

HEADQUARTERS SECOND BATTALION, 331ST INFANTRY
APO 83
UNITED STATES ARMY

21 Aug 44

The following is a translation of the speech made by the Mayor of St. Briac at the conclusion of the memorial Mass held for three American dead.

American friends, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The 15th of August has brought to all the people of St. Briac an unsurpassed joy and generations to come will preserve its memory.

Today it is fitting that we gather here to offer in sadness our tears and regrets to the tears of those who knew and loved these young men whose memory has brought us together.

They came from their far away land to save us. We had no arms; they gave us theirs; they brought us more than that--their hearts their will to conquer and their willingness to die for their country. We are now here because of the sacrifice they made at their combat post.

And now we weep as we once wept for beloved children. Our thoughts are in their country with their mothers, wives, children, fiancées, brothers and sisters to whom the news of their glorious death will bring great sorrow.

Would that we could console their grief stricken parents; our hearts are near them, their suffering is ours for our tears are mixed with those whom they left behind.

We would have liked to have buried these three glorious dead in our cemetery. However, we could not obtain permission from the American authorities. Indeed, we would have wept before their grave! How piously would we have gone there to pray for these men! With what zeal would we not have handed down to our children the sad and sweet duty of watching over their eternal sleep.

But since we could not carry out this sacred duty, we know how to better honor their memory. It is in remaining faithful, passionately faithful, to the idea for which they died -- the idea of liberty.

These are their hands today burnt in death which after four years of subjugation has been swept away. They are now with their soldier brothers, free of an odious servitude. We have contracted towards them, towards each of you, our American friends, a debt which we can never repay.

Americans! our dear friends! we have seen you go to battle our enemies. Our oppressors of four years built of steel and stone defenses which Hitler declared invulnerable. In a few short hours you reduced them.

Do you know what, above all, has caught our admiration? It is the stoical composure of your troops; their calm is so natural, and their attitude is so simple and straightforward without a bit of bluster. There is not one among you who has tried to act the hero. You are men of action, not words. You know how to die like heroes. All this, American friends, is very great and beautiful. We shall bear this memory of you at the bottom of our hearts.

Soldiers of Free America, fallen for a great idea - that the horrible Nazi oppression be swept from the face of the earth, sleep in peace! Your sacrifice has not been in vain!

You will rest in our cemetery. By a public subscription a monument will be erected in your memory. But the most touching, most human remembrance is that which our hearts will remember - it is the beautiful page of history which you have written, which our school children will be taught and which will be handed down from generation to generation.

Captain Woelner!
Pfc. Roy G. Posey!
Pfc. Sin J. MacDaniel!

Good-by
Good-by and Thank you.