

WHAT'S RIGHT WITH AMERICA

1. I want to talk about America--the end of the rainbow for people from many nations. A country to be immensely proud of...
2. America--land of the pilgrims' pride, land where my fathers died, of thee I sing...
3. A land first trod by creatures we never saw but which gave their lives that we might have a storehouse of energy in the ground.
4. Indians came and flourished, and their history is written in pictures...
5. And in great structures that fit the land...
6. and in ideas for agriculture, and in a living people.
7. The Indians and the Europeans who followed them found forests primeval, boundless, untrod by feudal foot.
8. In them were fuel for the home fires, wood for the homes that were coming...
9. Beauty for the soul...
10. Animals to enjoy...or put on the dinner table when they were hungry enough.

Material for talk by Norman A. Berg, Associate Administrator, Soil Conservation Service, at an awards banquet for SCS employees in Michigan, East Lansing, Michigan, October 17, 1973.

11. Clear ran the streams, unsullied, and teeming with bass, trout and salmon.
12. Bays and harbors gave shelter and a great harvest.
13. Great prairies lay to the west, with grass belly high to thundering buffalo.
14. And on beyond were great mountains, majestic and awesome and holding great wealth for the future.
15. The desert lay out there, remote and beautiful...
16. And full of life and rich resources.
17. Nature had carved her land in a thousand fascinating ways.
18. In our diverse America our fathers planted their seed and cleared their pathways.
19. They built their homes, some humble, some handsome, and defended their families and their future.
20. Many moved westward where opportunity was greater than conveniences,
21. And where the big sky gave man a new horizon in his mind.
22. Men lifted their eyes to the hills for gold and wisdom.
23. And a nation grew by sweat and determination.
24. America crossed the rivers and mountains...
25. And the great heartland of the continent...
26. And two railroads met in Utah...
27. So America could stretch through the mountains of the West
28. To connect ocean to beautiful ocean.
29. The winning of the West meant primitive log or sod huts.
30. The winning of a country meant drudgery and hard work.

31. And tiring battles with nature and markets...
32. And sometimes a loss of hope.
33. And sometimes a move on to a kinder place.
34. But life had its pleasures too--like sneaking out to join Huck Finn...
35. Or eating the Sunday meal.
36. And always there was faith in God, in themselves, and in the future of their Nation.
37. There was always Thanksgiving, sumptuous or lean...
38. There was Christmas to celebrate and reflect...
39. There was the Fourth of July to celebrate our great country quietly...
40. Or loudly...
41. Or fancily.
42. And there was always the land...
43. And the things of our own making that blended with the land...
44. And blended with the water.
45. There was always wildlife in great abundance, watching us watching them.
46. There were plants of great beauty, even in the most unlikely places.
47. We learned how to irrigate and to grow bountiful crops in many places,
48. And to grow food as the world had never seen before.
49. Sure, we made mistakes. We ruined many acres before we knew we had a problem.
50. But we took our medicine--and out of our disappointment and crisis era came a new wisdom.

51. We learned how to farm in a way to produce and protect, and the people in this room helped spread conservation ideas and action to hundreds of millions of acres.
52. We worked with the landowner to trade ideas and understanding of his needs and desires.
53. We worked with the land itself.
54. We worked with plants to get them to do amazing things for conservation or food production...
55. Sometimes we got carried away.
56. But we have learned to help man and his environment get along in a way that gives us real hope for the future.
57. And somewhere along the way America has managed to go to the moon several times and float back home safely.
58. We've built great structures that seem to reach there without much flying needed.
59. We've built great cities.
60. We've built businesses and factories, small and large, that produce quality goods for the world--and remember that our soil stewardship has freed the American people to work off the farm, because so few can grow so much for the table.
61. The productivity has given all of us things to buy and look at and profit from--and the highest standard of living on earth.

- 62. Along the way we have built hospitals and staffed them with knowledge and equipment to give us all a longer future. A couple of generations back, a fifth of you would have died before age 20. My generation made it possible for us to be here today, alive and healthy; we wiped out typhoid, diphtheria, bovine tuberculosis, polio, and more.
- 63. My generation has brought water and electricity and telephones and television and other community services to help us live better than anywhere else on earth. We have opportunity and convenience.
- 64. So when you think we're all alone in the darkness, and the environment or the constitution or the American dream is in real trouble...
- 65. When you think the world or Big Brother is out to get us and it's only a matter of time...
- 66. Maybe you'd better stop and look again.
- 67-78. Maybe you'd better look at America through the eyes of the people who really are our future--our children.
- 79. America's children and their families are our tomorrow.
- 80. Isn't America really something to get excited about? I think it is! We have kept this America of ours pretty solid. We have kept the doors of opportunity open. We do recognize that the comforts, food abundance, and affluence of this Nation have been achieved with some costs, some problems, some by-products of progress such as pollution, environmental deterioration, and resource depletion. But I think we have come to a point where people want to seek a solid common ground between economic interests and environmental concerns. Let's seize the opportunity.
