

Speech by: Robert Morgan

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Masonic Picnic
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ON A CITIZEN'S RESPONSIBILITY TO DEMOCRACY

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Let me tell you how very pleased I am to be with you today for the 90th Annual Mocksville Masonic Picnic. A person has only to look at this tremendous crowd to see how much the people of this part of North Carolina look forward to and enjoy this annual event.

You know the Mocksville Masonic Picnic has become a part of the tradition of North Carolina just as the good works that Masons have performed across the years. I know, first of all because as a citizen of this State I have benefited from the work which Masons have done for our people--especially the young, the widowed and the ill--and I know secondly because for many years now I have been a Mason myself and just recently advanced to the 32 degree.

This is a proud tradition--this is a proud heritage--and today I salute the members of Mocksville who each year make this great event possible. And I salute

all Masons throughout this State and Nation who work so diligently to carry on this proud tradition of service to their fellowman.

Certainly it is a thrill to be here today and feel the spirit of unity and brotherhood among the people of Mocksville and this whole area of the state gathered to celebrate this annual event.

Standing here today, I am reminded of my affection for my hometown of Lillington and I am struck by the "grass-roots Patriotism" so prevalent in small towns such as Lillington and Mocksville. 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 (fond) 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 and friendship--the spirit of brotherhood and cooperation and community spirit that the President saw in the small towns 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 become more dependent upon 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.

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 allowed a democratic ideal such as ours to survive and flourish? What is it about our American way of life which causes us to pay tribute to it and has fostered the kind of spirit we all feel here today?

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 was won by the brave deeds and simple achievements of men from towns like Lillington and Mocksville which never received national attention but nevertheless are stamped as "profiles of courage" in the minds of people like you in small towns and communities throughout these United States.

Great or small, these deeds performed beneath the folds of Old Glory, woven together, have produced a national fabric too strong to be ripped apart by the sudden violence of an assassination too rugged to be made threadbare by the repeated lawless acts of mobs, too proud to be lowered even one inch by assaults on our international prestige, too colorful to be stained by mud tossed from abroad and too durable to be weakened by the trampling it receives from its detractors and summer patriots.

I think we should remember also that our government is known as a "representative democracy," because it is a government in which the people - the citizens - remain supreme, since its officials remain responsible

to the people and can be removed from office-- peacefully, without threats, without violence and without violation of our laws--whenever the people so desire.

This is the way it should be. Government ought to be close enough to the people so that when the shoe pinches, the people can get some relief. Nothing causes my blood to boil any faster than worthless red-tape and government bureaucrats who ignore the wishes of the people.

You know Winston Churchill once said that though democracy is not perfect, he had never been shown anything which was better. I agree with him.

When we salute the Flag, we say the words, "with justice for all". We in America have tried our best to establish just government. It cannot absolutely guarantee to Americans freedom from all abuse, but it does provide means of redress designed in every way to protect the individual. That this is so, can easily be seen when one remembers the Bill of Rights and the numerous recent

judicial decisions based upon it. The courts today...as never before...are interested in protecting the individual freedoms and the rights of the underprivileged, the indigent, the disadvantaged and members of minority races.

The constitutions of both the United States and North Carolina guarantee that the people have a right to assemble together peaceably to consult for their common good, to instruct their representatives, to petition the government for redress of their grievances and to vote their representatives out of office whenever they fail to perform their duties to the voters' satisfaction. These are the methods of democracy and whenever such methods are available to the people, no man needs to turn to threats, violence and civil disobedience as means of protest.

It has been said that we should cease to take ourselves so seriously and begin to take our political responsibilities seriously. Ladies and gentlemen, I agree. Democracy and its methods can only work when the citizens of a nation take their political responsibilities seriously;

when they not only have respect for, but take a part in politics; when they not only criticize, but make constructive contributions; when they formulate and present reasonable alternatives; when they encourage their best to seek political office and then provide the public support necessary for them to serve effectively.

Let us resolve here today to do these things. Let us rededicate ourselves to the love and service of this Republic and its Flag. We Americans, the people of this community, are a diverse people; this nation is and always will be, a meltingpot. The American Republic was formed by lovers of liberty from all lands. But we stand together as citizens of the United States...a glorious country, a great Flag, the emblem of all that we are or hope to be, our protection in war, our guardian in peace and our hope at all times.

Let us make no apologies for what has passed in our lives but let us make great promises for the future. We love the heroic deeds of those who have gone before us and have demonstrated the strength of the American character,

the fabric of the American flag. We cannot forget, we shall not forget, their sufferings, their trials, their triumphs and their faithfulness. Our nation and small communities such as this one rest on the bedrock of their deeds.

I am glad that the people of Mocksville for ninety years have seen fit to come together for an occasion such as this one. I hope that each year as you do you will remember those who have come before you and contributed in so many ways to the strength of our nation, state, and community. And I hope you will dedicate yourselves to maintaining this same tradition of service to your fellowman.

Don't be misled by false propagañda
or by people with false pretenses. I am
reminded of a story a friend of mine told me
the other day.

It seems that there was a priest going
along the Ozark Highway and his car broke down
He looked around and wondered how he would get
help and he saw a farm house up there on the lane
and he started walking up that way to see if the
man could help him. He met a farmer coming his
way and stopped him and he said, "My friend,
I'm in trouble. My car is broke down. Do you
suppose this fellow up there would give me some
help?" The man said, "Now father, don't go up
there. That man is violently anti-Catholic.
He'd just sic the dogs on you. Don't go up
there." Well, the fellow passed on and the
priest thought "I don't know what else I can do."

So, he went on up and as he approached
the house, he saw the farmer sitting out there
in his rocking chair frowning down toward his
way. When he came up close to the porch, he saw
that the door was open and right back on the wall

of that humble farm home was an enormous great painting of Pope John. The priest thought that the guy was mistaken. This is a good Catholic. So he approached him and he said, "My friend, I see you are a good Catholic. I am in trouble. I need help." The guy said, "Why, I'm no Catholic. Whoever gave you that idea?" "Why," he said, "My friend, I see the picture of his Holiness, the Pope, right on your wall." "Oh," he said, "You are kidding me. That's not the Pope." "Oh, yes," said the priest, "I ought to know. That is a picture of Pope John, the XXIII." The fellow said, "Are you telling me the truth?" "Yes sir, I am. I'm telling you the truth."

The farmer scratched his head and he said, "well doggone that picture salesman. He came out here and he told me that that was the picture of Harry Truman in full Masonic dress."