

ADDRESS

BY

THE HONORABLE GRIFFIN B. BELL
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

"THE WRIGHT BROTHERS, KITTY HAWK,
AND THEIR NATIONAL GOVERNMENT"

BEFORE

75th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
OF THE
FIRST FLIGHT SOCIETY

Kitty Hawk, North Carolina
December 17, 1978

Pages 1 thru 4

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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1978
9:30 A.M.

WRIGHT BROTHERS NATIONAL MEMORIAL
KITTY HAWK, NORTH CAROLINA

ATTORNEY GENERAL BELL: Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I think I have four minutes left to speak.

[Laughter]

I see that plane here is ready to take off in four minutes. I am reminded that once I was arguing a case to a jury in a country town in Georgia, and the sheriff came in and whispered something to the judge, and the judge said "Just a minute, Mr. Bell, the sheriff has just reported that a tornado is on the way." The sheriff stationed himself at the window to watch out for the tornado. And the Judge said: "Mr. Bell, you go ahead with your argument."

[Laughter]

I will at least have to say something on behalf of the President. I bring you greetings from the President, and he asked me to say that the plot upon which we stand is a memorial to the courage, ingenuity, industry and perseverance of Wilbur and Orville Wright. It is a memorial also to independent initiative, for the Wright brothers utilized their own vision, determination and analytical insight to construct an engine-powered heavier-than-air machine that would fly with human hands at the controls, an achievement that is a model of an inspired [inaudible] endeavor.

I might add that the Wright brothers personified

what Faulkner said when he received the Nobel Prize for literature. He said: the human spirit will not only endure, it will prevail.

Now, you all know the history of the Wright brothers coming here, how they wrote to the U. S. Weather Bureau--they wanted a place where the wind blew 15 to 20 miles an hour every day. They wrote here] to Mr. Dozier --he put them in touch with Captain Tate; they were advised that there would be nowhere to stay--they might get bored, but they couldn't rent a house, probably ought to bring a tent with them. It took them two days to cross Albemarle Sound, but they came to love this area and they came back many times.

In 1928, when the twenty-fifth anniversary of the flight was commemorated, they came down to Norfolk, finally got down here. [Inaudible] had nothing whatever to do with the trip, but I want to read you what Orville Wright said to Congressman Lindsay Warren on that occasion, then I will sit down.

He said: "I wonder if this whole thing isn't a mistake. Fifty years from now might be soon enough to determine if this memorial should be built. To do it now seems like an imposition on the [inaudible],"because [inaudible] they would make a statement like that. In 1928 perhaps we didn't know where we were going in the air age.

Of course we do now know. And it's all [inaudible], but we know we've been to the moon.

It's a great pleasure for me to be here, and we'll go down and watch the airplane take off.

[Laughter and applause]