

REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION BROCK ADAMS,  
FOR THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF POWERED FLIGHT, KITTY HAWK, NORTH CAROLINA,  
DECEMBER 17, 1978

I, for one, am very pleased to be here this morning. If it hadn't been for Wilbur and Orville Wright, I would probably be the Secretary of Roads and Rails.

Because it is air travel that has revolutionized transportation in these 75 years. The internal combustion engine hasn't really changed very much over the years, and some people say the trains performed better in 1903 than they do today.

It is a rare thing in history to change the world. Edison may have done so. Perhaps Alexander Bell. But no inventor ever lived to see such a drastic change in the world of his boyhood as did Orville Wright. When he died in 1948 the country had nearly a half-million civilian pilots and the friendly skies were starting to get crowded.

The airplane had shown its deadly power in warfare, but it was also proving that it could bring the peoples of the world closer together, and perhaps -- in that way -- it could be a tremendous force for peace.

All of us who have a greater understanding of the world...who have met good friends from other countries...can thank Wilbur and Orville Wright for helping to take the blinders off our eyes.

Now that air travel is a way of life for so many of us, we still face the challenge of safety in flight. There have been predictions that in 10 years -- on any given day -- two million Americans will be up there flying around, either in airliners or private planes.

We've done well so far. Except for walking, it's probably the safest way to travel. But if we are going to sort out the planes and the air lanes in 1988 and 1990, all of us -- the air carriers and the manufacturers, the private pilots and the government -- have got to work together so that the Wright brothers' dream burns just as brightly as it does today.

Now on this day, 75 years ago, Wilbur and Orville Wright found a telegraph operator and they sent a telegram back home to Dayton. Using the terse language of Western Union they said, "Success. Four flights Thursday morning." And they ended by saying that they'd be home for Christmas.

When the editor of the local newspaper saw the message he said, "Isn't that great. The boys will be home for Christmas."

Well, of course he missed the point and the significance of what the Wright brothers had done. But now a lot of people do get home for Christmas because of this remarkable achievement.

In one lifetime, they took us from Kitty Hawk, North Carolina to the moon and beyond. We honor them today as America's greatest pioneers.

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