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Media Contact: Melissa Giller

“THESE ARE THE BOYS OF POINTE DU HOC”; REMEMBERING RONALD REAGAN’S WORDS AND LEGACY ON THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY

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(SIMI VALLEY, Calif.) – On the 40th anniversary of D-Day, President Ronald Reagan flew to France to deliver historic remarks at the site of the U.S. Ranger Monument at Pointe du Hoc. The speech was written by White House speechwriter Peggy Noonan. President and Mrs. Reagan arrived at the Pointe du Hoc landing zone via Marine One and toured the area for about an hour before President Reagan delivered the speech. Nancy Reagan later told a Washington Post reporter, “you wonder how in the world anybody made it.” **During his remarks, President Reagan ardently declared,**

“These are the boys of Pointe du Hoc. These are the men who took the cliffs. These are the champions who helped free a continent. These are the heroes who helped end a war.”

On June 1, 2019, Peggy Noonan remarked to the Reagan Foundation and Institute:

“Working with President Reagan was one of the honors of my life and I will never forget a conversation we had when he came back from Normandy after the 40th anniversary commemorations. He had been so moved to meet with and talk to the boys of Pointe du Hoc”, the Rangers who had taken the cliffs and who had returned for the anniversary. He told me that the day before the ceremony a group of young Rangers had dazzlingly recreated

the climb, and one of the D-Day veterans decided to go up with them just as he had forty years before, and made it to the top. Reagan was so moved by it. “Boy, that was something,” he said. People remember what Reagan said that day; but he remembered what they did.”

According to Presidential historian Douglas Brinkley’s book, *The Boys of Pointe Du Hoc*, “Everyone in attendance was overwhelmed by Reagan’s speech. Famed CBS newsman Walter Cronkite, by no means a pro-Reagan reporter, was visibly shaken by the oration....White House Chief of Staff James Baker noted that his boss that day was pitch-perfect, as if, for a few minutes, he actually personified the World War II generation. ‘I remember sitting in the audience, shaking my head, thinking, Boy oh boy, this is a dynamite moment,’ Baker recalled in a 2005 interview. ‘With Reagan what you saw is what you got. And the tears in his eyes that afternoon, believe me, they were real.’”

After delivering those remarks, President Reagan then went to the Omaha Beach Memorial at Omaha Beach, France where he delivered another set of remarks, saying,

“At this place of honor, we're humbled by the realization of how much so many gave to the cause of freedom and to their fellow man.”

Describing his visit to Omaha Beach in his diary, President Reagan wrote,

“This was the heart breaker—row on row of white marble crosses (& stars of David) more than 9000 of them. We have a picture of one—the grave of our Ann’s brother we’re giving to her. President of France Mitterrand arrived. Together we placed wreaths at the monument then I spoke. My speech contained many quotes from a letter I’d received a few days before the trip from a young lady whose father landed on D. Day. All her life she had heard his stories of what the day had meant to him. A few years ago he died of Cancer. He’d always said one day he would return to Omaha beach. She promised she’d do it for him. We made it possible for the family to be there. I had difficulty getting through my speech.”

When President Reagan passed away, Lisa Zanatta Henn was watching MSNBC. She watched as they played President Reagan's speech from Omaha Beach. Describing her reaction to seeing that on tv in his book, *The Boys of Pointe Du Hoc*, Douglas Brinkley wrote, "She started crying. She always felt safe when Reagan was alive; now there was a terrible void. 'He was, for my generation, the patriarch of WWII,' she noted. 'While Patton, Eisenhower, MacArthur, and all the others were bigwigs, Reagan represented the regular soldier, the GI Joes. He was their voice of remembrance.' Then, catching her breath, she said a line Reagan would have truly appreciated. 'He cared about our boys more than anybody else I ever knew.' That Reagan was able to convince not just Lisa Zanatta Henn but millions of WWII veterans' families of his deep empathy for them was one of his greatest political accomplishments. The story of D-day as the pervasive metaphor for American bravery and goodness endures for the ages to ponder."

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About The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute:

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute is the sole nonprofit organization created by President Reagan charged with continuing his legacy and sharing his principles - individual liberty, economic opportunity, global democracy, and national pride. The Foundation is a non-partisan organization which sustains the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum in Simi Valley, CA, the Reagan Center for Public Affairs, the Presidential Learning Center, The Air Force One Pavilion, and the Reagan Institute, which carries out the Foundation's mission in Washington, D.C. The Reagan Library houses 55 million pages of Gubernatorial, Presidential and personal papers and over 60,000 gifts and artifacts chronicling the lives of Ronald and Nancy Reagan. It now also serves as the final resting place of America's 40th President and his first lady. www.reaganfoundation.org