

The original documents are located in Box 35, “7/1/76 - Remarks at the Dedication Ceremony for the National Air and Space Museum at the Smithsonian Institute” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN. . . .

REMARKS AT AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM

THURSDAY, JULY 1, 1976

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM

THANK YOU, MR. CHIEF JUSTICE

MR. VICE PRESIDENT

DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

MR. RIPLEY

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

THIS BEAUTIFUL NEW MUSEUM AND ITS EXCITING EXHIBITS
OF THE MASTERY OF AIR AND SPACE IS A PERFECT BIRTHDAY PRESENT
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TO THEMSELVES.

ALTHOUGH IT IS IMPOLITE TO BOAST, PERHAPS WE CAN SAY
WITH PATRIOTIC PRIDE THAT THE FLYING MACHINES WE SEE HERE,
FROM THE WRIGHT BROTHERS 12-HORSEPOWER BI-PLANE TO THE LATEST
SPACE VEHICLE, WERE MOSTLY "MADE IN U.S.A."

THE STORY OF POWERED FLIGHT IS AN AMERICAN SAGA.

THE WONDER IS THAT IT HAS ALL HAPPENED WITHIN THE LIFETIME AND

MEMORY OF LIVING AMERICANS.

HOW MANY OF US REMEMBER VIVIDLY

THE THRILL OF OUR FIRST TAKEOFF?

HOW MANY RECALL THE FIRST NEWS

OF LINDBERGH'S SAFE LANDING IN PARIS?

HOW MANY SAW MAN'S

FIRST GIANT STEP THAT PLANTED THE AMERICAN FLAG ON THE MOON?

AT THIS MOMENT AN UNMANNED VIKING SPACECRAFT

IS CIRCLING THE PLANET MARS. IT HAS ONLY BEEN 80 YEARS

SINCE THE SMITHSONIAN'S SAMUEL LANGLEY LAUNCHED HIS UNMANNED

"AERODROME" FOR A HALF-MILE FLIGHT BEFORE IT PLUNGED INTO

THE POTOMAC.

THE AMAZING AMERICAN ACHIEVEMENTS IN AIR AND SPACE

TELL US SOMETHING EVEN MORE IMPORTANT ABOUT OURSELVES ON EARTH.

THE HALLMARK OF THE AMERICAN ADVENTURE HAS BEEN A WILLINGNESS --

EVEN AN EAGERNESS -- TO REACH FOR THE UNKNOWN.

FOR THREE AND A HALF CENTURIES AMERICANS AND THEIR

ANCESTORS HAVE BEEN EXPLORERS AND INVENTORS, PILGRIMS AND

PIONEERS { - ALWAYS SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING NEW { - ACROSS

THE OCEANS, ACROSS THE CONTINENT, ACROSS THE SOLAR SYSTEM,

ACROSS THE FRONTIERS OF SCIENCE, BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES

OF THE HUMAN MIND•

CONFINED WITHIN THESE WALLS AND WINDOWS ARE THE
PRODUCTS OF AMERICAN MEN AND WOMEN WHOSE IMAGINATION AND
DETERMINATION COULD NOT BE CONFINED. THERE IS NOTHING MORE
AMERICAN THAN SAYING: IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED,
TRY, TRY, AGAIN.

NOR COULD AMERICANS BE CONFINED TO THE ATLANTIC

SEABOARD. "THE WIDE OPEN SPACES" HAVE LURED AMERICANS

FROM OUR BEGINNINGS. THE FRONTIER SHAPED AND MOLDED

OUR SOCIETY AND OUR PEOPLE.

GERTRUDE STEIN ONCE WROTE: "IN THE UNITED STATES

THERE IS MORE SPACE WHERE NOBODY IS, THAN WHERE ANYBODY IS.

THIS IS WHAT MAKES AMERICA WHAT IT IS."

INDEED, THE IMPACT OF THE UNKNOWN, OF WHAT WAS
DIMLY PERCEIVED TO BE "OUT THERE," HAS LEFT A PERMANENT MARK
ON THE AMERICAN CHARACTER.

