

Joint Meeting of the Two Houses of Congress to Receive the Apollo 11 Astronauts

Congressional Record
Tuesday, September 16, 1969

The House met at 12 o'clock noon.

Rev. James H. Weber, St. Joseph Church, Oil City, Pa., offered the following prayer:

Almighty God, bless our Nation and keep it faithful to the ideas of freedom, justice, and brotherhood for all which make it great. Lord, You claim that if You are lifted up, You will draw all men to Yourself. Our astronauts have demonstrated literally and successfully this principle. Be close to our President and our Congress. Give them vision and courage as they ponder decisions affecting peace and the future of the world. Give all of us the wisdom to listen and to understand and not to judge. Keep us compassionate toward our fellow citizens who are struggling for an identity. Help us Americans humbly to be aware not just of our human limitations and weaknesses but also of our extraordinary potential. Reawaken personal confidence in ourselves as individuals and in our beloved country. Make this great land and all its peoples know clearly Thy will so that we live vigorously, courageously, and uprightly. Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The Journal of the proceedings of yesterday was read and approved.

RECESS

The SPEAKER. The Chair declares a recess subject to the call of the Chair. Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 3 minutes p.m.) the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

JOINT MEETING OF THE TWO HOUSES OF CONGRESS TO RECEIVE THE APOLLO 11 ASTRONAUTS

The SPEAKER of the House presided.

At 12 o'clock and 19 minutes p.m., the Doorkeeper (William M. Miller) announced the Vice President and Members of the U.S. Senate who entered the Hall of the House of Representatives, the Vice President taking the chair at the right of the Speaker, and the Members of the Senate the seats reserved for them.

The SPEAKER. The Chair appoints as members of the committee on the part of the House to escort our distinguished visitors into the Chamber the gentleman from Oklahoma, Mr. Albert; the gentleman from Louisiana, Mr. Boggs; the gentleman from Louisiana, Mr. Hébert; the gentleman from California, Mr. Miller; the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Rodino; the gentleman from Michigan, Mr. Gerald R. Ford; the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. Arends; the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Fulton; and the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. McCulloch.

The VICE PRESIDENT. On behalf of the Senate the Vice President appoints the following Senators to escort our distinguished astronauts into the Chamber: Senator Richard Russell, of Georgia; Senator Mike Mansfield, of Montana; Senator Clinton Anderson, of New Mexico; Senator Edward M. Kennedy, of Massachusetts; Senator Robert C. Byrd, of West Virginia; Senator Hugh Scott, of Pennsylvania; Senator Margaret Chase Smith, of Maine; Senator Milton R. Young, of North Dakota; and Senator Gordon Allott, of Colorado.

The Doorkeeper announced the ambassadors, ministers, and chargés d'affaires of foreign governments.

The ambassadors, ministers, and chargés d'affaires of foreign governments entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seats reserved for them.

The Doorkeeper announced the Cabinet of the President of the United States.

The members of the Cabinet of the President of the United States entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seats reserved for them in front of the Speaker's rostrum.

At 12 o'clock and 34 minutes p.m., the Doorkeeper announced the Apollo 11 astronauts.

Mr. Neil A. Armstrong; Lt. Col. Michael Collins, U.S. Air Force; and Col. Edwin E. Aldrin, Jr., U.S. Air Force, accompanied by the committee of the escort, entered the Chamber and stood at the Clerk's desk.

[Applause, the Members rising.]

The SPEAKER. My distinguished colleagues of the Congress, we are honoring today three men who represent the best in America and whose coordinated skill, fantastic daring, and visionary drive have made history that constitutes a turning point of paramount importance in the journey of mankind. I have the high honor and official and personal pleasure of presenting to you the crew of Apollo 11, who successfully made the historic journey to the moon, Neil A. Armstrong, Col. Edwin E. Aldrin, Jr., and Lt. Col. Michael Collins.

The Chair recognizes Mr. Armstrong.

Mr. ARMSTRONG. Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, Members of Congress, distinguished guests, we are greatly honored that you have invited us here today. Only now have we completed our journey to land on and explore the moon, and return. It was here in these Halls that our venture really began. Here the Space Act of 1958 was framed, the chartering document of the National Aeronautic and Space Administration. And here in the years that followed the key decisions that permitted the successive steps of Mercury and Gemini and Apollo were permitted.

