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SPEECH FOR BENEVOLENT AND PROTECTIVE ORDER OF  
ELKS MEMORIAL SERVICE

Prepared According to the Instructions of  
The Honorable Robert Dole

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SPEECH FOR BENEVOLENT AND PROTECTIVE ORDER OF  
ELKS MEMORIAL SERVICE

It is indeed fitting and proper that we in Elksdom set aside a period of time each December to pause in the quiet and serenity of our garden of memories and reflect upon the lives of our departed brothers. God in His infinite wisdom has called those with whom we have shared the fellowship of our Order to the Supreme Lodge above.

This ceremony is a tribute not only to those who have passed on, but is a challenge to us who are left to face tomorrow. There would be no meaning in this memorial service except for our belief in the future. The words we speak today would be mockery if we did not believe in the future and in the life everlasting.

As members of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, our departed brothers through their lives built temples of honor and virtue and unselfish devotion dedicated to the principles of our Order.

To the members of the bereaved families we extend our profound sympathy. We ask them to seek consolation in the fact that their loved ones' lives were filled with service to their fellowman.

Words are inadequate to express fully, on this occasion, the thoughts and emotions that lie deep within us. It is indeed difficult to express loss and sorrow merely by the way of utilization of words.

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The friendships and brotherhood found in Elkdom have few parallels in life. Each member of the Elks likes to speak of his Order as a "great" Order. But no Order can be "great" unless the individuals therein are "great". Our Order is what individual members make it. We are grateful for the lives we honor on this occasion.

It is not within the power of one man to completely evaluate the influence of another man's life. To each individual are given specific talents, characteristics, and thoughts, which make up what we call his personality, which, in turn, makes him unique among his associates. Each deed he performs, in his own way, has its influence in unknown paths.

As we glance back, we remember one beloved brother for his intense devotion to the duties of business, another for skill in a profession, and still another for integrity and moral purpose. We miss a friend for something as simple as a cheering smile, a word of encouragement, or the great wordless depths of understanding. We miss the pleasure of another's hearty handshake, or buoyance and love of life. The person whose little kindly deeds were known but to us alone, we miss most of all.

As we consider the traits of personality and character which endeared our departed brothers to us, we should pause to weigh how many opportunities for fellowship and understanding

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slip from those of us who remain, primarily because we are engrossed in our own individual spheres of duty. We are often too busy to enlarge our understanding and enrich our own character by wholeheartedly giving of ourselves in sincere friendship.

We, of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, refer to our fellow members as brothers. There is a rich implication in the term, my friends, that we ought not to lose in these hurried days of the mid-twentieth century. Brother is a word that has a real meaning within our Order.

It was once a widespread practice in everyday life to use the words "brothers" and "sisters." This usage has passed over into prominence in our fraternal orders. If we belong to the Order of Elks, we are brothers; and if we are brothers we are members of a fraternal family in which individuals have preeminence.

In a family, not only are the persons therein of unlimited worth individually, but they are bound together into a social whole; they are a community of affection. Brothers live together in understanding.

Historians tell us that every Roman boy was taught by his pedagogue to say with the poet, "Remember, O Roman, thou art born to rule the world." How fortunate that the founders of our Order went to another school. We find penned in the annals of Elk history the following words, which designate

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the general character of our Order.

[The Order of Elks] "therefore seeks to draw into its fraternal circle only those who delight in wholesome associations with congenial companions; who are deeply imbued with the spirit of patriotic loyalty and devotion; who recognize the obligations of human brotherhood. . . ."

With such characteristics as I have quoted, our Order has grown from a modest but purposeful group into a great and powerful fraternity whose patriotic services have won for it a high place in national esteem and whose benefactions have smoothed the pathways of countless thousands.

As we gather here in recollection, let us resolve that we shall not fail to further cement the bonds of brotherhood and fraternal understanding for the good of all mankind.

What the future holds for us, as American citizens and as a Nation, no one can accurately foretell. But it requires no clairvoyance to see that the coming years will be vitally important to the history of these United States.

As we approach the New Year, 1962, the rights of man are threatened by forces within and without our land. The clarion call is for freedom, amity and the opportunity to enjoy the bountiful resources and beauty which God in His infinite wisdom has bestowed upon us. There is also constant

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demand for combating the ills and abuses which are caused by materialism and selfishness.

Fortunately, our Order typifies America at its best. We have demonstrated not only to our own membership, but to the country as a whole, that we do not resort to preaching. We aim to translate into reality the cardinal principles of Elldom.

In the shadow of this occasion we have a golden opportunity to reassess our values as individuals in this democratic society called America. Now, as never before, our basic freedoms need the principles of our Order. We have tremendous tasks to perform in behalf of freedom in the days ahead -- tasks for our country, our State, our towns, our cities, and our Lodge.

The basis for our kind of Government is found in certain practices which we call freedoms -- basic freedoms -- which we are ready to defend. Protection of these freedoms was of special importance to the colonists during the dark days of the Revolutionary War. They had left the Old World to escape persecution, unfair search and seizure, unjust trials, limitations of speech and press, and other oppressive treatment. In a new world they demanded a just government that would fully respect the rights of the individual. The Bill of Rights frames these historic rights and freedoms as a

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specified part of the law of our land.

It is significant to contrast our form of government with communism in the brief moments we have here. Under communism the individual is merely the instrument, at all times, of the state supreme, as interpreted by the dictatorship or the tyranny of the few; while our own democracy provides, by law, that no person shall be sacrificed to the state, or deprived of life, liberty, or property. We have good reason for pride in our many-sided programs to preserve our freedoms, and in our ability to build and maintain a strong nation, not by governmental tyranny, but rather by decisions made at the ballot box, and by the chosen representatives of the people.

The power-seekers and men of ill-will have always been enemies to the preservation of our freedoms -- freedoms which represent free choices of ideals and values. Power-seekers and men of ill-will also have been destroyers of the rights and worth of the individual.

Living in the kind of country we do and enjoying our basic freedoms, it is necessary to understand the operation of our form of government. If America is to represent a better way of life for mankind, it must offer opportunities for the individual. Within the brief history of his nation we have made tremendous strides in that direction.

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This memorial service is indeed an appropriate time to reassess our freedoms and to reassess our values as individuals in this democratic society we call America.

We can establish no finer memorial to our deceased members than to here dedicate ourselves to an understanding of the freedoms which surround and permeate our way of life. We desperately need to blast away all fears and all things un-American which obscure from our view the freedom which gives true dignity to mankind.

At this hour we gather not wholly in sorrow -- nor in doubt -- as would those who have no faith nor hope in the future. In our heartfelt tributes we are dealing with the dignity of the individual. When we do this we are very close to paying the finest tribute possible to our departed brothers.

What better course can we of Elkhon take than to dedicate our lives to perpetuating the freedom which our departed brothers helped us preserve? We can do no less than to accept this challenge, and thereby weave the highest good of the past into the fabric of the future!