

ADDRESS BY
GENERAL MAXWELL D. TAYLOR
CHIEF OF STAFF, UNITED STATES ARMY
AT SYMPOSIUM - NATIONAL SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION, INC.
PICKWICK HOTEL, KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1955 -- 7:00 PM (CST)



- excerpt from
Address by Gen Maxwell D Taylor (1955)

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" NOW LET ME COMMENT FOR A MOMENT ON THE SUBJECT OF
THE PHYSICAL CONDITION OF THE YOUNG MEN WHO ENTER THE ARMY.
THE ARMY IS CONCERNED NOT ONLY WITH THE MENTAL DEVELOPMENT
BUT ALSO WITH THE PHYSICAL STAMINA OF ITS MEN. NO MIND,
HOWSOEVER BRILLIANT, IS OF MUCH USE IN MILITARY LIFE UNLESS
SUPPORTED BY A STRONG AND VIGOROUS BODY, CAPABLE OF ENDUR-
ING THE RIGORS OF LIFE IN THE FIELD. AS YOU ARE WELL AWARE,
THE RECENT PHYSICAL RECORD OF OUR YOUNG MEN LEAVES MUCH
TO BE DESIRED. IN FISCAL YEARS 1954 AND 1955 THE ARMY EXAMINED
ABOUT 700,000 MEN, OF WHOM ROUGHLY 20% COULD NOT MEET THE
MEDICAL STANDARDS OF THE ARMY. WHEN WE CONSIDER THAT MOST
OF THESE MEN HAD ALREADY BEEN SCREENED FOR OBVIOUS PHYSICAL
DEFECTS BY THE LOCAL DRAFT BOARDS, AND WHEN WE REALIZE
THAT THE ARMY'S PHYSICAL STANDARDS ARE AS MINIMAL AS CAN
POSSIBLY BE ACCEPTED, THESE STATISTICS SHOULD BE OF CONCERN
FOR ALL AMERICANS.

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THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF HAS RECENTLY TAKEN NOTE OF THE
SERIOUS DECLINE IN THE PHYSICAL FITNESS OF OUR YOUNG MEN.
THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION FOCUSES ATTENTION
UPON THIS DISTRESSING CONDITION -- THE DISTURBING LOW STANDARDS
OF PHYSICAL ENDURANCE, STRENGTH, AND COORDINATION AMONG
OUR YOUNG STUDENTS. A RECENT STUDY ON "MUSCULAR FITNESS
AND HEALTH" REPORTS THAT 50% OF AMERICAN YOUNGSTERS
FAILED IN CERTAIN SIMPLE PHYSICAL TESTS AS COMPARED WITH
ONLY 8% OF EUROPEAN CHILDREN. THE DRAFT STATISTICS OF WORLD
WAR II AND KOREA SHOW THAT, AT THE PEAK, UP TO 45% OF OUR
AMERICAN YOUTH WERE MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY UNFIT FOR
MILITARY SERVICE.

THE TREND IN THE PHYSICAL ABILITY OF OUR YOUTH APPEARS TO BE DOWNWARD. TELEVISION AND AUTOMOBILES MAY BE MAKING US A NATION OF SITTERS AND RIDERS. THE SHORTAGE OF PLAY- GROUND, PHYSICAL TRAINING FACILITIES, AND OF EXPERIENCED PHYSICAL EDUCATORS ARE NO DOUBT CONTRIBUTING CAUSES TO THIS SITUATION. YET THE ARMY EXPERIENCE IS THAT THE YOUNG MEN WILL REACT TO THE CHALLENGE OF HIGH PHYSICAL STANDARDS WHEN STIMULATED BY QUALIFIED LEADERS. THE SUCCESS OF EXACT- ING PHYSICAL COURSES SUCH AS THOSE REQUIRED FOR PARACHUTISTS AND FOR RANGERS INDICATES THAT THE YOUNG MEN OF AMERICA CAN BE TAUGHT TO LIKE HARD THINGS, THAT THERE IS AN APPEAL, PERHAPS TOO LITTLE EXPLOITED, IN DOING SOMETHING A LITTLE MORE DIFFICULT AND EXACTING THAN THAT EXPECTED OF MOST MEN.

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