Your policies and the marvels of modern communication have permitted people around the world to share the excitement of our exploration. And, although you have been informed of the results of the Apollo 11, we are particularly pleased to have this opportunity to complete our work by reporting to you and through you to the American people. My colleagues share the honor of presenting this report. First, it is my pleasure to present Col. Edwin Aldrin.

Colonel ALDRIN: Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, it is with a great sense of pride as an American and with humility as a human being that I say to you today what no men have been privileged to say before: "We walked on the moon." But the footprints at Tranquillity Base belong to more than the crew of Apollo 11. They were put there by hundreds of thousands of people across this country, people in Government, industry, and universities, the teams and crews that preceded us, all who strived throughout the years with Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo. Those footprints belong to the American people and you, their representatives, who accepted and supported the inevitable challenge of the moon. And, since we came in peace for all mankind those footprints belong also to all people of the world. As the moon shines impartially on all those looking up from our spinning earth so do we hope the benefits of space exploration will be spread equally with a harmonizing influence to all mankind.

Scientific exploration implies investigating the unknown. The result can never be wholly anticipated. Charles Lindbergh said, "Scientific accomplishment is a path, not an end; a path leading to and disappearing in mystery."

Our steps in space have been a symbol of this country's way of life as we open our doors and windows to the world to view our successes and failures and as we share with all nations our discovery. The Saturn, Columbia, and Eagle, and the extravehicular mobility unit have proved to Neil, Mike, and me that this Nation can produce equipment of the highest quality and dependability. This should give all of us hope and inspiration to

overcome some of the more difficult problems here on earth. The Apollo lesson is that national goals can be met where there is a strong enough will to do so.

The first step on the moon was a step toward our sister planets and ultimately toward the stars. "A small step for a man," was a statement of fact, "giant leap for mankind," is a hope for the future.

What this country does with the lessons of Apollo apply to domestic problems, and what we do in further space exploration programs will determine just how giant a leap we have taken.

Thank you.

Mr. ARMSTRONG. Now I should like to present Col. Michael Collins.

Colonel COLLINS. Mr. President, Members of Congress, and distinguished guests: One of the many things I have very much enjoyed about working for the Space Agency, and for the Air Force, is that they have always given me free rein, even to the extent of addressing this most august assemblage without coaching, without putting any words in my mouth. Therefore, my brief remarks are simply those of a free citizen living in a free country and expressing free thoughts that are purely my own.

Many years before there was a space program my father had a favorite quotation: "He who would bring back the wealth of the Indies must take the wealth of the Indies with him." This we have done. We have taken to the moon the wealth of this Nation, the vision of its political leaders, the intelligence of its scientists, the dedication of its engineers, the careful craftsmanship of its workers, and the enthusiastic support of its people. We have brought back rocks. And I think it is a fair trade. For just as the Rosetta stone revealed the language of ancient Egypt, so may these rocks unlock the mystery of the origin of the moon, of our earth, and even of our solar system.

During the flight of Apollo 11, in the constant sunlight between the earth and the moon, it was necessary for us to control the temperature of our spacecraft by a slow rotation not unlike that of a chicken on a barbecue spit. As we turned, the earth and the moon alternately appeared in our windows. We had our choice. We could look toward the Moon, toward Mars, toward our future in space—toward the new Indies—or we could look back toward the Earth, our home, with its problems spawned over more than a millennium of human occupancy.

We looked both ways. We saw both, and I think that is what our Nation must do. We can ignore neither the wealth of the Indies nor the realities of the immediate needs of our cities, our citizens, or our civics. We cannot launch our planetary probes from a springboard of poverty, discrimination, or unrest. But neither can we wait until each and every terrestrial problem has been solved. Such logic 200 years ago would have prevented expansion westward past the Appalachian Mountains, for assuredly the eastern seaboard was beset by problems of great urgency then, as it is today.

Man has always gone where he has been able to go. It is that simple. He will continue pushing back his frontier, no matter how far it may carry him from his homeland.

Someday in the not-too-distant future, when I listen to an earthling step out onto the surface of Mars or some other planet, just as I listened to Neil step out onto the surface of the Moon, I hope I hear him say: "I come from the United States of America."

Mr. ARMSTRONG. We landed on the Sea of Tranquillity, in the cool of the early lunar morning, when the long shadows would aid our perception.

