

he established by example the peaceful transition of power that has become the hallmark of our democracy.

Near midnight on December 14, 1799, America's great warrior, statesman, and leader took his final breath. His last words were, "'Tis well." Due in large part to the early guiding hand of George Washington, it has been well for our Nation ever since. Now, 200 years later, as America continues its journey into a new century, it is fitting that we acknowledge our enduring debt to this great man.

The Congress, by Senate Concurrent Resolution 83, has requested the President to proclaim December 14, 1999, as a day to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the death of George Washington.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, by the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and laws of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim December 14, 1999, as the Bicentennial Commemoration of the Death of George Washington. I call upon the people of the United States to mark this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities, paying tribute to the life and achievements of George Washington and his contributions to our Nation. As a further mark of respect, I hereby order that the flag of the United States shall be flown at half-staff upon all public buildings and grounds, at all military posts and naval stations, and on all naval vessels of the Federal Government in the District of Columbia and throughout the United States and its Territories and possessions on Tuesday, December 14, 1999. I also direct that the flag shall be flown at half-staff on that day at all United States embassies, legations, consular offices, and other facilities abroad, including all military facilities and naval vessels and stations.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirteenth 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.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 7261 of December 16, 1999

55th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge

*By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation*

By the winter of 1944, the United States and our Allies had turned the tide of the Second World War. Allied forces had liberated the Italian peninsula and were gaining ground in France and the Low Countries. In mid-December, in a desperate attempt to halt this steady advance, Adolf Hitler launched a furious and massive counteroffensive. On December 16, 29 German divisions flooded the Allied line in the Ardennes Forest region of Belgium and Luxembourg. The Battle of the Bulge had begun.

Facing superior enemy numbers, rugged terrain, and bitter weather, the American troops at first fell back. But their determination to defeat the Nazis never wavered. For 6 weeks, U.S. soldiers responded to fierce Ger-

man offensives with equally determined counterattacks, refusing to succumb to the Nazi onslaught. The siege of Bastogne in Belgium remains an enduring symbol of their indomitable spirit. At that strategic crossroads, a small detachment of the 101st Airborne Division and other attached troops were encircled. When called upon to surrender by the much larger German force, Brigadier General Anthony McAuliffe dismissed the demand with his legendary one-word reply: "Nuts." Against all odds, he and his men held firm during the siege until reinforcements arrived and helped halt the German offensive at a critical point in the Battle.

Inevitably, the spirit, toughness, valor, and resolve of the U.S. forces led to victory. By late January of 1945, the American and Allied counterattack had succeeded in pushing back the Nazi forces, eliminating the threat of further German offensives and ultimately sealing the fate of the Nazi regime. But this victory was costly. At the end of the Battle of the Bulge, some 19,000 Americans lay dead, and thousands more were wounded, captured, or missing in action.

Now, more than half a century later, we still stand in awe of the courage and sacrifice of the more than 600,000 U.S. soldiers and airmen who fought that epic battle. These seemingly ordinary Americans achieved extraordinary things. Leaving their homes, their families, and their civilian lives behind them, they stepped forward to wage a crusade for freedom. They laid the foundations of the peace and security we enjoy today and planted the seeds of democracy that now are bearing fruit throughout Europe. Many of these heroes and patriots have gone to their final rest; but their service, their sacrifice, and their achievements will live forever in the memories and hearts of their fellow Americans.

The Congress by House Joint Resolution 65, has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation honoring the veterans of the Battle of the Bulge.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the period of December 16, 1999, to January 25, 2000, as a time to commemorate the 55th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge. I call upon the people of the United States to express our profound gratitude to the veterans of the Battle of the Bulge and to honor them with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

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.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

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.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON