

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AUGUST 29, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY
(Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming)

THE WHITE HOUSE
REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT
YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK
OLD FAITHFUL LODGE

1:12 P.M. MDT

Tom Kleppe, Senator Hansen, representatives of the Department of Interior, Reverend Clergy, ladies and gentlemen:

Labor day, next weekend, marks the end of a glorious summer. It means one more carefree holiday before we all go back to school, back to work, back to the duties we must do to build a better life for ourselves, our children and our country.

For many, many families it means one last chance to get out of town, out into the sun, under the stars, close to nature's beauties and nature's creatures. For me, this is a moment that I have been looking forward to for a long, long time -- to return to Yellowstone where I spent one of the greatest summers of my life.

Being a seasonal Park Ranger -- we used to call them 90-day wonders, maybe they still do (Laughter) -- was one of the most challenging experiences, one of the greatest jobs I ever had following my graduation from the University of Michigan.

Now it seems more like fun than hard work, though we had plenty of both.

I have been telling my family about that summer ever since. Maybe I overdid those bedtime stories about my fire-fighting exploits and my heroic bouts with the bears. (Laughter)

At least that is what Mike, Jack, Steve and Susan keep on telling me. (Laughter)

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So, this time, I brought some of the family along. Jack, as you know, and has been mentioned, is no stranger to Yellowstone. Two years ago this month, he was working as a ranger at a tower station -- actually he was out fishing -- when he got a sudden summons to come to Washington to see his old man get a new job.

So, today, it is a sentimental return to the scene of wonderful memories for two of the Fords and a new experience for Susan, who hopes to get some good Yellowstone photographs like she did last summer at Yosemite.

Family vacations -- especially among the majestic mountains of the West -- are a tradition of our family. My parents always took my brothers and myself to lakes and woods in my State of Michigan before I was big enough to go myself as a Boy Scout. There is something wonderful about the wide open spaces that is almost a necessity for Americans. Being alone with nature strengthens our love for one another and for our country.

For those who live close to the land, this is nothing new. But as more and more Americans live in cities, the lure of the mountains, the beaches, the lakes and the rivers, becomes more and more compelling. So, I have a serious, as well as a sentimental, reason for this visit today.

Our Bicentennial Fourth of July turned out to be a very profound experience for millions and millions of Americans. Amid the fireworks and parades, the Tall Ships and the trips to historic shrines in our joyous celebration of two hundred years of our Nation under God, we found new meaning for the words of freedom, equality and unity.

I always knew the Park Service was efficient and effective (Laughter), and they really proved it just a moment ago. (Laughter)

If I might say, with our Bicentennial Celebration, which was very meaningful, on the Fourth of July, we did find new meaning for the words freedom, equality and unity. Somehow, despite our difficulties and our differences -- perhaps because of them -- Americans recaptured the essential spirit and greatness that makes us a very special kind of people. We realized again what a wonderful thing it is just to be an American.

As I thought about the changes that have taken place in this great country -- not only in the last two years, but during the last two centuries -- I also thought about those things that must never change. Those unchanging things really make us Americans.

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They are the things we must pass on to future generations. Some are intangible, invisible -- our deep religious and moral convictions, our bonds of family and community, our political values embodied in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

But we have other common treasures that are material and visible, that can be damaged and destroyed by man. We must be equally committed to conserve and to cherish our incomparable natural heritage -- our wildlife, our air, our waters and our land, itself.

More than a century ago, we began to save our natural heritage for the enjoyment of future Americans, with the national park system, of which Yellowstone is the oldest and the largest. This year alone, we expect 260 million Americans to visit and enjoy our 287 national parks that spread from the Virgin Islands to Maine to Alaska and to Hawaii.

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I am sure there are times when some of you thought that all 260 million were camping on your camp site.
(Laughter)

We have had a wonderful Bicentennial. We celebrated what our patriotic founders and our immigrant ancestors handed down to us. We renewed our vows to their vision of free Government and equality. But, I found myself saying we ought to do more. Can't we do something special, as our Bicentennial birthday presents to future generations, a gift that will be gratefully remembered 100 years from now. We can.

I, therefore, decided upon a ten-year national commitment to double America's heritage of national parks, recreation areas, wildlife sanctuaries, urban parks and historic sites.

I will send to the Congress Tuesday a Bicentennial Land Heritage Act, which calls for a pledge of \$1 billion 500 million during the next ten years. It will more than double our present acreage of land for national parks, recreation areas and wildlife sanctuaries; development of these new lands to make them accessible and enjoyable; improving facilities and increasing dedicated personnel at existing national parks; making available \$200 million for urban parks, bringing the benefits of nature to those who live in our cities; and accelerating the development of parklands and sanctuaries now delayed for lack of manpower and of money.

This national commitment means we may have to tighten our belts elsewhere a bit, but it is the soundest investment in the future of America that I can envision. We must act now to prevent the loss of treasures that can never be replaced for ourselves, our children and for future generations of Americans.

This is a big job, one that requires Government action at all levels. But, like most of the big jobs Americans undertake, it cannot be left to Government alone. In the past, the cause of land conservation has been advanced by many concerned citizens, companies and private organizations.

The Rockefeller family, represented here today by Mary and Laurence Rockefeller, is an outstanding example of this dedication. I thank them and all such far-sighted Americans for their generous contributions to our national park system and the preservation of our priceless natural heritage.

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I call upon all Americans -- our Bicentennial generation which has enjoyed the blessings of liberty and the pursuit of happiness, ours for 200 years -- to join in a great new undertaking, to improve the quality of our lives and of our land.

I recall that snowy day in 1961 when President Kennedy was inaugurated. I can still see that great American poet, Robert Frost, standing on the steps of the United States Capitol, reciting these moving lines:

"The land was ours before we were the land's. She was our land more than 100 years before we were her people."

I remember as a ranger the first time I stood alone on Inspiration Point over at Canyon Station looking out over this beautiful land. I thought to myself of how lucky I was that my parent's and grandparent's generation had the vision and the determination to save it for us.

Now it is our turn to make our own gift outright to those who will come after us 15 years, 40 years, 100 years from now. I want to be as faithful to my grandchildren's generation as Old Faithful has been to ours. What better way can we add a new dimension to our third century of freedom?

Thank you very much.

END

(AT 11:26 A.M. MDT)