The sun was only 10° above the horizon. While the earth turned through nearly a full day during our stay, the sun at Tranquillity Base rose barely 11°—a small fraction of the month long lunar day. There was a peculiar sensation of the duality of time—the swift rush of events that characterizes all our lives—and the ponderous parade which marks the

aging of the universe.

Both kinds of time were evident—the first, by the routine events of the flight, whose planning and execution were detailed to fractions of a second—the latter by rocks around us, unchanged throughout the history of man—whose 3-billion-year-old secrets made them the treasure we sought.

The plaque on the Eagle which summarized our hopes bears this message:
Here men from the planet earth first set foot upon the moon July 1969 A.D. We came in peace for all mankind.

Those nineteen hundred and sixty-nine years had constituted the majority of the age of Pisces, a 12th of the great year. That is measured by the thousand generations the precession of the earth's axis requires to scribe a giant circle in the heavens.

In the next 20 centuries, the age of Aquarius of the great year, the age for which our young people have such high hopes, humanity may begin to understand its most baffling mystery—where are we going?

The earth is, in fact, traveling many thousands of miles per hour in the direction of the constellation Hercules—to some unknown destination in the cosmos. Man must understand his universe in order to understand his destiny.

Mystery however is a very necessary ingredient in our lives. Mystery creates wonder and wonder is the basis for man's desire to understand. Who knows what mysteries will be solved in our lifetime, and what new riddles will become the challenge of the new generations?

Science has not mastered prophesy. We predict too much for next year yet far too little for the next ten. Responding to challenge is one of democracy's great strengths. Our successes in space lead us to hope that this strength can be used in the next decade in the solution of many of our planet's problems. Several weeks ago I enjoyed the warmth of reflection on the true meanings of the spirit of Apollo.

I stood in the highlands of this Nation, near the Continental Divide, introducing to my sons the wonders of nature, and pleasures of looking for deer and for elk. In their enthusiasm for the view they frequently stumbled on the rocky trails, but when they looked only to their footing, they did not see the elk. To those of you who have advocated looking high we owe our sincere gratitude, for you have granted us the opportunity to see some of the grandest views of the Creator.

To those of you who have been our honest critics, we also thank, for you have reminded us that we dare not forget to watch the trail. We carried on Apollo 11 two flags of this Union that had flown over the Capitol, one over the House of Representatives, one over the Senate. It is our privilege to return them now in these Halls which exemplify man's highest purpose—to serve one's fellow man.

We thank you, on behalf of all the men of Apollo, for giving us the privilege of joining you in serving—for all mankind.

[Applause, the Members rising.]

(Thereupon, the flags were presented to the Speaker and to the Vice President.)

The SPEAKER. I think we would be remiss on this occasion if we did not, in paying the highest honor that the Congress can pay to any person—to invite them and receive them in joint meeting—also honor what might be termed the unseen astronauts, the wives of our distinguished friends. I am going to ask the wives of the astronauts to rise: Mrs. Armstrong, Mrs. Collins, Mrs. Aldrin.

[Applause, the Members rising.]

The VICE PRESIDENT. On behalf of the Members of the Senate, we are very grateful for the presentation of this flag. We watched with great interest the Apollo program proceed and are conscious of the thrust of the need, in the words of the gentleman who spoke here this morning, the primary need being balance and the need to meet the problems of our society wherever they arise. I can assure you that this memento will not fall into that category but will be kept and appreciated with the dignity that it deserves.

Thank you very much.

The SPEAKER. On behalf of the House of Representatives I want to express our sincere thanks to the members of the Apollo 11 for the thought and for the action in carrying this flag, presented to the House, to the moon and flying it on the moon. These two flags are probably two of the most precious flags, not only of our own country, but of any other country. We extend to you the deep thanks of the Members of the House of Representatives and assure you that every care and caution will be taken, because this will be forever one of the most treasured possessions of this great Chamber.

[Applause, the Members rising.]

At 12 o'clock and 59 minutes p.m., Mr. Neil A. Armstrong, Lt. Col. Michael Collins, U.S. Air Force, Col. Edwin E. Aldrin, Jr., U.S. Air Force, accompanied by the committee of escort, retired from the Hall of the House of Representatives.

The Doorkeeper escorted the invited guests from the Chamber in the following order:

The members of the President's Cabinet.

The ambassadors, ministers, and chargés d'affaires of foreign governments.

JOINT MEETING DISSOLVED

The SPEAKER. The Chair declares the joint meeting of both branches of Congress hereby dissolved.