

REMARKS:

2001 BATTLE OF HONEY SPRINGS MEMORIAL SERVICE

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A few days ago we celebrated 225 years of Independence for our Country. Independence we now know, however, took us only part of the way. The Civil War was the event that completed the unfinished work begun in 1776.

We stand here today to remember one of the battles of the Civil War, fought less than a century after the founding of the United States. The Civil War was an American tragedy that was the culmination of tensions that existed in this country from its founding; tensions between the **reality** of our American culture and the **ideals** of the declaration, constitution, and bill of rights.

The Civil War pitted American versus American In four years of bloody conflict that lay waste to the land and to a generation of Americans. When we think of this conflict we often think of the North and the South, and of victors and of those defeated.

When we think in these terms we must inevitably come to the conclusion that some Americans must have died in vain at places like Honey Springs. But here the wisdom of time will tell us that such thoughts are in error. We can see now, clearly, that Union and Confederate alike ultimately fought not to prevail over the other. Rather, they fought almost as pawns in the struggle to end tensions within the very fabric of our country—tensions that were not of their making—and to bring the reality of our dally lives closer to those ideals put forth by our founding fathers (the greatest of whom were from the "old south").

It has been said that the Civil War transformed us from a collection of states into a nation. If this be true, then it must follow that Union and Confederate, equally, are patriots of our nation today. The sacrifice of both was, it seems, necessary to allow us to move forward toward a destination at which we have yet to arrive.

The 19th century, when the Civil War was fought, is long past, and the 20th century has just become a memory. As we stand here in the 21st century, we must remember that Union and Confederate alike helped us become the nation that we are today. To do otherwise is to exclude many Americans, and their descendents, from a feeling of ownership in our current nation and in its heritage. To do otherwise is to foster tensions and divisions between those

of us living today.

As we move forward into the 21st century, we will soon commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Civil War. As we approach this milestone of our history let us remember that all who fought here and elsewhere, regardless of their beliefs at the time, sacrificed so that we might stand here today in a country that is, because of them, a nation, more unified and closer, I believe, to the ideals set forth by the founding fathers.