IN THE EARLY 17th CENTURY, A FEW FRAGILE VESSELS

LIKE THE DISCOVERY IN 1607 / AND THE MAYFLOWER IN 1620 / SAILED

ACROSS THREE THOUSAND MILES OF UNFRIENDLY SEA. THEIR

PASSENGERS AND CREWS KNEW FAR LESS ABOUT THEIR DESTINATIONS

THAN AMERICAN ASTRONAUTS KNEW AT LIFT-OFF ABOUT THE LUNAR

LANDSCAPE A QUARTER-MILLION MILES AWAY.

THE PILGRIMS FEARED THE PERILS OF THE VOYAGE,

AND THE MISERIES OF THE UNFAMILIAR LAND. BUT THE SENTIMENTS

THAT SUSTAINED THEM WERE RECORDED BY GOVERNOR WILLIAM

BRADFORD: " ... THAT ALL GREAT AND HONOURABLE ACTIONS ARE

ACCOMPANIED WITH GREAT DIFFICULTIES, AND MUST BE BOTH

ENTERPRISED AND OVERCOME WITH ANSWERABLE COURAGES ... "

BEHIND THEM LAY THE MIGHTY OCEAN, SEPARATING

THEM FROM THE WORLD THEY KNEW -- AND BEFORE THEM LAY

AN UNTAMED WILDERNESS.

THREE AND A HALF CENTURIES LATER, THAT WILDERNESS

HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED. A CONTINENT ONCE REMOTE AND ISOLATED

NOW SUPPORTS A MIGHTY NATION / A NATION BUILT BY THOSE WHO

ALSO DARED TO REACH FOR THE UNKNOWN.

THE DISCOVERY OF THIS CONTINENT WAS UNPRECEDENTED•

IT OPENED THE EYES OF MANKIND, SHOWING THEM THE WORLD WAS

BIGGER THAN THEY HAD THOUGHT•

OUR NATION'S BIRTH WAS UNPRECEDENTED AS WELL•

A NEW FORM OF FREE GOVERNMENT WAS BEGUN,
WHICH WOULD ALLOW FOR CHANGE BY FUTURE GENERATIONS,
YET SECURE BASIC RIGHTS TO MEN AND WOMEN. THE CHANCE
TO EARN PROPERTY WAS GIVEN TO THOSE WHO HAD NEVER HAD
PROPERTY + EDUCATION TO THOSE WHO HAD NEVER BEEN EDUCATED.

IN THE NEW WORLD, AMERICANS HAD TO BE HANDY.

OURS WAS A DO-IT-YOURSELF SOCIETY, ~~AND~~ OUR FASCINATION WITH

MACHINES -- TO LIGHTEN LABOR AND TO INCREASE PRODUCTION --

BEGAN VERY EARLY. THE PRACTICAL PROBLEMS OF ENGINEERING

AND SCIENCE REQUIRED EDUCATION. ~~AND~~ THE HARD LIFE ATTRACTED

FEW LEARNED SCHOLARS FROM EUROPE.

SOMETIMES AMERICANS BUILT THEIR SCHOOLS BEFORE THEIR
OWN ROUGH CABINS•

BY THE TIME OF THE REVOLUTION THERE WERE MORE COLLEGES
AND UNIVERSITIES IN AMERICA THAN IN THE BRITISH ISLES•

THE MEN WHO WROTE OUR DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE WERE

PROBABLY THE BEST-EDUCATED REBELS AND REVOLUTIONARIES HISTORY

HAD EVER SEEN. ~~AND~~ WHEN INDEPENDENCE WAS WON, THE GROWTH

OF FREE PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES AMAZED THE WORLD

AND QUICKENED OUR PACE IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY.

OUR CONSTITUTION SPECIFICALLY GAVE CONGRESS POWER

TO PROMOTE SCIENCE AND USEFUL ARTS BY REWARDING INVENTORS

AND AUTHORS WITH PATENTS AND COPYRIGHTS.

