

SPEECH BY GOVERNOR VIC ATIYEH
NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION, 1983 ANNUAL MEETING
PHOENIX HILTON HOTEL, PHOENIX
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PREPARED TEXT

1) ACCEPT WITH PERSONAL HUMILITY THE OPPORTUNITY
IT IS A UNIQUE HONOR¹ TO ADDRESS THE MEMBERSHIP AT THE
112TH ANNUAL NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION MEMBERS' BANQUET.

~~A STRANGER IS A FRIEND WHO HASN'T MET YOU~~

THE NRA WAS FOUNDED OVER A HUNDRED YEARS AGO BY A GROUP
OF DEDICATED AMERICANS WHO SOUGHT TO PRESERVE ^{AN HISTORIC} ~~A~~ TRADITIONAL
AMERICAN SKILL, / PROMOTE PUBLIC SAFETY AND ORDER, / AND PROTECT AND
DEFEND THE BASIC RIGHTS OF ALL CITIZENS GUARANTEED BY ~~THE~~ OUR
CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES.

TONIGHT, / I WISH TO CONCLUDE THREE BUSY DAYS OF ANNUAL
MEETING BUSINESS BY HIGHLIGHTING FOR ALL OF US SOME OF THE GREAT
TRADITIONS OF THE NRA. / WHEN I THINK OF THOSE TRADITIONS, / I THINK
OF THREE ABOVE ALL: / HISTORY, / SERVICE, / AND AN UNSHAKEABLE
COMMITMENT TO BASIC PRINCIPLES.

LET ME TALK FIRST ABOUT SERVICE. / BY PARTICIPATING ACTIVELY IN THE NRA, / EACH OF US IN OUR OWN WAY IS PERFORMING SERVICE. / FOR SOME ~~OF US~~, / THIS SERVICE CONSISTS OF PROMOTING SAFETY EDUCATION IN THE RESPONSIBLE USE OF FIREARMS. / FOR OTHERS, / THIS SERVICE CONSISTS OF ACTIVE ADVOCACY THROUGH THE NRA ON BEHALF OF THE FREEDOMS WE HOLD DEAR. / AND FOR OTHERS, / THIS SERVICE CONSISTS OF SETTING AN EXAMPLE OF RESPONSIBLE PARTICIPATION IN SUCH GREAT AMERICAN SPORTS AS HUNTING AND COMPETITIVE SHOOTING.

WHATEVER OUR LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION, / WE KNOW THAT OUR INVOLVEMENT HELPS INCREASE OUR OWN SKILL, / AND OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE SAFETY, / USAGE, / AND ENJOYMENT OF FIREARMS. // AND AT THE SAME TIME, / WE KNOW THAT BY INCREASING OUR SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE, / WE CAN IN TURN INCREASE THE UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF ALL CITIZENS.

TRULY, / THE WELL-SPRING OF OUR NATION IS AN INFORMED AND EDUCATED CITIZENRY. / THUS, OUR SERVICE IS A BIG PART OF WHAT NRA IS ALL ABOUT.

BESIDES SERVICE, / I MENTIONED HISTORY.

THE NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION IS STEEPED IN HISTORY. IT IS THE HISTORY OF A YOUNG, VIGOROUS LAND TAMED BY A SPIRITED, ADVENTUROUS, FREEDOM-LOVING PEOPLE. OUR HISTORY FROM THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE TO THE PRESENT DAY IS A HISTORY OF FUNDAMENTALS. THEY ARE FUNDAMENTALS SHAPED BY A CHALLENGING LAND AT A CHALLENGING TIME AND FUNDAMENTALS WRITTEN BY HUMAN BEINGS WHO MET THE CHALLENGE.

SOME LIKE WASHINGTON AND LINCOLN -- HAVE BEEN GIANTS. OTHERS, LIKE YOU & ME, HAVE CONTRIBUTED IN LESSER WAYS. BUT EVEN, IN OUR OWN TIME, ALL CAME TOGETHER AT THE RIGHT TIME AND PLACE TO CREATE THE HERITAGE THAT IS OURS.

