

was going to take America to do something about it.

We were fortunate to have strong leaders: President Franklin Roosevelt knew that a full-scale mobilization was needed, and that it was going to take the entire country pitching in to properly prepare our military for war. Army Chief of Staff George Marshall revamped the military and crafted overall strategy.

One who was watching the American reaction and knew what it meant was British Prime Minister Winston Churchill: "To have the United States at our side was to me the greatest joy. Now at this very moment I knew the United States was in the war, up to the neck and in to the death. So we had won after all . . . Hitler's fate was sealed. Mussolini's fate was sealed. As for the Japanese, they would be ground to powder."

Thousands upon thousands of Americans answered the call to arms, flooding into enlistment centers. They knew the danger; news reports out of Europe and Asia made the mounting death tolls clear. Japan's assault on Pearl Harbor was of a piece with its strategy to dominate the Pacific, capturing nearly every outpost of significance. As they became entrenched, dislodging them would only be more difficult and cost even more lives.

American courage and commitment would prove superior to the great evil it confronted. Our sailors, marines and soldiers battled every step of the way, first at the Battle of Midway on June 6th, 1942, and then through the long slog of the Guadalcanal campaign (August 1942–February 1943).

Meanwhile, the American fighting men joined the European front, and our allies from Britain, Poland and many other nations. First in North Africa the German armies were confronted under Operation Torch in November 1942, which culminated in the defeat of Germany's greatest general, Erwin Rommel, by early 1943.

The war then moved to Sicily, then Italy—at each step our men giving better than they got. The Battle of Monte Cassino during the first half of 1944 led to the liberation of Rome.

The greatest single act of courage came on D-Day, the largest one-day offensive in history, on June 6th, 1944. Over 10,000 allies were killed that day in breaching Fortress Europe, and another 200,000 would die over the next two months during the Battle of Normandy. American fighting men, in concert with men from Britain and many other nations, stormed the beaches of northern France. They charged through a hail of machine-gun fire to gain the foothold they would use to liberate all of Europe.

The last major German offensive was the Battle of the Bulge, December 1944–January 1945, trying one last time to keep the war outside of Germany. American supply lines had been stretched since D-Day, and the 101st Airborne Division found themselves surrounded at Bastogne. A hundred miles from their nearest fellow units, the situation was grim, and the German commander demanded they surrender. The American attitude, here and throughout the war, was summed up by the response: "Nuts."

While many persevered in the belief that liberty would prevail, educated opinion was cynical. Many believed that the captured lands could never be freed, even assuming that the aggressors could be forced into a stalemate. What force could possibly stop them?

It was up to the American GIs to dispel the doubts and charge into the fire. Every step of the way they knew that many of them would never be coming home again. But they knew the importance of their task—as Dwight Eisenhower said: "History does not long entrust the care of freedom to the weak or the timid." Our fighting men were neither.

Today, at long last, we unveil the monument to those who saved civilization in World War II. We thank them for their sacrifice and pray that no struggle so titanic ever again need take place.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JOE KNOLLENBERG

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 18, 2004

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, regretfully, my plane was unavoidably delayed yesterday and I was unable to record my vote in the House of Representatives. Had I been here, I would have voted "yea" on rollcalls 177, 178, and 179.

MAINE VOICE OF DEMOCRACY SCHOLARSHIP WINNER

HON. THOMAS H. ALLEN

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 18, 2004

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with my colleagues an essay titled "My Commitment to America's Future," by Joseph B. Faucher of Augusta, Maine. Mr. Faucher is a winner of the 2004 Voice of Democracy broadcast scriptwriting contest. Each year the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and its Ladies Auxiliary hold a Voice of Democracy audio essay competition for high school students. This year's theme was "My Commitment to America's Future." I congratulate all of this year's 59 Voice of Democracy Scholarship winners.

It is vitally important that we encourage our young people in their understanding of and commitment to civic virtue. The life and health of our democracy are dependent on citizen engagement. Democracy must be constantly re-created. In Mr. Faucher's words, a commitment to America is "a commitment to protect the freedoms, liberties, and rights that this country was founded on . . . to make this country an even better place for the next generation . . . to put time, effort, and thought into being American." The rest of his essay speaks for itself.

"MY COMMITMENT TO AMERICA'S FUTURE"

(By Joseph Faucher)

I Pledge Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America. . . . By the time I was four, I could recite the Pledge of Allegiance verbatim. I would stand straight, place my hand over my heart, and say those words without much thought. Pledging allegiance to one's country should never be taken lightly.

It was not until I was in the fifth grade and learning about American history that I began to understand and appreciate the Pledge of Allegiance. And, I can honestly say, each year my depth of understanding for

those words increases as does my commitment to this great country.

"I pledge allegiance," what does it truly mean? To me, it is promising my commitment to America. A commitment to protect the freedoms, liberties, and rights that his country was founded upon. A commitment to make this country an even better place for the next generation. A commitment to put time, effort, and thought into being an American!

The founding fathers provided America with a very solid foundation, the Constitution, the living, written backbone of our country. Imagine, in less than 100 working days, in a document of just 4543 words, fifty-five men with many conflicting and diverse ideas drafted a constitution that has served this country for over 216 years. In all that time, in spite of all the advances in science and technology, changes in culture and society, and influences from other countries and peoples, there have only been 17 revisions in the form of amendments.

It is important to note that people in the 18th century were not all that different than people in the 21st century. There have always been differences in philosophy, political ideology, and priorities. But in spite of these differences, the founding fathers were able to produce a document that has survived the test of time and has influenced all countries that have developed constitutions since then.

We should not let our differences in political ideologies impact negatively on America. Differences can spawn creativity. Differences should not divide a country but make it stronger. America, not a person, not a group, not a people, but a united nation. A united nation as a whole has one mind set and one set of goals. We should not let our differences affect our allegiance. My commitment to America will not waver regardless of whether I agree or disagree with a particular person or group whether it be my neighbor, the mayor of my city, the governor of my state, my Representatives in the House and Senate, or even the President.

After September 11th, American flags were flown everywhere in our country. They were on houses, cars, pins, and other items. Where are all those flags now? My commitment to America cannot come just at times of great tragedy and trauma. It is not enough to remember that I am an American when tragedy strikes. Our commitment must be consistent, every day, every minute, every second. It simply does not take long to do something to remind myself, and others that we are Americans, and that everyone has the responsibility to make a tangible, visible commitment to America.

Commitment is not just enjoying all of the freedoms, rights, and liberties America has to offer. Commitment is not just taking a stand when I think one of my freedoms or rights has been violated. My commitment to America must include getting involved; to be active in civic organizations, to communicate and give input to my representatives, to voice my opinion without putting anyone else's down, from the time of my 18th birthday onward to vote in every election no matter how small, and to take the time to truly understand the issues, to encourage others to become involved, and to cherish and never take for granted all that America provides.

As part of my commitment to America, I will not take for granted what it means to pledge allegiance to the flag. I will take my commitment seriously and work toward fulfilling it every day for the rest of my life. I will stand straight, place my hand over my heart, and say the words with great pride, strength, and meaning; I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and what it stands for and what it means to me.