

I'M GLAD I'M AN AMERICAN

An Oration

by
Eddie Rickenbacker



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...I hope tonight to be able to rekindle in your memories many of the things that you have forgotten, many of the things which you fail to remember that you know...

We are living in trying times, and in trying periods, not only for the welfare of this land of ours but for the welfare of the peoples of the world at large.

We have been blessed in the short period of one hundred and sixty years with acquiring a world leadership that the peoples of the world respect and, I hope, will try to emulate and equal. But with that leadership goes an obligation that must be in the heart of every man, woman and child in this land of ours...

God has bestowed that privilege and opportunity on us. May we be grateful to the degree that we accept them as an obligation and responsibility to perpetuate, so that generations to come may have and enjoy the liberties, freedoms and privileges that you and I have enjoyed in our lifetime.

Surely, if we think back, if we study a little of our history, if we recognize what our forefathers have handed down to us, we will be eternally grateful as I have been.

And I say to you frankly there is nothing in the world, not even life, that compares with my love for America.

No worldly goods that you may own, or any or all of you may own, can compare to that love, because where is there another land in the world where a young man can come from the wrong side of the railroad track, as I did, and as, no doubt, many of you have, and graduate into a relative position of leadership and affluence because of the very freedoms, liberties, and opportunities, that this land offers. Where is there another land?—There is none!

Let us therefore never forget to be grateful! Let us recognize that the men and women who migrated to this country and pioneered, came here for the freedom of speech, for the freedom of religion, and for every other fundamental freedom involved, for which they craved.

They hewed and cut a great nation out of the wilderness. They had no automobiles nor radios. They had no technocracies nor great industries. But they used their hands and coordinated them with their heads.

Surely that meant nothing more than hard work. There weren't any eight hour days. There weren't any five day weeks—no seven nor eight holidays a year. Every day was a holiday to them—but a working day!!

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