I CAN THINK OF NO MORE APPROPRIATE TIME THAN NOW TO PAUSE, FOR A MOMENT, AND TRANSPORT OUR IMAGINATION TO THE WELLSPRING OF OUR BEGINNING TO THE BRILLIANT REASONING THAT LED TO OUR FORM OF GOVERNMENT. LET US RECAPTURE THE EXCITING, BREATHIAKING CONCEPTS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD. LET US REMEMBER HOW FRAGILE OUR WORKING DEMOCRACY WAS AND IS. LET US ALL GO BACK TO 1776.

1776: CONCORD AND LEXINGTON, WHERE THE SHOT WAS FIRED THAT WAS HEARD AROUND THE WORLD -- AND STILL REVERBERATES TODAY. 1776: WHEN WORDS WERE SPOKEN WITH EMOTION AND COMMITMENT. "I REGRET THAT I HAVE BUT ONE LIFE TO GIVE TO MY COUNTRY"... "GIVE ME LIBERTY OR GIVE ME DEATH"... "WE MUST HANG TOGETHER OR WE SHALL HANG SEPARATELY"...

THERE WERE PEOPLE, AND PLACES -- BUNKER HILL AND VALLEY FORGE // THE GREEN MOUNTAIN BOYS AND THE MINUTEMEN... ALL INVOLVED REAL HUMAN BEINGS WHO ^{voluntarily} FACED FEAR, PAIN, AND DEATH // AND MANY DID HAVE FEAR, WERE INJURED, AND DIED IN THAT YEAR OF 1776.

AT THE SAME TIME, IN THE DAWN OF A NEW NATION, THERE APPEARED HEROIC PEOPLE WHOSE INSPIRATION IS FOREVER PRESERVED IN OUR HISTORY // SAM AND JOHN ADAMS, BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, JOHN HANCOCK, THOMAS JEFFERSON, AND GEORGE WASHINGTON.

THEY, AMONG OTHERS, SAID, "WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF-EVIDENT, THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL..." AND THEN, IN A FEW WORDS, THEY CAPTURED THE SPIRIT OF OUR SYSTEM WHEN THEY PENNED THESE WORDS. // "LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS."

THEY WROTE INTO OUR NATION'S FUNDAMENTAL CHARTER A LITANY OF FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS:

- THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND ASSEMBLY;

- FREEDOM OF CHOICE OF RELIGION;

- THE RIGHT TO KEEP AND BEAR ARMS; AND

● A REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT / ELECTED BY THE PEOPLE.
THEY DESIGNED EXECUTIVE, / LEGISLATIVE / AND JUDICIAL
BRANCHES / EQUAL TO ONE ANOTHER.

ALL THE FEARS OF PAST GOVERNMENTS WERE PUT TO REST. / ALL
THE EVILS OF OTHER SYSTEMS WERE WALLED OFF. / ALL THE PAINS OF
INJUSTICE WERE GUARDED AGAINST. / REAL HUMAN BEINGS ARGUED AND
DEBATED FOR LONG HOURS / AND DAYS / AND FINALLY FINISHED THEIR
WORK: / AMERICA'S CONSTITUTION AND BILL OF RIGHTS. / THEN THEY LEFT
IT TO US - / "WE THE PEOPLE" / TO BREATHE LIFE INTO THOSE GREAT
PRINCIPLES. THESE GIANTS CONCEIVED AN IDEA NEVER TRIED WORDS
BEFORE - LET'S HAVE THE PEOPLE RUN THE GOVERNMENT /

Now, / OVER 200 YEARS, / TWO WORLD WARS, / A CIVIL WAR, / ONE
POLICE ACTION, / THE VIET NAM BLOODLETTING, / SEVERAL RECESSIONS AND
DEPRESSIONS, / AND MANY PRESIDENTS LATER WE ARE / PERHAPS / LUCKY TO
HAVE MERELY SURVIVED. / SURVIVED / WITHIN A SYSTEM OF FREEDOM / AND
SELF-DETERMINATION / NEVER PREDICTED TO LAST BY THE POLITICAL
PHILOSOPHERS OF YESTERYEAR.

