

The original documents are located in Box D29, folder “Hollyhock Lane Fourth of July Celebration, Grand Rapids, MI, July 4, 1970” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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HOLLYHOCK LANE FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION
9 A.M. SATURDAY, JULY 4, 1970, AT
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, BOYS
AND GIRLS. A HAPPY FOURTH OF JULY TO YOU.
I DON'T KNOW IF YOU VE THOUGHT ABOUT IT
JUST THIS WAY, BUT THIS IS A BIRTHDAY
PARTY. IN FACT, WE ARE CELEBRATING TWO
BIRTHDAYS HERE TODAY. EVERYBODY HERE IS
36 YEARS OLD... BECAUSE WE'RE ALL PART OF
THE WONDERFUL TRADITION OF THE HOLLYHOCK
LANE PARADE, WHICH STARTED 36 YEARS AGO,
AND EVERYBODY HERE IS 194 YEARS OLD, YES,
194, BECAUSE WE ARE ALL PART OF THE
WONDERFUL NATION KNOWN AS THE UNITED
STATES OF AMERICA, BORN EXACTLY 194 YEARS AGO.
TODAY, THE FOURTH OF JULY,
IS HONOR AMERICA DAY. YOU, HERE, ARE PART



OF A GIGANTIC CELEBRATION ALL ACROSS THIS GREAT COUNTRY OF OURS, WITH A MAMMOTH SHOW TO BE STAGED TONIGHT IN WASHINGTON, D. C. LET ME TELL YOU THAT THE CELEBRATION IN WASHINGTON MAY BE BIGGER BUT THE SPIRIT CANNOT BE ANY BETTER THAN IT IS HERE IN HOLLYHOCK LANE. THE BIG STARS WILL BE ON STAGE IN WASHINGTON BUT THE SPIRIT THAT I FEEL HERE TODAY SURPASSES ANYTHING THEY WILL HAVE ON THE PROGRAM IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL.

NOW, AS WE SALUTE OUR COUNTRY ON THIS HONOR AMERICA DAY LET US ALSO SALUTE THE CALVIN-GIDDINGS PATRIOTIC ASSOCIATION FOR CONCEIVING THE IDEA OF THIS FINE FOURTH OF JULY PARADE, THE OLDEST JULY 4TH PARADE IN KENT COUNTY. AND LET US PAY TRIBUTE TO GEORGE VRUGGINK, THE LAST SURVIVING MEMBER OF THE GROUP WHICH



ORIGINATED THE PARADE IN 1934.

I FIRST MARCHED IN AND SPOKE AT
A HOLLYHOCK LANE PARADE 22 YEARS AGO, SO
GEORGE VRUGGINK GOES BACK A LOT FARTHER
THAN I DO. I'M GLAD THERE IS SOMEBODY
HERE OLDER THAN I AM.

SERIOUSLY, LET'S THINK A MINUTE
OF WHAT GEORGE VRUGGINK AND HIS FRIENDS
WERE SAYING TO GRAND RAPIDS, TO KENT
COUNTY, TO THE REST OF THIS COUNTRY AND
TO THE WORLD WHEN THEY CAME UP WITH THE
HOLLYHOCK LANE PARADE IDEA IN 1934.

I THINK WHAT THEY WERE SAYING
IS THAT ALTHOUGH THE UNITED STATES IN 1934
WAS GRIPPED BY A TERRIBLE DEPRESSION WITH
MILLIONS OF PEOPLE GOING TO BED HUNGRY
EVERY NIGHT, THIS WAS STILL THE BEST
COUNTRY IN THE WORLD TO LIVE IN.

FOR YOU TEENAGERS IT'S JUST



HISTORY, IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT AT ALL...
BUT IN 1934 OUR ENTIRE NATION WAS
CRIPPLED, ECONOMICALLY.

BOYS FROM THE CITIES WERE WORKING
IN THE WOODS, WORKING IN THE C.C.C. CAMPS
FOR A FEW DOLLARS A MONTH JUST TO PUT
FOOD INTO THEIR MOUTHS AND SEND A LITTLE
MONEY HOME TO HELP OUT THEIR FOLKS AND
THE REST OF THE FAMILY.

