Presidential Documents

Proclamation 7262 of December 16, 1999

Wright Brothers Day, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

We stand at a rare moment in human history: the end of a century and the birth of a new millennium. The arrival of the 21st century presents all Americans with an opportunity to reflect on where we have been as a Nation and to dream about where we will go in the future. At the dawn of this century, Orville and Wilbur Wright found themselves poised at such a moment. Behind them lay years of painstaking effort and experimentation, trial and failure, in their pursuit of the dream of powered human flight. Ahead of them stretched the sands of Kitty Hawk in North Carolina and yet another attempt to fly in the aircraft they had built by hand. On December 17, 1903, for 12 seconds and 120 feet, they achieved their dream and forever changed the destiny of humankind.

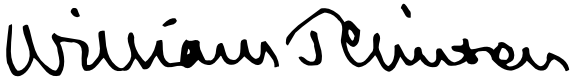
That first brief flight showed that the sky was no longer a limit but a new horizon; it ignited new dreams in our people. Each succeeding generation of Americans, building on the Wright brothers' achievement and fired by the same vision, energy, and determination, has refined the science of flight, increased the range, efficiency, and safety of aircraft, and created a modern air transportation system and aviation industry that have energized our economy and helped transform the world into a truly global community.

And, while they could never have foreseen it, the Wright brothers also brought us to the threshold of space. A scant six decades after that first flight, Americans left the Earth's atmosphere and orbited our planet. By 1969, Neil Armstrong had left the first human footprint on the dusty surface of the Moon. Today's astronauts fly space shuttle missions that are helping us meet the challenge of global climate change, bringing the International Space Station closer to completion, and expanding our knowledge of Earth and the universe. Yet even now the Wright brothers' achievement continues to fire our dreams and beckons us to make new discoveries.

The Congress, by a joint resolution approved December 17, 1963 (77 Stat. 402; 36 U.S.C. 169), has designated December 17 of each year as ''Wright Brothers Day'' and has authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation inviting the people of the United States to observe that day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim December 17, 1999, as Wright Brothers Day.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of December, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.



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