MAYBE TODAY WE SHOULD PAUSE TO TAKE STOCK. / MAYBE TODAY
WE SHOULD TAKE TIME TO ASK THE QUESTION. / "IS IT WORTH THE
STRUGGLE?" / SHOULD WE KEEP OUR REPUBLICAN FORM OF GOVERNMENT?
SHOULD WE CONTINUE TO FIGHT FOR THE FREEDOMS GIVEN TO US BY OTHERS?
IN WHICH WE BELIEVE?

THESE ARE NOT TREASONOUS QUESTIONS. / WE SHOULD
CONSTANTLY ASK OURSELVES TO RE-EXAMINE WHAT WE HAVE IF ONLY TO RECONFIRM
THE TREASURE THAT IS OURS.

WELL, I HAVE MADE UP MY MIND, I HAVE STUDIED THE ALTERNATIVES, AND I AM UNEQUIVOCAL AND UNSHAKEABLE THAT THERE IS NO BETTER FORM OF GOVERNMENT THAN THIS AND NO MORE FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS THAN THOSE THAT ARE OURS ^{AS} ~~IN~~ AMERICANS!!

WHAT WE NEED TO DO IS LIFT UP OUR HEAD JUST ONCE IN A WHILE! LOOK AROUND! LOOK AT OUR NATION // AT OURSELVES. ^{THEN} WE CAN BE PROUD OF WHAT WE SEE.

AMERICA IS A GREAT NATION, ONE THAT HAS DONE MORE GOOD FOR MORE PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTRY AND AROUND THE WORLD THAN ANY NATION IN HISTORY. // THE HOPE OF RELIGIOUS AND PERSONAL FREEDOM --// TODAY MORE THAN EVER // IS SYMBOLIZED BY THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. — TODAY, MORE THAN EVER BEFORE

I BELIEVE THAT IT IS TIME FOR US TO STOP BEING ASHAMED OF BEING IDENTIFIED WITH A DEEP AFFECTION FOR OUR COUNTRY, OUR FREEDOMS, AND OUR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT. WE MUST INSTEAD UNITE PROUDLY TO BOTH PRESERVE AND PASS ON THE HERITAGE OF A SOCIETY UNIQUE IN THE HISTORY OF MANKIND.

WE MUST
~~IT IS TIME TO~~ RETURN TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF OUR RESPONSIBILITY IN THIS NATION OF GOD-LOVING FREE PEOPLE, ONLY THROUGH EXERCISING OUR RESPONSIBILITIES CAN WE TRULY REMAIN FREE. // WE MUST HAVE FULL KNOWLEDGE
~~IT IS TIME TO REMEMBER~~ THAT WHAT WE DO WILL AFFECT // FOR GOOD OR BAD --// OUR GRANDCHILDREN BORN AND AS YET UNBORN.

OUR HISTORY HAS BEEN, AND CONTINUES TO BE, A HISTORY OF PROGRESS AND FORWARD MOTION. / YET --// JUST AS A STATUE IS NOT SCULPTED FROM A SINGLE STROKE OF THE CHISEL --// SO OUR HISTORY HAS NOT BEEN SHAPED BY ONE ACT ALONE. / EACH PERSON, / IN HIS ^{OR HER} OWN TIME, HAS MADE ^{THEIR} ~~HIS~~ OWN IMPRESSION --// FOR BETTER / OR FOR WORSE.

I HAVE SPOKEN ~~NOW~~ OF HISTORY AND OF SERVICE. / LET ME ^{AS THIS POINT} TURN ~~FINALLY~~ TO THE NRA TRADITION THAT SPEAKS TO OUR MOST FUNDAMENTAL FAITH AS A NATION: / A COMMITMENT TO PRINCIPLES.

THOSE OF US IN POLITICS SEE EVERY DAY THE TREMENDOUS CLASH OF INTERESTS THAT OCCURS IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY. / THOSE OF US IN THE NRA GLIMPSE THIS PROCESS MORE OFTEN THAN MOST. / IT IS TRUE THAT OUR NEEDS CHANGE AS OUR COUNTRY GROWS. / MOST OF US IN GOVERNMENT AGREE THAT LAWS MUST BE CHANGED TO MATCH THE CHANGING NEEDS OF OUR CITIZENS.

