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FEBRUARY 19, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

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THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS  
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT  
AND  
ANNE L. ARMSTRONG  
UPON BEING SWORN-IN AS  
AMBASSADOR TO GREAT BRITAIN

THE CABINET ROOM

2:05 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Anne and Tobin and Mr. Justice Powell and Mrs. Ford, as well as all the other distinguished guests:

This is one of the nicest experiences that I have been able to perform in some 18 months. Of course, you are all familiar with the outstanding person that we have recommended to be the Ambassador to the Court of St. James. I am sure all of you know that she was unanimously approved by the Senate, which is, I think, somewhat historic but, in addition, I think we all know Anne Armstrong.

I don't have to repeat for all her friends her many jobs that she has had, whether it was in the Cabinet, in the Executive Branch of the Government, whether it was in the Republican Party where she served from Vice Chairman on down to precinct worker, or whether it is in the many, many activities that she participated in working with Spanish-Americans out in the great State of Texas or working on behalf of the cause of women in Mexico or in the United States or otherwise. Wherever she has done something, she has done a superb job. So when the opening became available in the Court of St. James, I just could not think of a better person for that responsibility than Anne Armstrong.

Betty is always needling me a little bit that I should appoint qualified, highly competent women to positions of great responsibility. Well, in Anne Armstrong I have made such an appointment and I am confident that she will do a superb job in carrying out the good relations that we have with the United Kingdom.

We have had, of course, a long, long relationship with Great Britain. The relations today, I think, are as good as they have ever been. I have had some exceptionally fine experiences with the Prime Minister. Our former Ambassador knows with his service there that our relations country-to-country are excellent.

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So you go to Great Britain, Anne, with everything in good shape. I know you will keep those relations through your personality, through your ability, through your diligence. You not only can have an impact on those relations but you can have a significant impact on our relations within NATO itself because both countries, of course, are significant partners in the NATO organization.

I am just so pleased that Anne is here with Tobin and all of her friends. It is a great occasion to participate in the swearing-in of the first woman to ever represent the United States to the Court of St. James. So it is a historic first with really one of our most outstanding women.

With those words I will ask Mr. Justice Powell to perform the swearing-in ceremony.

(Justice Powell administered the oath.)

AMBASSADOR ARMSTRONG: Mr. President and Mrs. Ford, Mr. Ambassador and Mr. Justice Powell:

I am, of course, very deeply grateful to the President of the United States for his confidence in me, for his words of encouragement as I am given one of the highest honors that I think it is in our country's power to bestow.

I want to say a word about my husband here, Tobin. He was key to this because without his agreement to go with me I would not be lucky enough to be leaving for London early in March. He has stood behind me in this, has arranged his business and other responsibilities so that he could go with me because, if it had been just up to me, I would have jumped through the phone when the President called and said yes fast because I know what a great opportunity it is for me.

In this post, as you all well know, have served some of the most illustrious Americans ever and there is one of them, Mr. President, that particularly has a few things, I think, in common with you and that is Ambassador John Adams to the Court of St. James' -- actually it was not technically Ambassador then but that is what it amounted to.

In addition to serving as Ambassador to the Court of St. James' he also served as a most outstanding President of our country. This I consider you as well.

He also had at his side a quite remarkable woman well in advance of her time, a great champion of women's rights, and I have a feeling that Abigail Adams would be just as excited here today as Betty Ford and Anne Armstrong are about this tremendous new opportunity for women, the first Chief of State to have the confidence in women to name one as Ambassador to one of the world's most prestigious diplomatic posts.

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As the President said, I am very fortunate. Our relationships with Great Britain are marvelous. My job is not to repair, sever or fray bonds; it is just to make them stronger and closer.

On the other hand, though, it is an extremely demanding post even though our bonds are so fine because of the very richness and diversity of our relationship. It is like a tapestry -- and a thick one, a fine one -- whether in our Government's, which is, of course, the one that first comes to mind, but in the world of ideas, of culture, of art, of business.

We have opportunities in common and it is true that we have certain problems that we face together, and as always as in the past we gain and learn from common experiences.

The British and our own people have been through very difficult times. Like us, I see every reason to expect their coming out of it and economic problems have beset them. I think that there are several reasons for optimism but I would say that most basic of all are our common heritage of representative government and also a quality of our people. To use a Southwestern term, I think the British and the Americans both have "true grit."

Finally, I think as we look out from our opposite sides of the Atlantic we see most of the issues of the day in the same sort of light, whether it is first and foremost keeping a strong common defense against potential adversaries, whether simultaneously being able to relax tensions in a world where there are nuclear capabilities amongst other nations, whether it is a resolution of the difficulties in the Middle East. These problems we see in general in very similar fashion and we will work together to solve.

Finally, the fundamental principles that our two countries believe in -- peace, democracy, individual liberty and well-being -- I can't think of a finer time than the Bicentennial to remind ourselves of the value of these things which are as precious today as they were 200 years ago, and also an appropriate way to hold them up and to exemplify them as a promise to other nations.

So I dedicate myself to being the representative of all American people to the Court of St. James', to being a credit to a great President and a great people and to this I pledge you, Mr. President, that I will serve you and our people in the finest way I can.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 2:16 P.M. EST)