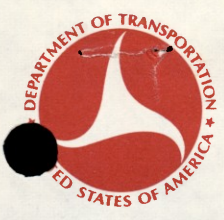


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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

9-S-72

REMARKS BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE AT THE
GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY, TUSKEGEE MUNICIPAL AIRPORT, TUSKEGEE,
ALABAMA, MONDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1972

This is a very distinct honor to be with you today. I have been looking forward eagerly to this occasion since last summer when the history -- as well as the future -- of this airfield was brought to my attention at a meeting with Negro Airmen International.

I told Chief Anderson at that time that when this project was ready, let me know because I wanted to be here. And I am delighted to be able to take this time from a heavy schedule to join with you on this occasion.

The history of Moton Field is an impressive story -- and I might note that I am well aware of Dr. Fisher's keen sense of history; we serve together on the American Bicentennial Commission, and you can all be very proud of the work he is doing.

I do not have a lengthy speech to make this morning. I will leave that to FAA Administrator Jack Shaffer, who will address the luncheon a little later on. I've been away from Washington since last Thursday and have to return for some important meetings this afternoon.

I do, however, want to pass on to you some of the thoughts that occur to me as I look at this crowd -- and at this Field.

This is a significant and important piece of land. It is not large in physical dimensions compared to some airports, but it is truly massive in other ways.

This is a meaningful piece of land because of what it is not. It is not a cotton field, nor will peanuts be grown here. Tenant farmers will not feel the heat of the Alabama sun on this field. Mules will not drag their plows through the dirt here. Barefoot children with rags on their backs will not call this "home."

- more -



Rather, this will be "home" for men who take wing.

More than just aircraft will take to the air from this field. Here also rise the spirits of freedom.

Here also climb to the clouds the hearts, the souls, the aspirations of men who will not be bound!

I am humbly honored to stand under the Southern sun with each and every person here today. I am humbly honored to be here with a man who has quietly but effectively earned himself a solid niche in the history of America, General Benjamin O. Davis, now serving as my Assistant Secretary for Safety and Consumer Affairs.

We are also honored by the presence of General Daniel "Chappie" James, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense. These men know -- better than I can say -- the spirit of the 99th Pursuit Squadron that trained on this Field so many years ago.

You have done me honor too -- by asking me to join men like Chief Anderson -- one of the great names in civil aviation.

I take my hat off too, to our Department of Transportation people like Spann Watson. Bernie Knighten. Vernon Burke and John Briggs. Josh Langford. Bill Broadwater. Bob Daniels. All FAA employees and each and every one of them a tribute to -- the Nation. A tribute to aviation. A tribute to tenacity and guts.

To the officials of Tuskegee Institute, a great institution that opens new horizons to students who will walk in the footsteps of men such as those I have just mentioned, my heartiest congratulations. My sincere offer of continued help and my thanks for your concern.

Tuskegee Institute is the classic example of what Booker T. Washington had in mind when he said "There are two ways of exerting one's strength: one is pushing down, the other is pulling up."

Let me say too, that I am delighted that the City of Tuskegee is the new owner of this property, and that this is -- and will be -- a thriving Municipal Airport. The City of Tuskegee shows what cooperation, understanding, and civic pride is all about. You have my very best wishes and my continued support.

In fact I understand that Jack Shaffer has some news about additional Federal money in his remarks at the luncheon!

As you know, the Federal contribution for the expansion and improvement of Moton Field is being made under the new Airways and Airport Assistance Act of 1970.

When this Administration came to Washington we set to work immediately to bring some balance to the transportation system of this Nation. I don't have to tell you that while the highway program was in pretty good shape, we had a tremendous catchup job to do in public transportation, in safety, in aviation -- and overall, in long-range planning.

Just what is the Act that provided the funds for this project here? In a nutshell: for the first time in the history of the country there is now a long-range program -- 12 years and \$10 billion worth -- to expand and improve our present airports and to build new ones as well. Today, because of the action of the President and the Congress, we have a planned program -- a Trust Fund similar to the Highway Trust Fund -- which guarantees that this Nation will have the capacity aviation needs in the years ahead.

We know that as transportation prospers and grows, the Nation will share in that growth and prosperity. We know that as we make the sometimes-difficult transition from a wartime to a peacetime economy, we can do our part by participating fully in such bootstrap operations as this one here today. Yes, this Administration wants prosperity for each and every person and family in this Nation -- and it is projects such as this one that are proof of our determination!

My friends -- I promised not to make a lengthy speech. And I come back again to my earlier comment that we are here not just to turn a shovel full of earth and to start a project of economic importance. We are here, also, because of this spirit of this occasion. I would like to conclude my remarks by reading a short poem -- written by a Captain in Great Britain's Royal Air Force in 1941 -- the year the fighting 99th started training here in Tuskegee. This poem was published by the young man's parents after he failed to return from a night raid across the Channel.

May the words of this young pilot be an inspiration to all who ever fly from this Field:

"Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth, and danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;

Sunward I have climbed and joined the tumbling mirth
of sun-split clouds -- and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of -- wheeled and soared and swung
high in the sunlit silence.

Hovering there, I have chased the shouting wind along
And flung my eager craft through footless hills of air.

Up, up the long delirious burning blue I have topped the windswept
heights with easy grace,

Where never lark or even eagle flew;

And while with silent lifting mind I've trod the high un-trespassed
sanctity of space, put out my hand, and touched the face of God."

Thank you.

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