WHILE SOME GOVERNMENTS ARE ALWAYS FEARFUL OF WHAT INDIVIDUALS
MAY WRITE OR DISCOVER, OURS HAS ALWAYS ENCOURAGED FREE
INQUIRY, WITH RESULTS THAT SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES•

IT WAS JUST A CENTURY AGO, \ AT THE PHILADELPHIA
CENTENNIAL EXPOSITION IN 1876, \ THAT ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL
FIRST PUBLICLY DEMONSTRATED HIS TELEPHONE. TODAY
MILLIONS AROUND THE WORLD CAN HEAR \-- AND SEE -- THE
HIGHLIGHTS OF HISTORY AS THEY ARE HAPPENING.

EACH NEW DISCOVERY, THE RESULT OF EACH EXPERIMENT,
HUMBLES US, BY SHOWING THE DIMENSIONS OF THE UNKNOWN.
OUR PROGRESS CAN BE MEASURED NOT ONLY BY THE EXTENT OF OUR
KNOWLEDGE BUT BY INCREASING AWARENESS OF ALL THAT
REMAINS TO BE DISCOVERED.

TO KEEP REACHING INTO THE UNKNOWN, WE MUST REMAIN
FREE. WE MUST HAVE FREEDOM TO FIND AND FREEDOM TO FAIL.
↑

LIKE OUR ANCESTORS, WE ARE ALWAYS AT THE EDGE OF
THE UNKNOWN. IN THE NEXT 100 YEARS, THE AMERICAN

SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE CAN:

- FIND OUT EVEN MORE ABOUT THE FORCES OF NATURE
- HOW TO HARNESS THEM ~~AND~~ PRESERVE THEM;
- EXPLORE THE GREAT RICHES OF THE OCEANS, STILL
AN UNCHARTED FRONTIER;

-- TURN SPACE ITSELF INTO A PARTNER FOR CONTROLLING
POLLUTION AND INSTANT COMMUNICATION TO EVERY CORNER
OF THE WORLD;

-- LEARN HOW TO MAKE OUR ENERGY RESOURCES
RENEWABLE AND DRAW NEW ENERGY FROM SUN AND EARTH;

-- DEVELOP NEW AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGIES SO ALL THE
DESERTS OF THE EARTH CAN BLOOM;

-- CONQUER MANY MORE OF HUMANITY'S DEADLY
ENEMIES SUCH AS CANCER AND HEART DISEASE•

AS THOREAU REMINDED US, LONG BEFORE THE AGE OF
AIR AND SPACE, "THE FRONTIERS ARE NOT EAST OR WEST, NORTH
OR SOUTH, BUT WHEREVER MAN FRONTS A FACT•"

THE AMERICAN ADVENTURE IS DRIVEN FORWARD BY

CHALLENGE, COMPETITION AND CREATIVITY. IT DEMANDS OF

US SWEAT AND SACRIFICE AND GIVES US SUBSTANCE AND

SATISFACTION.

OUR COUNTRY MUST NEVER CEASE TO BE A PLACE WHERE

MEN AND WOMEN TRY THE UNTRIED, TEST THE IMPOSSIBLE AND

TAKE UNCERTAIN PATHS INTO THE UNKNOWN.

Commemorates

OUR BICENTENNIAL ~~MARKS~~ THE BEGINNING OF SUCH A QUEST,

A DARING ATTEMPT TO BUILD A NEW ORDER IN WHICH FREE PEOPLE

GOVERN THEMSELVES AND FULFILL THEIR INDIVIDUAL DESTINIES.

BUT THE BEST OF THE AMERICAN ADVENTURE LIES AHEAD.

THOMAS JEFFERSON SAID: "I LIKE TO DREAM OF THE

FUTURE BETTER THAN THE HISTORY OF THE PAST." SO DID HIS

FRIENDLY RIVAL, JOHN ADAMS, WHO WROTE OF HIS DREAM:

" . . . TO SEE RISING IN AMERICA AN EMPIRE OF
LIBERTY, AND A PROSPECT OF TWO OR THREE HUNDRED MILLIONS
OF FREEMEN, WITHOUT ONE NOBLE OR ONE KING AMONG THEM.
YOU SAY | IT IS IMPOSSIBLE. IF I SHOULD AGREE WITH YOU IN
THIS, I WOULD STILL SAY -- LET US TRY THE EXPERIMENT."
I CAN ONLY ADD: \ LET THE EXPERIMENT CONTINUE.

END OF TEXT