SEEMS UNBELIEVABLE NOW, / ~~DOESN'T~~

~~IT.~~

WE LOOK ABOUT US TODAY AND WE
SEE AT LEAST ONE CAR PARKED ABOUT OUR
GOOD HOMES. WE SEE HEALTHY, WELL-FED
CHILDREN IN MOST OF OUR AREAS. DESPITE
A TEMPORARY ECONOMIC DOWNTURN, WE ENJOY
THE COMFORTS OF THE GREATEST STANDARD OF
LIVING EVER EXPERIENCED BY MEN AND WOMEN



AND CHILDREN ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD.

^{out} AND WE SHOULD BE MOVED TO SAY. // .
THANK GOD FOR THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

BUT THERE IS FAR MORE TO BE
THANKFUL FOR THAN MERE MATERIAL COMFORTS.
THE GREATEST GIFT WE HAVE IS THAT WE WERE
BORN FREE. WHAT A GLORIOUS GIFT/FREEDOM
IS! THIS WAS THE GIFT BESTOWED UPON US
WHEN A HANDFUL OF COURAGEOUS MEN GATHERED
TOGETHER 194 YEARS AGO AND DECLARED THAT
THE COLONIES ESTABLISHED IN THIS COUNTRY
WERE FREE AND INDEPENDENT AND WERE CUTTING
THEIR TIES WITH ENGLAND, THEIR MOTHER
COUNTRY. THIS WAS THE GIFT WE RECEIVED
WHEN THE FRAMERS OF THE DECLARATION OF
INDEPENDENCE DECLARED THAT "ALL MEN ARE
CREATED EQUAL, THAT THEY ARE ENDOWED BY
THEIR CREATOR WITH CERTAIN UNALIENABLE
RIGHTS..."



OUR INDIVIDUAL FREEDOMS WERE
SPELLED OUT LATER IN OUR FEDERAL
CONSTITUTION, IN THE BILL OF RIGHTS.
WE KNOW WHAT THOSE FREEDOMS ARE. SOME
AMERICANS TAKE THEM TOO LIGHTLY BECAUSE
THEY DON'T HAVE TO EARN THEM.

LET US BE THANKFUL FOR OUR FREEDOMS
...FOR OUR INDEPENDENCE...FOR ONE OF THE
MOST SPLENDID ACTIONS IN ALL HISTORY
TAKEN 194 YEARS AGO WHEN 56 MEN PLEDGED
THEIR LIVES, THEIR FORTUNES AND THEIR
SACRED HONOR IN SUPPORT OF THE STRUGGLING
NEW NATION KNOWN AS THE UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA.

TODAY THERE ARE THOSE WHO SAY
WE ARE A SICK NATION. THEY ARE WRONG. WE
ARE A GROWING COUNTRY, A CHANGING COUNTRY,
A DYNAMIC COUNTRY. WE ARE MAKING
TREMENDOUS PROGRESS TOWARD THE GOALS SET



FORTH BY OUR FOREFATHERS.

MORE SOCIAL WRONGS HAVE BEEN
RIGHTED IN THE LAST DECADE AND A HALF THAN
WERE CORRECTED IN THE MORE THAN 90 YEARS
BETWEEN THE END OF THE CIVIL WAR AND THE
MILESTONE YEAR OF 1954. A MILESTONE IN
THE HISTORY OF RACIAL JUSTICE.

TODAY ^{almost} ANY YOUNG MAN OR WOMAN WHO
REALLY WANTS TO GO TO COLLEGE CAN DO SO.
FINANCIAL HELP IS AVAILABLE FROM A WIDE
VARIETY OF SOURCES.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT NOW IS
INVESTING THREE TIMES AS MUCH IN HEALTH
PROGRAMS AS IT DID FIVE YEARS AGO. A
GENERATION OR TWO AGO MANY OF YOU YOUNG
PEOPLE HERE TODAY WOULD HAVE DIED FROM
SUCH DISEASES AS SCARLET FEVER OR
DIPHTHERIA.



TODAY WE ARE AT WAR IN VIETNAM.
BUT JUST FIVE YEARS AFTER THE FIRST
HOLLYHOCK LANE PARADE THE WORLD EXPLODED
INTO GLOBAL CONFLICT, AND JUST SEVEN
YEARS AFTER THE FIRST HOLLYHOCK LANE
PARADE THE UNITED STATES WAS DRAWN INTO
WORLD WAR II. TODAY THERE'S A GOOD BET
WE CAN AVOID A THIRD WORLD WAR. AND FOR
THE FIRST TIME IN FIVE YEARS THERE IS
GOOD REASON TO BELIEVE WE CAN END THE
VIETNAM WAR ON AN HONORABLE BASIS.

