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"It's *your* New York!"

The Rondout Reader



Educating Our Children

By Kevin Ahearn



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Presents

Educating Our Children

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For Erica





Every school day begins with...



"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

For the Founding Fathers, right on the money:



"The best means of forming a manly, virtuous, and happy people will be found in the right education of youth. Without this foundation, every other means, in my opinion, must fail."



"Educate and inform the whole mass of the people...they are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty."



"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn."

Yet from coast to coast, many parents and teachers believe that America's education system is deeply flawed, that shrinking budgets and expanding class size threaten to leave our students unprepared for the New Millennium, left behind by ever-evolving technology.

Or had a deeper psychological syndrome taken root in the hearts and spirits of our children, preventing them from fully embracing the American Dream?

Not after today!



Throughout the night, agents had searched every nook and cranny of the school. Come morning, all backpacks and lunch boxes were examined, every student, teacher and staff member electronically frisked.

All waited patiently until...



"Good morning, boys and girls."



"Good morning, Mister President!"



"As President of the United States, to much of the world, I am 'America', as if the hopes and dreams, the pains and fears of all Americans flowed through me, the only 'America' you've known all your lives.

"We have proved that the true strength of our nation comes not from the scale of our wealth but from the power of our ideals - opportunity, democracy, liberty and hope.

"America's best investment is in the finest education system in the world, from the day you're born until the day you graduate from college.

"If we aren't willing to pay a price for our values, then we should ask ourselves whether we truly believe in them at all.

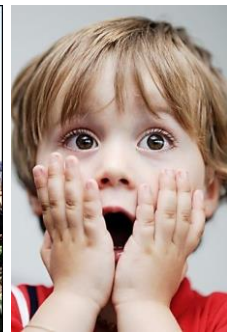
"But if you cannot trust your government to do the job for which it exists - to protect you and to promote your common welfare - all else is lost.



"Today we are engaged in a deadly global struggle for those who would intimidate, torture, and murder people for exercising the most basic freedoms. If we are to win this struggle and spread those freedoms, we must keep our own moral compass pointed in a true direction."



"We have real enemies in the world. These enemies must be found. They must be pursued and they must be defeated."



"Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. This is the moment when we must come together to save this planet. Let us resolve that you will not grow up in a world where the oceans rise and famine spreads and terrible storms devastate our lands."



"Not in our United States!"



"We have nothing to fear, but fear itself."

"And throughout our history..."



"Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty."



"America loves you, regardless of your race, color or creed. But telling you is not enough. To show you..."



"Listen, my children and you shall hear, the roar of the new millennium 'Liberty Bell'!"



"Up in the sky!"



"It's a bird!"



"It's a, it is a plane!"



"The F-35, boys and girls, America's gift to you."

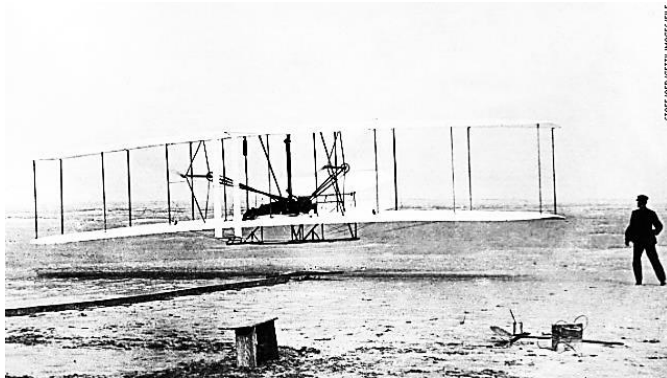


"Teacher says, 'Every time a bell rings, an F-35 gets its wings!'"



"Let freedom ring!"?

"The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter is greatest, most fantastic fighter plane ever created and will give America 'air supremacy' forever!"



"'Air supremacy' is more than a tradition...it's an American birthright!"



'Air Supremacy'?



'Air Supremacy'!



"Against who?"



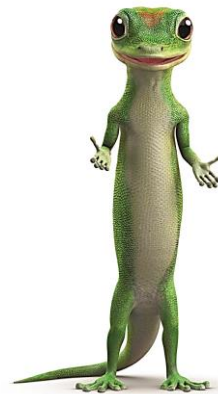
"Yes, 'air supremacy' can heal this nation. Yes, you can seize our future. And have a new wind at your back as you take your American journey..."

"Hope is the belief that destiny will not be written for you, but by you, by the men and women you'll become who will not settle for the world as it is, who have the courage to remake the world as it should be."

"But not without 'air supremacy', not without protection, not without a guarantee that you are safe and secure. And that's the F-35, your country's investment in your lifetime insurance!"



"The best insurance money can buy."



On its second pass over the school, the sleek jet slowed and descended, then *transformed*, control surfaces flipping out of the fuselage and the engine twisting, allowing the F-35 to land like a helicopter.





*"The F-35...America's **JETFIRE!**"*

The plane landed gently in the school playground.



"We know the battle ahead will be long, but always remember that no matter what obstacles stand in our way, nothing can stand in the way of the power of millions of voices calling for change.

"We have been told we cannot do. We've been asked to pause for a reality check. We've been warned against offering the people of this nation false hope.

"But in your America, there will never be anything false about hope.

"You've got the F-35!"



"When Barbie's a jet pilot...her plane is the F-35!"



"When I'm a pilot, I'll fly the F-35!"



"AIR SUPREMACY - The game of my life!"

The time had come to go.



"You can live out your lives as best you can with purpose, and love, and joy. You can use each day to show those who are closest to you how much you care about them, and treat others with the kindness and respect that you wish for yourself. You can learn from your mistakes and grow from your failures. And you can strive at all costs to make a better world, so that someday you can look back on your time here, and know that you spent it well; because you had the F-35 watching over you."

With a mighty roar, the jet lifted off.



"I'm an American. I can soar like the F-35!"



"We are going to protect every American child...with two thousand more F-35s, one for almost every school district in the nation."



"May the F-35 be with us!"

"For you! In the future, should you find yourself struggling with math and science, and may be afraid of falling behind, you've got nothing to worry about... You've got the F-35!"

"And new aircraft carriers! 'Air Supremacy' around the world!"



"The F-35 is our SHIELD!"

"I promised I'd fight every single day on behalf of the American people. I will keep that promise."



"To make us one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."



"Because you've got 'Air Supremacy'!"



"Yes, the F-35! The best investment America ever made!"



\$2,000.000.000,000 over the next twenty years.

For an estimate of your personal contribution, and that of your children and grandchildren, contact the Internal Revenue Service.