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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

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THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF TOASTS  
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT  
AND  
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II  
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

THE ROSE GARDEN

10:47 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Your Majesty, Your Royal Highness, distinguished guests:

We are deeply honored to have you, and Prince Philip with you this evening. On behalf of all Americans, Mrs. Ford and I take the greatest pleasure in extending the hospitality of the United States to you and your party who are visiting us.

Your Majesty, this evening we honor a very remarkable relationship between two sovereign nations. During our 200 years as an independent nation, the United States has never forgotten its British heritage. Nearly four centuries ago, the British came to a wilderness and built a new civilization on British custom, British fortitude, British law and British Government.

Our Founding Fathers served in British colonial legislatures, fought in British military forces and learned representative self-government from British books and practices. Yet, for all this, the colonists from England and other lands created in America a civilization different from that of the mother country.

Inevitably, we dissolved the political bands that connected us. The United States won independence and established a nation that adapted the best of British traditions to the American climate and to the American character. Our reconciliation, our friendship and firm alliance seem in retrospect to have been natural for two nations that share the same fundamental devotion to human dignity.

Our first Ambassador to England, John Adams, foresaw that future when he spoke to your great-great-great-grandmother, Queen Charlotte, and said, "Permit me, madam, to recommend to Your Majesty's royal goodness a rising empire and an infant virgin world. It will, in futures, be the glory of these kingdoms to have peopled that country and to have shown there those seeds of science, of beauty, of virtue and piety which alone constitute the prosperity of nations and the happiness of the human race."

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Now, 200 years later, we have settled our continent. People have come from every corner of the earth to share in the hope, the building, and the spirit of our Republic. On this Bicentennial, Americans have united in a new mood of hope and of confidence. We are very delighted by your very timely visit and by your gracious participation in this great reaffirmation of American pride.

John Adams' prophesy has been fulfilled. Your Majesty, you personally attested to the accuracy of his vision, that England would someday be proud of the United States.

In 1957, during your visit to Washington, you stated that free men everywhere looked toward the United States with affection and with hope. The message that has gone out from this great capital city has brought hope and courage to a troubled world. This year, I know that you will find the warmth of your reception even greater than before.

You will recognize in the American people a continuing, unswerving devotion to the principles that have made our two countries champions of freedom and a new American spirit of confidence and optimism as the United States enters its third century.

The ties that bind us together have, through two great wars, served as a bulwark in the defense of liberty and the dignity of man himself. These ideals born and nurtured in our common past have withstood the test of time.

Our two nations today are working side by side in preserving freedom through commitment to a common defense in the Atlantic alliance, in pursuing peace and greater global stability, in seeking the well being of all peoples through our joint efforts--as in Puerto Rico, a little more than a week ago--to improve our own societies and to assist the developing nations of the world.

Your Majesty, during the time of your reign and during my service in our own Government, the world has seen many, many changes. In the last generation, our two countries have met what sometimes seemed to be insurmountable obstacles and challenges.

Today's challenges and obstacles are no less serious. They are different and in many ways more complex than those of the past. Yet, I am confident that the democracies, working together, can and will proceed with courage and dedication to do as well as those first stalwart Englishmen who settled here, and their decedents who forged an independent nation will ultimately and definitely prevail.

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In a changing world, our continuing relationship is a reassuring symbol of our determination to continue the defense of freedom. Your Bicentennial visit and the many, many generous gifts from the British people are vivid reminders of the continuing vitality of the friendship and our partnership in a noble endeavor.

Your Majesty, as we celebrate our past, we also look forward with confidence to working for a better life for all humanity. In our third century, I know that the United Kingdom will be on our side and the United States will be on your side.

Your Royal Highness, ladies and gentlemen, the Queen.

QUEEN ELIZABETH: Mr. President, thank you for your welcome and for your gracious words tonight. We are deeply grateful for having been invited to visit the United States in the main week of your Bicentennial. It was a generous gesture and appropriate.

After all, nobody can say that what happened on the Fourth of July 1776 was not very much a bilateral affair between us. (Laughter) We were indeed happy to accept your invitation.

Two hundred years ago this week, America declared its independence from Britain and for several years the English-speaking world was at war with itself and families on both sides of the ocean were deeply divided.

So, too, was the British Parliament, whose greatest orators of the time denounced the measures which provoked the war and the separation. But, when Britain eventually recognized the independence of the United States of America, a new chapter in history opened.

In the summer of 1785, John Adams, America's first envoy to the Court of St. James, paid his first call on King George III. My ancestor said to him, in well-known words which are worth repeating, "I was the last man in the Kingdom to consent to the separation, but the separation having been made, I have always said, as I say now, that I would be the first to meet the friendship of the United States as an independent power."

Mr. President, history is not a fairy tale. Despite the good intentions, hostility soon broke out between us and even burst into this house. But, these early quarrels are long buried. What is more important is that our shared language, traditions and history have given us a common vision of what is right and just.

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Both our peoples believe in the worth of the individual and the family, in freedom of religion and expression, and in the right to change a Government by the ballot box rather than the gun, perhaps the best definition of democracy.

That is why time and time again, in the testing days of war, and the constructive years of peace, we have stood together on the things that matter. The world has changed a great deal since that Declaration was signed in Independence Hall 200 years ago. Over the generations the British people have watched with admiration -- and can I say with pride -- how you, with ingenuity and resource, first peopled and settled the continent and then undertook a world role which has brought great and lasting benefits to humanity.

Britain too has undergone many changes. The British empire, with imagination and good will, has been transformed into a Commonwealth of nations. In this age, when the relationship between the developed and the developing countries is a central issue, I have no doubt that this Commonwealth link of friendship and understanding is of true value.

At home in recent years, Britain has sought to insure that everyone has the opportunity for self-fulfillment, and a real stake in the future development and prosperity of the country. She is a country much concerned about things that matter--the creation of the necessary wealth to support a prosperous society, the preservation of a clean and healthy environment, the education of the young, the care of the elderly and the sick.

While maintaining the closest links with the Commonwealth of the United States, Britain has become a member of the European community, and this gives us yet another opportunity to work through a wider grouping for the benefit of all.

Interdependence is a feature of the modern world, a world that has become smaller, yet more complex. Today no nation can stand alone. We depend, as never before, upon each other.

Mr. President, we live in times of uncertainty, even of apprehension, and with forces that we cannot allow to escape from our control. We must be farsighted and adaptable. But, we must never lose sight of our basic values, nor underrate the worth of what we know to be certain.

One thing is certain, and that is the strength and permanence of Anglo-American friendship. It has grown and prospered down the years. It has brought with it benefits beyond measure to our peoples. May it long continue to flourish for the sake of both our countries and for the greater good of mankind.

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Mr. President, I raise my glass to you and to Mrs. Ford, to the 200th birthday of America and to the happiness of her staunch and generous people.

END (AT 11:03 P.M. EDT)