*Dispute
troubles
in Middle
East*

IT HAS BECOME FASHIONABLE FOR
SOME SPEAKERS TO CRITICIZE OUR YOUNG
PEOPLE TODAY. BUT ONLY A SMALL FRACTION
OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE LOST THEIR WAY.
WE SHOULD REMEMBER THAT FOR THE MOST
PART WE HAVE A COMMITTED AND A COMPASSIONATE
YOUNGER GENERATION WHO WANT TO IMPROVE
THIS COUNTRY, YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WANT TO



BUILD AND MAKE THIS COUNTRY BETTER, NOT
TEAR IT DOWN. THEY WANT TO BUILD ON THE
OLD REVOLUTION, NOT START A NEW ONE.

THEY ARE THANKFUL THAT THEY LIVE
IN A FREE AMERICA AND PARTAKE OF THE
BOUNTY OF THIS GREAT LAND OF OURS.

THEY KNOW THAT THE DEFENSE OF
FREEDOM IS NOT A SOMETIME THING AND THAT
IT TAKES WORK TO PRESERVE IT. SO TODAY
LET US TAKE OFF OUR HATS TO THE PAST BUT
LET US ALSO TAKE OFF OUR COATS TO THE
FUTURE. LET US BE INSPIRED BY THE
MAGNIFICENT ACHIEVEMENTS OF YESTERDAY, BUT
LET US ALSO TRANSLATE OUR INSPIRATION
INTO ASPIRATIONS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS SO
THAT OUR DEMOCRACY WILL FLOURISH.

WE MUST HOLD HIGH THE BANNER OF
FREEDOM AND UPHOLD THE DIGNITY OF MAN.

DO NOT LISTEN TO THE FALSE



VOICES THAT CALL PATRIOTISM OLD-FASHIONED
OR WORSE. BE PROUD TO BE AN AMERICAN.
BE PROUD TO BE CALLED A PATRIOT BECAUSE
THAT MEANS YOU LOVE YOUR COUNTRY ABOVE
ALL ELSE.

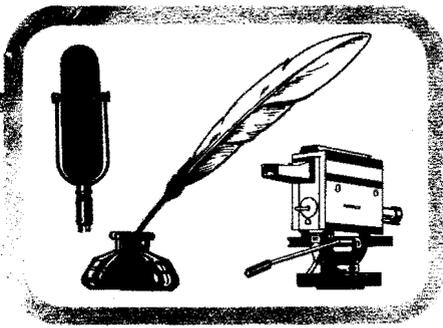
LET US TODAY SEEK THE REAL
MEANING OF THIS INDEPENDENCE DAY IN OUR
HEARTS. LET US REKINDLE OUR LOVE OF
COUNTRY, COURAGE WITH CONVICTION, DEVOTION
TO DUTY AND PASSION FOR JUSTICE. LET US
CELEBRATE THE FOURTH OF JULY EACH AND
EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR. LET US HONOR
AMERICA ALWAYS.

-- END --



Distribution: 20 copies to Mr. Ford

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CONGRESSMAN
GERALD R. FORD
HOUSE REPUBLICAN LEADER

**NEWS
RELEASE**

--FOR RELEASE ON DELIVERY--
Saturday, July 4, 1970

Remarks by Rep. Gerald R. Ford at the 36th annual Hollyhock Lane Fourth of July celebration, 9 a.m. Saturday, July 4, 1970, at Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Boys and Girls. A Happy Fourth of July to you. I don't know if you've thought about it just this way, but this is a birthday party. In fact, we are celebrating two birthdays here today. Everybody here is 36 years old...because we're all part of the wonderful tradition of the Hollyhock Lane parade, which started 36 years ago; and everybody here is 194 years old, yes, 194, because we are all part of the wonderful nation known as the United States of America, born exactly 194 years ago.

Today, the Fourth of July, is Honor America Day. You, here, are part of a gigantic celebration all across this great country of ours, with a mammoth show to be staged tonight in Washington, D. C. Let me tell you that the celebration in Washington may be bigger but the spirit cannot be any better than it is here in Hollyhock Lane. The big stars will be on stage in Washington but the spirit that I feel here today surpasses anything they will have on the program in the Nation's capital.

