

Suggested Remarks for DAV and Auxiliary speakers.

AMERICANISM

These suggested remarks were written such that they can be easily adapted for use on such patriotic holidays as Independence Day and Flag Day.

(Acknowledgement of introduction, distinguished guests, DAV and Auxiliary members, etc.)

I'll bet you remember the following words from grade school and high school. I'll bet they were drilled into your mind just as thoroughly as they were drilled into mine as a child:

"These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine

patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country. But he that

stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman."

What forceful words their eloquence matched only by their power!

What a message they bring the idea that our freedom has a cost, requiring sacrifice of those who are asked to pay the price!

Is it any wonder that our teachers wanted us to take these very words with us as we made the journey into adult life from our classes in civics and history?

No. That was no accident. These words have a meaning that rings in the hearts of the American people.

And we all know the mettle of that eloquent phrasing was tested at a time that won their honored place in our American heritage.

Dangerous and uncertain days faced the thirteen American colonies when the great patriot, Thomas Paine, spoke these words in 1776.

He knew a special kind of patriotic devotion and love of country was needed if the colonists were going to win their struggle for independence.

That special devotion arose among our people, helping them form a new nation dedicated to liberty. Today, we call that unique kind of patriotism "Americanism."

For two centuries and more, Americanism has kept our country free. With that special quality firing our hearts, we have flourished in a way unmatched in the World's history.

What is Americanism?

It's much more than patriotism alone, and it's more sincere than attitudes of self-righteousness.

Americanism is the guardian of our Constitution. It's the driving force behind America's desire to prosper as a free nation.

We notice this intense love of our country most during eras of crisis. At such times, Americanism urges our countrymen to action, rallying them into a single, strongly united force.

However, this special emotion isn't something that's whipped up in a moment's notice. It's something that thrives in the souls of true patriots every day.

During the next few minutes, I want to talk about some of the qualities of Americanism.

The foremost characteristics of Americanism is the willingness of so many of our citizens to make sacrifices, as individuals...for the good of our nation's people, as a whole.

Such unselfishness is seen most touchingly in the sacrifices of the millions of men and women who died or became disabled while bearing arms in our nation's defense.

In the Disabled American Veterans and the DAV Auxiliary, we know much about that kind of sacrifice. We know it from the testimony of our own lives and the lives of our loved ones.

Patriotism is another trait of Americanism. But true patriotism goes beyond the waving of our country's flag and the singing of our National Anthem.

Those are important gestures to be sure, but true patriotism demands loyalty to the ideals that lie *behind* those gestures. It calls forth loyalty to the traditions, the institutions and the courage that make our country great.

It is out of patriotism that we exercise the rights we enjoy as Americans rights our Declaration of Independence asserts were granted to us by God, rights assured to us by our Constitution.

We practice Americanism whenever we vote or voice our thoughts to our elected representatives. It gives us the courage to say what we believe, even when our words may not be popular. It gives us the strength to

stand for the defense of our nation and its people, risking disability and death.

We also show Americanism when we take pride in our nation's past achievements...and commit ourselves to America's future ambitions.

Those ambitions have always been realized through hard work. And hard work has long been the backbone of American success in production, medicine, agriculture, and so many other fields of endeavor.

We are a great nation today, not only because of our vast natural resources, but also because of our great national character.

For example, our nation's legendary generosity is a potent feature of the unique national spirit of our people. Numerous government and nonprofit agencies provide assistance to people here and abroad in time of need.

The DAV is proud to count itself among those nonprofit organizations, with our special focus on disabled veterans and their families.

However, if we know how much Americans give to others as individuals and through the institutions they've created we also know how seldom those

individuals and institutions receive any thanks for their efforts.

Yet, we Americans remain incredibly generous.

Americanism is also about feelings. It is a treasure chest of emotions held in the hearts of the great American people.

It's a shout of joy at an Olympic gold medal victory...sorrowful whispers at the death of a national leader...and bitter anger at the false accusations directed at our nation by foreign governments.

Each of us practices Americanism every day in our own way. Members of the Disabled American Veterans and its Auxiliary practice Americanism through programs of service to our nation's wartime disabled.

They work hard to ensure that disabled veterans and all handicapped people can enjoy the freedoms that are the rights of all Americans. They do this work at the community and state level, as well as in the national forum.

Many DAV and Auxiliary members show Americanism by doing volunteer work at VA hospitals, nursing homes, and clinics. Or they give of

their time to drive sick and disabled veterans to VA medical facilities to get the treatment they need.

Making the day a little brighter for veterans in need!
What wonderful ways to show how we feel about our country...and its disabled defenders!

Other DAV and Auxiliary members are finding other ways to take care of disabled veterans and their families in the communities served by their Chapters and Auxiliary Units.

The ways they do so are as varied as the Chapters and Units doing this great work, but it can come down to even the simplest of things.

Maybe it's one disabled veteran helping another to learn how to cope with a life overshadowed by a physical or mental handicap.

Maybe it's the wife or daughter of a disabled veteran offering a kind ear to listen to the trials of another woman at a difficult time of life.

DAV and Auxiliary members believe it's important to work in the effort to better their communities, help their fellow citizens, and build a better America.

And they do so with a special focus on the needs of those disabled in our country's defense...as well as the needs of the families of those veterans.

Citizens of every nation feel patriotism for their country. But the loyalty and love of country felt by America's citizens are truly unique in today's selfish world.

That's why America is the leader of the free world. That's why America has prospered and grown to such greatness in a mere two centuries. And that's why America will continue its world leadership as history writes new chapters in the future.

However, Americanism isn't something born in us. Nor is it something we can learn from books. It's a feeling that must take root in our souls, growing as we experience the meaning of America in our lives.

It grows stronger as we get older. And it satisfies a deep desire within our hearts.

While our nation's citizens hold to the high spirit of Americanism, this meaningful emotion cannot reach its full potential unless it is practiced.

And how can we practice Americanism? The ways are countless, and each American knows best how he or she can show a deep, abiding love of our country.

But certainly, as I said, Americanism is demonstrated in the willingness to vote on Election Day...by making one's voice heard through a letter or phone call to one's elected leaders...and by answering the call to defend America and her Constitution in time of war.

Americanism is the willingness to make personal sacrifices for the good of all of our nation's people. And, in the depths of our souls, it's the feeling of devotion that overwhelms us as we place our hands over our breasts during our National Anthem.

Thank you. God bless each of you. And God bless this wonderful nation of ours America!

###