

Speech written for
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I am honored by the opportunity and the privilege to stand before you today at this celebration of the beginning of the independence of our nation, one of the grandest experiments in government of all time. On this day, throughout our state and wherever the American flag is now flying, people are also gathered in celebration and reverence for the nation which that flag represents.

I can remember as a boy attending the Fourth of July ceremonies in my home town of Ahoskie; I can remember the pride I felt when I heard the National Anthem, and I can remember the feeling of unity and brotherhood with my fellow townspeople as we gathered to celebrate the birthday of our nation.

Standing here on these steps I am struck by the "grass-roots Patriotism" so prevalent in a small town such as Ahoskie or Cary. President Eisenhower also recognized the virtue and the integrity of the small town citizen, for he said:

"I think for any American who had the great and priceless privilege of being raised in a small town, there remains always with him nostalgic memories of those days. And the older he grows, the more he senses what he owed to the simple honesty, the neighborliness, the integrity that he saw all around him, in those days, and took for granted, and that he learns to appreciate only as he grows older and dwells more in other places of the earth."

The simple honesty, integrity, neighborliness--the spirit of brotherhood and cooperation and community spirit--that the President saw in the small town are the very foundations of our country. The early settlers of the colonies had to unite and cooperate in order to meet and conquer the perils of the wilderness. In later years, as they began to develop a greater affinity with one another, they answered, as one, the call of honor and duty and united behind a single ideal in the true spirit of self-sacrifice to throw off the yoke of tyranny and lay the foundations of our country.

As the democratic ideal began to approach realization in the Constitution of the United States, even then Americans pressed toward the western boundaries of the continent, seeking the fulfillment of their own

American dream. This same spirit of '76 kept our nation together through one civil war, two world wars, and numerous other conflicts. But what is it that has given such durability to such a democratic ideal as ours? What is it about our American way of life which has caused us to pay tribute to it, and to honor it on the Fourth of July each year for the span of nearly 200 years?

First of all, we must all recognize that democracy was not in the beginning a gift, nor is it now. It was won out of the anguish of an enslaved people; it was won out of man's long cherished hopes to be free. It is a battle still going on, and it is being won today by our faith in ourselves and our dedication to the ideals which have made us great.

Freedom does not come easy. If freedom had been the happy, simple, relaxed state of ordinary humanity, man would have everywhere been free - whereas through most of time and space he has been in chains. Do not let us make any mistake about this. The natural government of man is servitude. Tyranny is the normal pattern of government. It is only by intense thought, by great

effort, by burning idealism and unlimited sacrifice that freedom has prevailed as a system of government. And the efforts which were first necessary to create it are fully as necessary to sustain it in our own day.

Our forefathers, drawn from the grass roots of an agrarian society, sought to define the democratic ideal for us in the Declaration of Independence, which we celebrate on this day, and our Constitution. History had taught them that no form of government could long exist unless it embodied the ideals that all men would have the right to freedom; that all men would have the right to equality; that all men would have the right to a voice in their own government. And it is these ideals that have kept us a mighty country, that have kept us a united country, indeed, that have kept us a country at all.

In the solidifying of these ideals in the Consitution; however, the Founding Fathers faced an almost impossible task: that of securing the maximum possible freedom for the individual and at the same time providing for the protection and perpetuation of the new form of government, the Republic. They recognized that if everyone were free to do as he pleased, no one would be free; and yet they knew that a government too repressive of the individual's rights was exactly the type of government which they themselves had rebelled against.

Faced with the problem of apparently conflicting ends, these early men of vision realized that the existence of a nation guaranteeing equal liberty and equal protection could be sustained upon only one condition, the condition that each individual be willing to surrender a part of his liberty in order to respect the rights and opinions of others. Such a curtailment of an individuals freedom is a necessary price for a free and democratic society.

George Washington expressed the idea in other words. He saw the future existence of the United States as contingent upon "the prevalence of the pacific and friendly among the people of the United States which will induce them to forget their local prejudices and politics; to make those mutual concessions which are requisite to the general prosperity; and in some instances--TO SACRIFICE THEIR INDIVIDUAL ADVANTAGES TO THE INTEREST OF THE COMMUNITY." And in the words of General Eisenhower "It is the firm duty of each of our free citizens to place the cause of his country before the comfort and the conveniences of himself."

So it is evident that the sacrifice of a few liberties for the preservation of all is dependent upon a sense of community understanding and brotherhood, and here in America that spirit is based on a common dedication to the democratic ideal. As the great statesman Adlai Stevenson once said,

"No country on earth owes the sense of community more explicitly to the fact that it is united not by race or nationality but by fidelity to an idea. We were born 'dedicated to a proposition' and our greatest leaders--the Jeffersons, the Lincolns, the Wilsons--were not great because they achieved purely American purposes, but because they were able to speak for humanity at large and extend their vision to the whole family of man."

But today our country faces a danger which we have never before faced as a society: Our nation is rent from top to bottom by dissent and revolution. Have we as Americans lost this sense of brotherhood? Have we lost our collective conscience? Have we lost our sense of truth? And here I am not concerned about controversy as to whether or not we should be in Southeast Asia, whether or not we should promote Medicare, whether or not we should continue our space exploration. But I am concerned about our great central pulse--our freedom, the great truth of liberty, which we first set working in the modern world.

By all outer tokens in matters of dress, schools, literature, morals, we are passing through an unprecedented period of rebellion in our society. Seldom before has the

individuals claim for freedom of speech--for freedom of action--reached so far. During these times, the tradition patterns, religious, political, military, educational, have been assaulted and attacked. Self-indulgence seems so often the key to the moral climate of our times. We have even dropped words of discipline and self-denial from our vocabulary. Duty, obligation, country--where does one hear them today?

But the climate of revolt has not only attacked the traditions of religion, politics, morals--the revolt has spread to incorporate the very principles of law and justice that this nation was founded on. On one extreme, there are those who express open and blatant disrespect for the law, burning buildings and destroying property and expecting immunity from prosecution, since after all their cause is just. But on the other hand there are those who would restrict all students from the right of peaceful protest, who would deny some citizens of our country the right to vote, to obtain jobs, and to otherwise participate in the benefits of our free society. This kind of individual license carried to its ultimate end will, of course, lead to chaos for our country and destroy freedom everywhere. Society--our democratic way of life as we know it--cannot

should be no dissent; I am not saying that there should be no change. It is the nature of a living society that it is always undergoing change and refinement; change based on principle is progress, but constant change without principle breeds chaos. And chaos can breed nothing but repression and the loss of all freedoms.

On this day of national Independence we should rededicate ourselves to the principles and values, those democratic ideals on which this great nation was founded. Once again to quote General Eisenhower:

"America today is just as strong as it needs to be. America is the strongest nation in the world, and she will never be defeated or damaged seriously by anyone from the outside. ONLY AMERICANS, ONLY AMERICANS CAN EVER HURT US." I would agree with General Eisenhower; we have the military might and the physical resources to defeat any nation in the world. But in order to remain strong we must possess the internal might and unity to defend ourselves against pressures from within as well as from without. Only through a restoration of the sense of community spirit and brotherhood on which this country was founded can we find the fortitude to face the problems of the present and the challenges of the future.

Someone has said "nothing ever built arose to touch the skies, unless some man dreamed that it should, some man believed that it could, and some man willed that it must." The founders of our nation dreamed of America's greatness; the belief and faith in the democratic ideal held by our forebears kept that dream alive. All that remains is that Americans today possess the will and the resolve to press forward, united under the banner of justice, brotherhood and freedom for all mankind.