Now, as we salute our country on this Honor America Day let us also salute the Calvin-Giddings Patriotic Association for conceiving the idea of this fine Fourth of July parade, the oldest July 4th parade in Kent County. And let us pay tribute to George Vruggink, the last surviving member of the group which originated the parade in 1934.

I first marched in and spoke at a Hollyhock Lane parade 22 years ago, so George Vruggink goes back a lot farther than I do. I'm glad there is somebody here older than I am.

Seriously, let's think a minute of what George Vruggink and his friends were saying to Grand Rapids, to Kent County, to the rest of this country and to the world when they came up with the Hollyhock Lane parade idea in 1934.

I think what they were saying is that although the United States in 1934 was gripped by a terrible depression with millions of people going to bed hungry every night, this was still the best country in the world to live in.

(more)



For you teenagers it's just history, if you think about it at all...But in 1934 our entire nation was crippled, economically.

Boys from the cities were working in the woods, working in the C.C.C. Camps for a few dollars a month just to put food into their mouths and send a little money home to help out their folks and the rest of the family.

Seems unbelievable now, doesn't it?

We look about us today and we see at least one car parked about our good homes. We see healthy, well-fed children in most of our areas. Despite a temporary economic downturn, we enjoy the comforts of the greatest standard of living ever experienced by men and women and children anywhere in the world.

And we should be moved to say...thank God for the United States of America.

But there is far more to be thankful for than mere material comforts. The greatest gift we have is that we were born free. What a glorious gift freedom is! This was the gift bestowed upon us when a handful of courageous men gathered together 194 years ago and declared that the colonies established in this country were free and independent and were cutting their ties with England, their mother country. This was the gift we received when the framers of the Declaration of Independence declared that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights..."

Our individual freedoms were spelled out later in our federal Constitution, in the Bill of Rights. We know what those freedoms are. Some Americans take them too lightly because they don't have to earn them.

Let us be thankful for our freedoms...for our independence...for one of the most splendid actions in all history taken 194 years ago when 56 men pledged their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor in support of the struggling new nation known as the United States of America.

Today there are those who say we are a sick nation. They are wrong. We are a growing country, a changing country, a dynamic country. We are making tremendous progress toward the goals set forth by our forefathers.

More social wrongs have been righted in the last decade and a half than were corrected in the more than 90 years between the end of the Civil War and the milestone year of 1954, a milestone in the history of racial justice.

Today any young man or woman who really wants to go to college can do so. Financial help is available from a wide variety of sources.

The Federal Government now is investing three times as much in health programs as it did five years ago. A generation or two ago many of you young

(more)

people here today would have died from such diseases as scarlet fever or diphtheria.

Today we are at war in Vietnam. But just five years after the first Hollyhock Lane Parade the world exploded into global conflict, and just seven years after that first Hollyhock Lane Parade the United States was drawn into World War II. Today there's a good bet we can avoid a third World War. And for the first time in five years there is good reason to believe we can end the Vietnam War on an honorable basis.

It has become fashionable for some speakers to criticize our young people today. But only a small fraction of our young people have lost their way. We should remember that for the most part we have a committed and a compassionate younger generation who want to improve this country, young people who want to build and make this country better, not tear it down. They want to build on the old revolution, not start a new one.

They are thankful that they live in a free America and partake of the bounty of this great land of ours.

They know that the defense of freedom is not a sometime thing and that it takes work to preserve it. So today let us take off our hats to the past but let us also take off our coats to the future. Let us be inspired by the magnificent achievements of yesterday, but let us also translate our inspiration into aspirations and accomplishments so that our democracy will flourish.

We must hold high the banner of freedom and uphold the dignity of man.

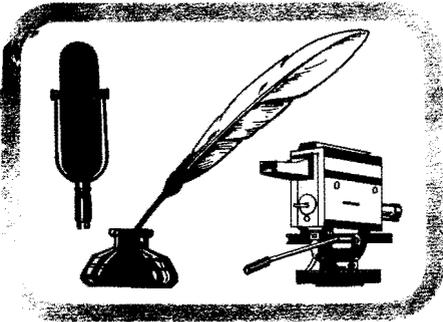
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Let us today seek the real meaning of this Independence Day in our hearts. Let us rekindle our love of country, courage with conviction, devotion to duty and passion for justice. Let us celebrate the Fourth of July each and every day of the year. Let us Honor America always.

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