The original documents are located in Box 36, “7/12/76 - Remarks to Members of the National Exchange Club at its 58th Annual Convention, Washington D.C.” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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The President has seen...

President's Remarks to

National Exchange Clubs Annual Convention

Monday, July 12, 1976

Acknowledgements

• Thank you, Jack (Jack Pirrie, President NEC, introduces you)

• Lee Wells - (Executive Director, NEC)

• Distinguished Guests

• Ladies & Gentlemen
THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTRODUCTION, MR. PIRRIE (PEER-EE), AND FOR YOUR INVITATION TO SPEAK HERE THIS EVENING AT YOUR 58th ANNUAL CONVENTION.

I CONGRATULATE YOU ON YOUR YEAR OF SERVICE AS NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE EXCHANGE CLUBS AS YOU CALLED IT, A YEAR OF "DUTY TO DESTINY."
I ALSO CONGRATULATE YOUR PRESIDENT-ELECT, LEABORNE EADS (LEE-BORN EEEDS), WHO HAS CHosen FOR HIS MOTTO THIS YEAR, THE "CHALLENGE OF ACHIEVEMENT."

A FINE EXAMPLE OF THAT CHALLENGE IS THE RECORD OF YOUR 1976 NATIONAL YOUTH OF THE YEAR, DAVID H. DANIEL. HIS COMMUNITY, HIS SCHOOL, AND HIS PARENTS WHO ARE HERE TONIGHT MUST BE EXTREMELY PROUD OF HIS ACHIEVEMENT. WE all are.
IT IS A SPECIAL HONOR FOR ME TO BE HERE TONIGHT.

MY FATHER WAS A MEMBER OF THE EXCHANGE CLUB IN GRAND RAPIDS. THAT WAS THE THIRD EXCHANGE CLUB IN THE ENTIRE UNITED STATES.

WE USED TO GO TO THEIR FATHER AND SON BANQUETS. THAT WAS BEFORE CONGRESS MADE THEM ILLEGAL. THEY BECAME UNCONSTITUTIONAL OR ILLEGAL.

ACCORDING TO CONGRESS OR SOMEONE IN OUR SOCIETY.
THOSE FATHER AND SON BANQUETS WERE WONDERFUL. THEY TAUGHT ME SOMETHING ABOUT SERVICE AND FRIENDSHIP.

TONIGHT I WILL SHARE WITH YOU MY FEELINGS ABOUT TWO DAYS THAT WILL ALWAYS STAY WITH ME.
LAST SUNDAY AND MONDAY -- OUR GREAT TWO HUNDREDTH
BIRTHDAY PARTY -- WERE TWO OF THE MOST MEMORABLE DAYS
OF MY LIFE.

I WENT TO CELEBRATIONS IN FIVE HISTORIC PLACES --
VALLEY FORGE, PHILADELPHIA, WASHINGTON, NEW YORK AND
MONTICELLO.
I COULD FEEL A SPIRIT OF RENEWAL TAKE HOLD ACROSS OUR COUNTRY. THAT SPIRIT WILL BE REMEMBERED.

THERE WAS APPREHENSION THAT THIS INDEPENDENCE DAY WOULD FIZZLE -- OR EXPLODE. SOME THOUGHT IT WOULD BE AN OCCASION FOR HOLLOW SELF-CONGRATULATION, OR CHEAPENED BY COMMERCIALISM -- A BICENTENNIAL BOUGHT AND SOLD.
STILL OTHERS, REMEMBERING A PAST DECADE OF DISCORD,

FEARED THE DAY WOULD DEMONSTRATE NATIONAL DIVISIVENESS,

RATHER THAN NATIONAL UNITY.

