

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OCTOBER 7, 1975

Office of the Vice President
(Kings Mountain, North Carolina)

REMARKS OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
JOHN H. GAMBLE STADIUM
KINGS MOUNTAIN, NORTH CAROLINA

(AT 1:35 P.M. EDT)

Reverend clergy, Congressman Jim Broyhill, and I thank you, sir, for that very warm welcome and the wonderful introduction of this magnificent gathering of people here; as you pointed out, descendants of that group of 900 men who may well have caused the turning point of this critical moment in our history.

I am honored to be here with my good friend, Governor Jim Holshouser, Congressman Jim Martin, and Your Honor the Mayor, Mayor Moss. I want to thank you, sir, for the invitation and the privilege of being here to call on the wonderful friends who are here, and a special thanks to the university and high school bands of the two great States of North and South Carolina who are here present.

They have been magnificent. I know we have all had a tremendous thrill watching them.

(Applause.)

I would like to express my personal respect and appreciation to Mrs. Plonk and Mr. Johnson and all the members of the Kings Mountain Bicentennial Commission for what they have done in making today possible. This is a great gathering.

I have to feel, frankly, ladies and gentlemen, this is America at its best right here in this stadium. This is our country.

(Applause.)

I am thrilled to be here. I am deeply privileged. And especially let me say how delighted I am to be here to represent our great President, President Ford.

(Applause.)

The President asked me to bring you his best wishes and to say how disappointed he was personally not to have the privilege. But I will report to him tomorrow and tell him what he missed. And he has missed a lot, I will tell you that. So I will take the message back to him.

(Applause.)

But he did send his warmest congratulations for the imaginative and exciting approach to the Bicentennial which you have developed here.

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I have got to say I share his feelings. What we are witnessing here today is the Bicentennial spirit at its best. The same character traits that motivated our ancestors are evident today in what you have achieved.

This celebration has been an initiative of the people, and, of course, this is the great strength of America. That Frenchman who came over here in 1820, Mr. deTocqueville, and wrote about the United States, one of the things that impressed him most was the fact, as he put it, somebody has an idea in America and they go across the street to talk to their neighbor about it; the neighbor agrees; they set up a committee; and then they organize it; and they do it; and he says the whole thing is done totally outside and without relation to the bureaucracy. He said, "You won't believe it."

Now this is America, ladies and gentlemen. This is what you have done here today. That is why we are having such a wonderful celebration, because of the initiative of individual citizens who have taken it upon themselves to organize this great gathering; individual citizens, civil groups, business groups, local leaders, in this region joining together to recreate this brilliant page of our history.

I was going to say, and my text says, without any help of the Federal Government, but after what the Mayor said about you, Jim, I am not sure. I had better strike those two lines.

(Laughter.)

So maybe they did have, through your Congressmen, some help. But you gave of your own time. You put in your own talents. You paid with your own resources to make this historic moment live again.

This is a perfect example of what the American character is all about. It is made up of initiative, hard work, imagination, caring about each other, and fundamental to all, a deep love of our country.

(Applause.)

You know, if a foreign visitor were to ask, where did such a great, free Nation begin, it began right here, in places like this historic border area of the Carolinas where this famous battle was fought. Our country began with men like those 900 mountaineers, your ancestors, who left their farms, who left brave, strong women behind to carry on, who marched across the mountain to face a tough, disciplined, professional army.

What sort of an army were these mountain men? The British smugly referred to them as back water men. But that was before the battle. The guns they were carrying were their own. The blankets they slept on they took from their homes. The horses they rode had been hitched to plows just days before. So let's think of that kind of sacrifice the next time we face hardship.

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These citizen soldiers didn't have a general officer. They had no orders from the Continental Congress. They didn't have an army doctor. They had no uniforms. They had no paymaster. Let's face it, they had no pay. But I will tell you this: They had courage, and they loved freedom, more than life itself.

Colonel Shelby commanded them to shoot like hell and fight like devils. Those are the orders they had. That is just what they did; and because they did, the well-trained, well-led, well-armed Redcoats were defeated.

(Applause.)

The Battle of Kings Mountain became the turning point of the Revolutionary War in the South. The war was then headed down the road which led eventually to the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown. Colonists then became free people and the colonies then became a free Nation.

How can we remember these events without bursting with pride at being Americans?

(Applause.)

How can we remember these events without knowing that we are the luckiest people on earth because we live in the greatest Nation on earth and because we are free?

(Applause.)

How can we recognize and remember what our ancestors went through without recognizing that we are the same kind of people, and many of you are the descendants of those very men.

We have the same tough genes in our national character. And recognize this fact: We ought to recognize that there is no problem today that we as a free people and as a Nation cannot concur.

A Britisher with American blood in his veins said it best, speaking to our common heritage. Winston Churchill said, "We have not journeyed all this way across the centuries, across the oceans, across the mountains, across the prairies, because we are made of sugar candy."

Let us never forget that we are people who found the wilderness and out of it carved a Nation. We survived the great depression. We defeated tyrants in two world wars. We have achieved the highest standard of living on earth, all in less than 200 years.

I don't think there is anything that we Americans cannot accomplish if we put our hearts and our minds to the task. To put it another way: There is nothing wrong with America that Americans cannot right.

(Applause.)

And, ladies and gentlemen, let us never forget that we began as a deeply religious people, and we must

continue to lead our lives with strong, spiritual foundations.

(Applause.)

Yesterday morning Chaplain Elson, the Chaplain of the United States Senate, put it in his beautiful opening prayer, and I quote, "In thy power and by Thy grace," he said, "make us better than we are that we may do our part in the shaping of a better world."

And I am optimistic about the future. I have absolute faith in the American people. We have vast untapped natural resources and the unlimited strength, vitality and creativity of a great free people. We stand on the eve of our third century as a Nation, a Nation that has grown to greatness because we were free, because we had faith in ourselves and in our system of Federal Government and free enterprise.

Within this framework we showed the ability to meet the changes and develop the opportunities that lay before us. Ours is a Nation where strength is rooted in a love of country, belief in integrity, in basic standards, and a sense of national purpose and individual meaning in our lives.

I am optimistic that we can continue to meet the great challenges and the opportunities before us. And out of that effort a better Nation and a better world will emerge.

Thank you for letting me be with you on this occasion.

(Applause.)

END

(AT 1:47 P.M. EDT)