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(Smith)
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NAVY

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: U.S.S. IOWA
DOVER, DELAWARE
MONDAY, APRIL 24, 1989

Ladies and gentlemen, my fellow Americans.

Each of us brings a perspective to life and, now, to death.

The mother who has lost a son. The wife whose husband was her confidant and best friend. The little girl who tagged along, bat and glove in hand, as her older brother -- her hero -- ventured off to Little League.

An old Indian saying observes, "No one can really know a man until he has walked in his moccasins." My friends, I -- no one -- can walk in your moccasins. We cannot truly -- cannot presume to -- know your grief, despair, and injuries of the heart

Yet we can try to understand -- understand as human beings. For we are all children of the same God. We all inhabit a common earth. And our fate is not divisible.

There are times when America gathers as a Nation, and as a family. This such a time. We gather in sadness, but also in gratitude: Sadness for the men who reflect the greatness of

America; gratitude for their courage and sacrifice, and for the example of their lives.

I, also, bring a perspective to today. For as Commander-in-Chief, I feel deeply, personally, the deaths of these 47 heroes. I come here, too, as a Navy man. And, like you, so many times I have heard that stirring anthem -- the anthem that can move strong men to tears.

Its title is Eternal Father, Strong to Save. And its lyrics tell the Navy Story, which is the Story of America: " _____ ."

My friends, at times like these -- when tragedy befalls the American Family -- we ask some simple questions: How, to what avail, and above all, why?

In one sense, I promise you: We will find the why -- the circumstances -- of this tragedy. Of that, you have my word. But in a larger sense, there are no simple answers to the questions which haunt us. For we will not -- cannot -- know why God has called them home -- not until that day when we, too, enter the finest house of all.

Twenty years ago, speaking at Dwight Eisenhower's funeral, President Nixon observed, "He came from the heart of America." And it was twenty-five years earlier this spring that Franklin

Roosevelt, addressing America on D-Day, spoke this moving prayer:
"Our sons, pride of our Nation. Lead them straight and true."

My friends, the U.S.S. Iowa -- its name, and its men --
embodied the heart of America. And they were -- will always be -
- the pride of our Nation. They urged us to keep America as a
citadel of freedom. They told us to use our strength to keep the
peace. Even now, their voices speak through the silences. Even
now, in death, these heroes speak for life.

In coming years, let us, too, speak for life. And let us
honor the Men of the U.S.S. Iowa. Honor them daily, decently,
with the lives we lead.

We are here to comfort one another -- for as a family, we
can do no less. God bless you and keep you. Our Nation grieves
for you. And this, I pledge: We will never forget your sailors
of the sea.

Thank you, and God bless America.

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