THE REAL CONTEST, / HOWEVER, / IS NOT OVER CHANGING NEEDS // BUT OVER PRINCIPLES. / WE CAN ALWAYS ADJUST OUR LAWS // BUT WE MUST NEVER SACRIFICE OUR PRINCIPLES. / OUR CULTURAL, / SOCIAL, / AND POLITICAL PROGRESS FOR OVER 200 YEARS HAS BEEN MADE POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF OUR UNSHAKEABLE FAITH IN THE LIVING PRINCIPLES UPON WHICH ^{THIS} ~~OUR~~ COUNTRY WAS FOUNDED.

THE ACID TEST OF OUR CREDIBILITY // WHETHER AS PUBLIC OFFICIALS OR NRA MEMBERS // IS IN NOT MERELY PAYING LIP SERVICE TO THESE PRINCIPLES, / BUT IN PRACTICING THEM. // AND THE TEST OF OUR COURAGE IS IN SPEAKING OUT ON BEHALF OF OUR PRINCIPLES IN ALL OF OUR PUBLIC AFFAIRS.

~~OUR FOREFATHERS LEFT THEIR PRINCIPLES IN OUR TRUST, LIKE A GREAT ARCHER, THEY SHOT THE ARROW OF THEIR FAITH FORWARD INTO THE FUTURE. OUR TASK IS NOT TO STEP BACK AND START OVER -- BUT RATHER TO GRASP FIRMLY THE OPPORTUNITY WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN, AND DO OUR PART TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT THE ARROW OF OUR COUNTRY'S FAITH FLIES FORWARD STRONGLY ON A COURSE THAT IS STRAIGHT AND TRUE.~~

IN ACCEPTING THIS CHALLENGE, / OUR HERITAGE WILL BE MADE SECURE BY THE SERVICE WE / OURSELVES / GIVE. AND WITH PRIDE WE CAN CARRY THE TORCH OF FREEDOM THAT TO THIS DAY IS THE LIFE AND HEARTBEAT OF OUR GREAT NATION.

~~THANK YOU VERY MUCH.~~

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TODAY, AS TIME HAS NUMBED OUR SENSES, AS THE RARE BELIEF OF
 A DEMOCRACY IS DEMEANED BY THOSE WHO SHOULD KNOW BETTER, WHEN
 WE SEEM DETERMINED TO END THIS NOBLE EXPERIMENT, ^{WE MUST FIGHT EVEN HARDER} INSTEAD OF
BUILDING UPON ALL THAT HAS BEEN GIVEN TO US, MANY SEEM CONTENT IN
TEARING ~~IT~~ DOWN. ~~IT~~ TAKES COURAGE, SKILL, TENACITY, DETERMINATION,
ENDURANCE AND VISION TO BUILD. ~~THOSE~~ WHO DO NOT HAVE THESE
 QUALITIES SEEK RECOGNITION BY TEARING DOWN, BUT THE ONLY SKILL
^{IN TEARING DOWN} INVOLVED IS MANAGING TO GET OUT OF THE WAY WHEN THE WALLS COME
 TUMBLING DOWN.

SO FAR WE HAVE COME FROM 1776 TO ^{TODAY} 1963. LET'S NOW STEP
 BACK HALF WAY TO THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION YEAR OF 1876.
 DURING THE 100-PLUS YEARS SINCE THEN, MANY THINGS HAVE CHANGED,
 BUT MANY SIMILARITIES BETWEEN 1876 AND 1963 EXIST BOTH LARGE
 AND SMALL TO IDENTIFY US WITH THAT YEAR. ^{HOWEVER} UNQUESTIONABLY THERE
 ARE DIFFERENCES AS WELL. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT AND IMPORTANT
DIFFERENCE IS THE WIDE GAP AND DEGREE OF CONFIDENCE IN OUR FUTURE.
 "DESPITE POLITICAL SCANDALS, LINGERING ECONOMIC DEPRESSION, AND
 A WIDESPREAD SENSE OF LIVING IN A TIME OF CRISES," (I AM ^{NOW} QUOTING

FROM AN 1876 NEWS ARTICLE) AMERICANS IN THAT YEAR TOOK A VERY
POSITIVE VIEW OF THE COUNTRIES FUTURE. / A HISTORIAN WRITING ABOUT
 THE CENTENNIAL / OBSERVED THAT COUNTLESS ORATORS MENTIONED THE YEAR
 1976 IN SPEECHES, ^{WITH A CASUALNESS FOUNDED IN UNQUESTIONED CONFIDENCE} ~~SAIDING~~ ^{QUOTING} "NO DOUBT THAT THE BICENTENNIAL WOULD
ARRIVE IN GOOD TIME, / AND THAT THERE WOULD BE AMERICANS HERE TO
 TO CELEBRATE ITS COMING."

