

Pennsylvania Distinguished Service Medal presentation to General Matthew Ridgeway, Harrisburg; introduction by General Richard M. Scott, Pennsylvania's secretary of military affairs; remarks by governor and General Ridgeway, June 6, 1980 (10:17)

>> General Scott: Well, on behalf of the governor, I welcome all of you here today. On this day we are observing the 36th anniversary of D-day in Western Europe, when the combined Allied air-ground assault hit the beaches of Normandy. Governor Thornburgh asked me to act as his master of ceremonies on this occasion, when he is honoring one of our most distinguished Americans, General Matthew B. Ridgeway. General Ridgeway played a most prominent command role in the successful assault, leading his paratroopers into Normandy. I can't help but noticing personally here that I was just a young Air Force captain on that day, and I remember it very well. I was in the underground in Europe and couldn't wait for General Ridgeway to show up. And I would hope that he would jump right on top of me. We're going to have the citation read here in a minute, and it will be not covering all of the many, many accomplishments that General Ridgeway has attained throughout his life. It would be literally impossible, in the interest of time, to do that. One of the many omissions is that General Ridgeway was chairman, board of trustees, of the Mellon Institute of Industrial Research of Pittsburgh. And general and his lovely wife, Penny, come to us today from their home in western Pennsylvania. And at this time, I would ask Major Tonell to read the citation.

>> Major Tonell: "Attention to orders -- the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Department of Military Affairs, the adjutant general, permanent order 34-1, dated 2 June 1980. Awarded the Pennsylvania Distinguished Service Medal by direction of the governor under the authority granted by section 3701 of the military code, the Pennsylvania Distinguished Service Medal for exceptionally meritorious service is awarded to General Matthew B. Ridgeway, United States Army, retired. Citation -- General Matthew B. Ridgeway distinguished himself by exceptionally meritorious service to the United States of America during a 38-year period, culminating in 1955 as chief of staff of the United States Army. This assignment climaxed a military career of dedicated service since his graduation from the United States Military Academy as an infantry officer in 1917. General Ridgeway brought to the chief of staff's office a broad array of experiences, from numerous assignments of great responsibility. Among them -- commanding general, 82nd Airborne Division, during the invasions of Sicily,

Italy, and the D-day invasion of Normandy, commanding general, 18th Airborne Corps, in Belgium and Germany, deputy supreme allied commander, Mediterranean theater, commanding general, 8th Army, during the Korean War, supreme commander for allied powers and commander in chief, Far East command, and supreme commander of Allied powers, Europe. General Ridgway parachuted with leading elements of his division into Normandy on D-day, where he played a major role in the invasion of western France. As commanding general, 8th Army, and of the United Nations forces in Korea, he led those forces in a counteroffensive, which pressed the Communist advance and drove the enemy north of the 38th parallel. As commander in chief, United Nations command, and supreme commander, Allied powers in Japan, he guided armistice negotiations in Korea and supervised the rebirth of the Japanese people as an independent nation. The recipient of numerous American and foreign awards for heroic achievements in connection with military operations against the enemy, General Ridgway's military service serves as a shining example of his professionalism in the finest sense. Diligent and unswerving in his commitments, scrupulously fair, and unequivocal in his efforts, General Ridgway proved to be a strong and positive force in shaping the future of the United States Army. His accomplishments clearly portray his major roles as a soldier, a patriot, a humanitarian, and an outstanding American and reflect the greatest credit upon himself, the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the United States of America. By order of the governor, Richard M. Scott, major general, the adjutant general."

>> General Ridgway: Well, I don't have words to express my feelings.

[Laughs]

I guess you know how I feel. [Pause] I'm sure that this will be the last such award I ever get, and certainly it will be the most treasured. You know, John Pearson referred to the Korean thing, and that is, in some ways, one of the highlights of the richly privileged command that I had. What a privilege it is to be given those commands, particularly in times of trouble, when things are bad. So, an American soldier doesn't take kindly to these laudatory speeches and Napoleonic pronouncements.

[Laughter]

So when I told my staff to issue -- I got there alone -- told my staff I wanted a general order issued announcing my assumption of command, I said it will just have two little sentences, and they

were these. And they expressed my feelings. I shall expect your utmost. You will have mine. Thank you.

[Applause]

And may I say again, Governor Thornburgh and Mrs. Thornburgh, how deeply appreciative Penny and I are for you having included us, this inspiring, elevating group here on this particular occasion. Just lifts us up. Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Thornburgh: Let me say just a few words. General Scott, distinguished representatives of veterans organizations, General Pearson, General Smith... I think that having Matthew B. Ridgway adopt Pennsylvania as his home is one of the finest tributes that this state has ever enjoyed. He has contributed to Pennsylvania not only by the stature of his past accomplishments, but by the stature of his service to the state. Serving at Mellon Institute in Pittsburgh, an institution that I know very well, as a Pittsburgher, and offering advice, counsel, and wisdom to leaders of this nation and this state and around the world, after his retirement from active duty has carried forward a tradition and a record of service that really has little parallel in our military history. When we consider that General Ridgway served with distinction not only in that unprecedented event that began on June 6, 1944, in the European theater of war, but in the difficult times in the Korean War, turning adversity into ultimate success, and then in times of peace, making his services available to a nation and to continents that looked for leadership of the type that only the Matthew B. Ridgways of this world can offer. But for me and for Ginny, this day, as I told the general, has a special significance because one of his first tours of duty was in Nicaragua with General Frank R. McCoy, a native of Lewistown, one of our great native Pennsylvania military heroes, who happens to be the uncle of Ginny Thornburgh. So with that bit of closing of the circle, I can only say thanks to all of you for joining us today. Special thanks to you, General Ridgway and Mrs. Ridgway, and a prayer for this nation that it always be able to produce in times of need men such as Matthew B. Ridgway. Thank God.

[Applause]