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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

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THE WHITE HOUSE

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

THE SOUTH GROUNDS

11:54 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Your Majesty, Your Royal Highness, ladies and gentlemen:

On behalf of the American people, I am delighted to welcome you and your party to the United States and to the White House. Your first State visit to America in 1957 marked the 350th anniversary of the settlement of Jamestown, the first permanent British colony in this new land.

You honor us again by coming to share our Bicentennial observance in the new spirit of optimism and cooperation generated by this great occasion. During the 169 years between the first settlement of Jamestown and our independence, 13 colonies prospered, protected by the British Navy, enjoying the advantage of British commerce, and adopting British concepts of representative self-government

In declaring independence in 1776, we looked for guidance to our British heritage of representative Government; representative Government as well as law. As a sovereign nation, we have kept and nurtured the most durable bond of all -- the bond of idealism in which our new nation was conceived.

Your Majesty's visit symbolizes our deep and continuing commitment to the common values of an Anglo-American civilization. Your Majesty, for generations our peoples have worked together and fought together side by side. As democracies, we continue our quest for peace and justice.

The challenges we now face are different from those that we have confronted together and overcome in the past. At stake is the future of the industrialized democracies which have sustained their destiny in common for more than a generation.

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At stake is the further extension of the blessings of liberty to all humanity in the creation of a better world. As new nations and old, each set their political course to achieve these aims. The principles of human dignity and individual rights set forth in the Magna Carta and our own Declaration of Independence remain truly revolutionary landmarks.

Your Majesty, the wounds of our parting in 1776 healed long ago. Americans admire the United Kingdom as one of our truest allies and best friends. There could be no more convincing evidence of that friendship than the splendid British contributions and participation on the occasion of our Bicentennial.

Last month, I had the privilege and honor to welcome to the White House Rose Garden the distinguished delegation of the British Parliament, who escorted an historic copy of the Magna Carta to America. The loan of this document for our Bicentennial is a gesture that will bring pleasure and inspiration to all who view it.

Yesterday, in Philadelphia, Your Majesty inaugurated the new Bicentennial bell, a gift from the people of Britain to the people of the United States, inscribed "Let Freedom Ring." It will hang in the Bell Tower in Independence National Historical Park.

When I was in Philadelphia on the Fourth of July, I thought what a perfect complement the new bell will be to our own Liberty Bell and the Centennial bell in Independence Hall.

For these gifts and for many others which Britain has honored our historic celebration, the American people are deeply grateful. Above all, we appreciate the personal honor you have so graciously demonstrated by visiting our shores at this special moment in our history.

During your visit, you will travel to hallowed American landmarks. You will observe many changes since you were last here. But, as you travel throughout our land, I trust that you will find something else in the United States, a new sense of unity of friendship, of purpose, and tranquility.

Something wonderful happened to America this past weekend. A spirit of unity and togetherness deep within the American soul sprang to the surface in a way that we had almost forgotten. People showed again they care, that they want to live in peace and harmony with their neighbors, that they want to pull together for the good of the nation and for the good of mankind.

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This weekend we had a marvelous reaffirmation of the American spirit. In the days ahead, we would like very much to share that spirit with you. During your visit in 1957, President Eisenhower remarked that America's respect for Britain was symbolized in our affection for the royal family.

It is in this spirit we welcome Your Majesty's visit as a happy occasion for reaffirming our joint dedication to freedom, to peace, democracy, and the well being of our people.

Your Majesty, America bids you, Prince Philip and your party a most cordial and heartfelt welcome.

QUEEN ELIZABETH: Mr. President, thank you for your welcome to us. We are very pleased to be with you and the American people in this most important week of your Bicentennial year.

Our countries have a great deal in common. The early British settlers created here a society that owes much to its origins across the ocean. For nearly 170 years there was a formal constitutional link between us. Your Declaration of Independence broke that link, but it did not for long break our friendship.

John Adams, America's first Ambassador, said to my ancestor, King George III, that it was his desire to help with the restoration of "the old good nature and the old good humor between our peoples."

That restoration has long been made and the links of language, tradition and personal contact have maintained it.

Yesterday, Prince Philip and I were deeply moved by the welcome we were given in Philadelphia, and now we are looking forward to our time in Washington and to our visits to New York and Boston and to the home of Thomas Jefferson at Monticello.

We shall have visited the four cities that were at the center of events 200 years ago. We also hope to see something of America of 1976 and of the young people who will be taking this country forward into its third century.

Mr. President, the British and American people are as close today as two peoples have ever been. We see you as our strong and trusted friend, and we believe that you, in turn, will find us as ready as ever to bear our full share in defending the values in which we both believe.

That is why we are so happy to be here.

END (AT 12:05 P.M. EDT)