WELL, WE ARE ^{THOSE} ~~THE~~ AMERICANS. / WE ARE HERE / AND WE DID CELEBRATE
OUR BICENTENNIAL. / BUT WHO IS HERE TO ASSURE THE TRICENTENNIAL?

IN THE BEGINNING IT WAS TRUE ABOUT "WE THE PEOPLE," / AND WE
 ARE THIS CENTURY'S ~~POSSESSIVE~~ VERSION OF "WE THE PEOPLE." / OUR
 DESIGN WAS IN A BELIEF IN GOD / AND CREATED FOR "WE THE PEOPLE"
 TO DO WITH AS WE WANTED. / IN FACT / WHO WE ARE ^{AND} WHAT WE ARE IS A
TRUE AND ACCURATE REFLECTION OF THE COMBINED "WE THE PEOPLE."

MAYBE NOW IS THE TIME TO ANSWER THE LETTER GEORGE WASHINGTON
 ONCE WROTE TO CONGRESS IN UTTER DESPAIR. / WHILE HIS ARMY WAS
FREEZING AND STARVING AT VALLEY FORGE HE WROTE TO CONGRESS FOR
 HELP / AND RECEIVED NO ANSWER. / HE WROTE ONCE MORE AND AGAIN NO

ANSWER. / FINALLY, HE WROTE A THIRD TIME AND ~~THIS TIME~~ ^{WONDERED} ASKED, "IS ANYONE THERE -- DOES ANYONE CARE?"

WE SHOULD SAY WE ARE HERE AND WE REALLY CARE.

~~ALL~~ ^{ALL} OF WHAT I HAVE SAID SOUNDS LIKE "I ~~STAND FOR MOTHERHOOD,~~ ^{I AM MUCH TOO PATRIOTIC} AMERICA AND A HOT LUNCH FOR ORPHANS" -- ~~AND I DO.~~ ^{BUT I AM.} AND I DON'T MIND SAYING SO. / I AM NOT ASHAMED OF BEING IDENTIFIED WITH A DEEP AFFECTION FOR ~~OUR~~ ^{THIS} COUNTRY AND ~~OUR~~ ^{THIS} SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT. // I AM WILLING TO SACRIFICE TO IMPROVE IT, / FOR THAT IS ALSO PART OF OUR DESIGN. / I WANT TO BE PART OF PASSING ON TO THOSE WHO ARE YET TO COME A THRILL THAT THEY / ALSO / ARE PART OF OUR SOCIETY, UNIQUE IN THE HISTORY OF MAN.

TODAY - 1983 -

↑ IT IS TIME TO TURN TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF OUR RESPONSIBILITY IN THIS NATION OF GOD-LOVING FREE PEOPLE / IF WE WISH TO REMAIN FREE. ~~IT IS TIME TO PRACTICE THE GRANDCHILDREN THEORY WHICH IS, AN ACUTE AWARENESS OF WHAT WE DO WILL AFFECT -- FOR GOOD OR BAD -- OUR GRANDCHILDREN BORN AND AS YET UNBORN.~~

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IT IS TIME FOR A REVITALIZATION / AND A REJUVENATION OF THAT
WHICH HAD BROUGHT US TO OUR BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION. // IT IS TIME
FOR US TO PREPARE FOR OUR GRANDCHILDREN'S TRICENTENNIAL. / IT IS
TIME FOR US TO SAY -- AND BELIEVE ^{WITH THE SAME UNQUESTIONED CONFIDENCE} -- THAT WHICH WAS SAID IN 1886
-- "THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE TRICENTENNIAL WILL ARRIVE IN GOOD
TIME / AND THAT THERE WILL BE AMERICANS HERE TO CELEBRATE ITS COMING."

THANK YOU ~~~~~