsibility is to build upon the goodness of their lives and the extent of their sacrifice so that our children and grandchildren may grow up to live in a world where all live free, where nation no longer lifts up sword against nation, and where all, regardless of circumstance, have true opportunity.

This obligation, this duty we have to those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for freedom was movingly stated by Tom Hanks’ Captain John Miller in the movie “Saving Private Ryan.” As Miller is dying from the German bullet he took saving Ryan, Miller says to him: “Earn this.”

So it is for us. We must earn their ultimate sacrifice.

Every year on the Jewish High Holidays I read the following passage that articulates the duty we have to those who came before:

*“Alas for those who cannot sing, but die with all their music in them.’ Let us treasure the time we have, and resolve to use it well, counting each moment precious--a chance to apprehend some truth, to experience some beauty, to conquer some evil, to relieve some suffering, to love and be loved, to achieve something of lasting warmth.”*

Let freedom ring.