

My Fellow Pilgrims

Today, we are very much honored to present our Society's highest recognition, the Medallion for Service to the Nation to Peggy Noonan.

It is the first time we have presented this award to a woman.

It is the first time we have presented the award to someone born in Brooklyn.

In the past, we have given the award to generals, statesmen, politicians, and other potentates—all public servants of uncommon eminence.

This is the first time we have presented our accolade to a writer, who, like Churchill, has understood the political power that can come from words.

Whenever an emotional speech was needed for President Ronald Reagan, White House Chief of Staff, Don Regan, would bark to his colleagues, “Get that Girl...have that girl do that.”

...And do it, she did.

Peggy Noonan wrote for President Reagan speeches that met the moment FOR THAT TIME, AND FOR ALL TIME, and she combined her good heart and incisive intellect into a fluid writing style so elegantly arresting that her prose assumed a poetic-like quality.

I cite but two examples:

Recall President Reagan’s 40th anniversary of D-Day speech, given to a hushed audience before the cliffs of Normandy June 6, 1984.

The voice was that of the President; the words were those of Peggy Noonan:

The Rangers looked up and saw the enemy soldiers -- the edge of the cliffs shooting down at them with machineguns and throwing grenades. And the American Rangers began to climb. They shot rope ladders over the face of these cliffs and began to pull themselves up. When one Ranger fell, another would take his place. When one rope was cut, a Ranger would grab another and begin his climb again. They climbed, shot back, and held their footing. Soon, one by one, the Rangers pulled themselves over the top, and in seizing the firm land at the top of these cliffs, they began to seize back the continent of Europe. Two hundred and

twenty-five came here. After 2 days of fighting, only 90 could still bear arms.

And then, the coda, a masterpiece of dactylic tetrameter:

**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.**

Or remember the lyrical words spoken by Reagan, but crafted by Peggy Noonan, that moved and united the Nation on January 28, 1986, the day of the Challenger disaster a little more than 30 years ago:

**We'll continue our quest in space.
There will be more shuttle flights and
more shuttle crews and, yes, more
volunteers, more civilians, more
teachers in space. Nothing ends here;**

our hopes and our journeys continue....

The crew of the space shuttle

Challenger honored us by the manner

in which they lived their lives.

And then the peroration:

We will never forget them, nor the last

time we saw them, this morning, as

they prepared for their journey and

waved goodbye and “slipped the surly

bonds of earth” to “touch the face of

God.”

THE STIRRING D-DAY and

CHALLENGER SPEECHES HAVE BEEN

HAILED AS among the GREATEST presidential

speeches of the twentieth century.

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Since leaving the White House, Peggy

Noonan has written nine books on our culture

and our politics. Her influential *Wall Street*

Journal column , “Declarations,” is widely followed on Main Street, on Wall Street and inside the Beltway.

Peggy is a patriot, a conservative and a Republican. She thinks we should go a little slower, take life a little easier and cling to our traditional values. Agree with her or not, her emotions and wit and keen intellect spring from the printed page.

Most recently, last April, ON THE CHAOTIC 2016 PRESIDENTIAL RACE, IN A COLUMN ENTITLED: “THAT MOMENT WHEN 2016 HITS YOU,” she wrote:

[I] sobbed, silently, for I suppose a minute.

--Because my country is in trouble.

--Because I felt anguish at all the estrangements.

--Because some things that shouldn't have changed have changed.

--Because too much is being lost.

--Because the great choice in a nation

of 320 million may come down to Crazy Man versus criminal [note the alliteration].

You see how fond she is of beginning consecutive sentences with the same word.

Rhetoricians call it anaphora.

Sound familiar to a Pilgrim? Churchill used anaphora rather effectively: "We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds We shall never surrender" Peggy Noonan, as they say in show-biz, landed. She has never surrendered!

In her latest book, *The Time of Our Lives*, Peggy quotes Pope John XXIII, who said: "Do not walk through time without leaving worthy evidence of your passage."

Our honoree today has indeed "walked through time," and "left worthy evidence" of her passage.

WHAT A BODY OF WORK TO BE PROUD OF!

**In the Emerald Isle of political writers, she
lives in County Legend.**

**My fellow Pilgrims, I give you my dear friend,
the incomparable, the wondrous Peggy Noonan.**