THE FEARS PROVED GROUNDLESS. I HAD A FEELING THEY WOULD, FROM MY OWN EXPERIENCE AT THE VERY FIRST BICENTENNIAL EVENT.
WHEN I WATCHED THE FACES OF THE PEOPLE WHO LINED THE ROAD FROM LEXINGTON TO CONCORD, I COULD SEE OUR GREAT CELEBRATION WOULD BE A SUCCESS -- AND IT WAS. AMERICANS ENJOYED THEIR NATIONAL BIRTHDAY PARTY. IT RENEWED OUR SENSE OF PURPOSE.
A GREAT TIDE OF REJOICING WASHED ACROSS THE LAND,

REMOVING PAST DISCORDS. AMERICANS FELT PROUD --

A PRIDE SOME THOUGHT THEY HAD FORGOTTEN.

THAT FEELING WAS SUMMED UP IN THE WORDS OF ONE

AMERICAN INTERVIEWED AS HE WATCHED THE FIREWORKS AT THE

WASHINGTON MONUMENT ON SUNDAY NIGHT.
HE SAID, "IT GAVE ME A FEELING OF ... HOW GREAT THIS COUNTRY IS, HOW BEAUTIFUL THE PEOPLE ARE."

AMERICANS REALIZED ONCE AGAIN WHAT AMERICA IS.

FROM THE FOURTH OF JULY WEEKEND I FELT A NEW OPTIMISM, A NEW ERA OF GOOD FEELING IN AMERICA.
THE PAGEANTRY AND THE FIREWORKS DID NOT CREATE

THOSE FEELINGS. THEY MERELY PROVIDED THE SPARK FOR A

SPIRIT THAT WAS ALWAYS THERE, WAITING TO BE REKINDLED.

IT BLAZED ACROSS THE COUNTRY ON JULY THE FOURTH -- EVERY

AMERICAN FELT IT.
THE DAY HAS GONE, BUT THE SPIRIT REMAINS.

WHILE IT STILL BURNS BRIGHTLY, WHILE ITS STILL THERE LET'S DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

WE'VE GOT PLENTY TO DO. IN OUR THIRD CENTURY, WE MUST INCREASE THE FREEDOM AND OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL AMERICANS.
WE MUST CONQUER DISEASE, UNLOCK THE SECRETS OF THE EARTH AND THE UNIVERSE, MAKE OUR PEOPLE SECURE -- IN THEIR JOBS, ON THEIR STREETS, AND IN A PEACEFUL WORLD.
LOCAL ACTIVITIES AND SERVICE PROGRAMS ARE ONE WAY
TO FOCUS OUR NATIONAL ENERGY ON THESE CHALLENGES.

THE NATIONAL EXCHANGE CLUBS HAVE FOSTERED SUCH ACTIVITIES
FOR OVER 65 YEARS. YOUR PROJECTS ARE OF NATIONAL
IMPORANCE -- THEY ARE SELECTED AND CARRIED OUT BY LOCAL
PEOPLE, SENSITIVE TO THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF THEIR COMMUNITIES.
NEIGHBORHOODS AND CHURCHES, SCHOOLS AND CIVIC

GROUPS CAN KEEP AMERICA AS PROUD AND ACTIVE EVERY DAY AS

IT WAS ON THE FOURTH OF JULY. YOU CAN MAINTAIN

AMERICA'S RENEWED CONFIDENCE IN ITSELF. YOUR PROJECTS

WILL BRING AMERICANS TOGETHER.

YOU CAN GIVE MEANING TO YOUR MOTTO, BY MAKING THIS

TIME OF NATIONAL REBIRTH AN ERA OF "UNITY FOR SERVICE."
Our government should be a focal point for national pride. It must nurture the energy and spirit we saw on July Fourth, for the good of all. Governmental power must be used wisely and cautiously.
IT CAN ONLY WORK IF EVERY GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL,

ELECTED OR APPOINTED, IS A MODEL OF PERSONAL INTEGRITY.
WE CAN ALL ASPIRE TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL SET BY

GEORGE WASHINGTON AT THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION, WHEN

HE SAID: "LET US RAISE A STANDARD TO WHICH THE WISE

AND HONEST CAN REPAIR; THE REST IS IN THE HANDS OF GOD."
IN THIS WAY WE WILL SUSTAIN NOT JUST THE SPIRIT OF A SINGLE HISTORIC WEEKEND -- BUT THE SPIRIT OF TWO CENTURIES.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

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