

JULY 2, 1776

4<sup>th</sup> of July, 2014 Speech at Faces of Freedom Veterans Memorial Atascadero, Calif.

Two days ago, July 2<sup>nd</sup> is a date that will long be remembered and live in the hearts and souls of many-many tens of Millions of our fellow Countrymen past, present and long into the future and hopefully never to be forgotten. For on that date on a quiet afternoon in the City of Philadelphia 238 years ago 56 delegates from the thirteen Colonies to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Continental Congress, after days of debate and revision of the original Thomas Jefferson draft, formally voted for independence from Great Britain declaring the United Colonies free and independent States.

The final form of the document then went to, what I call, “The Committee-of-Details”, and was formally adopted two days later on the morning of July 4<sup>th</sup> as THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

Historians will say this is was the day that the Doctor spanked the baby liberty and she took a deep breath. However time would tell if it this new born Nation was going to survive. There was much work that lay ahead

That evening the document was then rushed to a local printer John Dunlop who made 200 broadsides (copies) which in the days that followed were widely distributed. As a foot note-- in the confusion of this great moment in our Nation’s history the original “4<sup>th</sup> of July document was lost. However to record and preserve this important document-- On July 19 it was ordered that an official engrossed,

Inscribed (signed) copy is made on parchment.

In the weeks that followed all of the 56 delegates signed their names to the document. By their signatures they committed an act of treason for which they could have been put to death. However, their brave action also set in motion a series of events that created a new Nation—and forever earned them a place in history as our Country’s FOUNDING FATHERS.

This might be a good time to pause and ask—who were our Founding Fathers and what kind of men were they? With the exception of 70 year old Benjamin Franklin, these were not old men. Eighteen were under 40 years old and three were in their 20’s. There were not wild-eyed rabble rousing revolutionaries. On the contrary—they were soft-spoken men of means and education. Twenty five were lawyers or jurists. Eleven were merchants. Nine were farmers or large plantation owners and another nine were doctors, ministers and politicians. One was a teacher, one a musician and one a painter. As a testament of the character of these great men, the final words of The

Declaration of Independence read“---we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.”

Following the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 our young nation continued to be enmeshed in an eight year war for independence with Great Britain, at the time the World’s most powerful land and sea force. Major hostilities ended with the British surrender at the battle of Yorktown on October 19, 1781. Two years later on September 3, 1783 Great Britain formally recognized the Colonists’ independence with the signing of the Treaty of Paris and the war officially ended. In essence this young nation was told—“It’s all yours now, let’s see what you can do with it”.

The time was now ripe for this newly independent Nation to convene a Constitutional convention of the 13 original Colonies. It was held from May 25 to September 17, 1787 in the City of Philadelphia to revise the unwieldy Articles of Confederation and to draft a new document which would set forth how the young Nation would be governed. The Document was subsequently ratified and adopted on June 21, 1788 with the approval of New Hampshire and became officially The Constitution of the United States of America. From that date forward it has been the Supreme Law of the Land.

The rest is our History—and what a History and Legacy we have inherited.

Through the years, The United States of America is unrivaled in its success as a democracy. We have had only one form of government since the Constitution was ratified in 1788. Neither our closest allies nor our fiercest enemies have experienced the stability with which we have been blessed. This would not have happened when or how it did if it were not for the group of intelligent and dedicated men our “Founding fathers” –Who gave us the Declaration of Independence 238 years ago.

The impact of this event in ours and World history can best be summarized in the words forever cast in bronze on the “Your American Heritage Monument” here in Atascadero.

NATIONS COME INTO BEING IN MANY WAYS. MILITARY REBELLION, CIVIL STRIFE, ACTS OF HEROISM, ACTS OF TREACHERY, A THOUSAND GREATER AND LESSER CLASHES BETWEEN DEFENDERS OF THE OLD ORDER AND SUPPORTERS OF THE NEW---ALL THESE OCCURRENCES AND MORE HAVE MARKED THE EMERGENCE OF NEW NATIONS, LARGE AND SMALL. THE BIRTH OF OUR NATION INCLUDED THEM ALL. THAT BIRTH WAS UNIQUE , NOT ONLY IN THE IMMENSITY OF ITS LATER IMPACT ON THE COURSE OF WORLD HISTORY AND THE GROWTH OF DEMOCRACY, BUT ALSO BECAUSE SO MANY OF THE THREADS OF OUR NATIONAL HISTORY RUN THROUGH TIME TO COME TOGETHER, IN ONE PLACE, AT ONE TIME, AND IN ONE DOCUMENT.

## THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

It is there for fitting that we meet here on this day, as our ancestors have over these last 238 years, to not only celebrate the birth of our young Nation but to honor those Magnificent Founding Fathers who made it possible for our young Nation to become what it is today- "THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA"