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State Park Day Address

Strom Thurmond

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We are gathered today in the foothills of the mountains of South Carolina in one of our State Parks—an area set aside for the recreation of our people. As we assemble here, other groups are gathered in fifteen other parks, listening as I talk to you on this occasion. They are all gathered, as we are, in beautiful woodland surroundings. At Table Rock they look out across Lake Pinnacle to the imposing mountain, formed in the shape of a pinnacle, a table and a stool in the august presence of Sah-ka-na-ga, the Great Blue Hills of God, as the Indians called these mountains before the coming of the white man. At Oconee they are gathered on a high plateau between Station and Stumphouse Mountain; at Kings Mountain they are assembled near the site of the Battle of Kings Mountain, the "Battle of the Colonels" fought October 7, 1780, between British Regulars, Tories and American Patriots; at Cheraw they look out upon a 300 acre lake built at Eureka damsite on Juniper Creek which used to be close to the headwaters of navigation on the great Pee Dee basin; at Poinsett they are near the final resting places of Joel R. Poinsett, General Thomas Sumter and others who figured so largely in colonial developments; at Hunting Island they are assembled on one of the hundred odd islands that compose Beaufort County, an area which has been governed under six flags: Spanish, French, English, the State of South Carolina in the Revolutionary War, the Confederate States and the United States. I will not take your time to mention all of the State's parks. Sufficient to say, they represent the best of our scenic areas from the mountains, through
and the piedmont, sandhills, coastal plains to the seashore. Since 1934 these areas have been under protection from fire, vandalism and scenic exploitation, and have been available to the public for outdoor recreation. Our people enjoy swimming in safe areas protected by qualified lifeguards; they go boating in beautiful lakes; they fish in these lakes and attractive streams and ponds; they enjoy picnics and family reunions in rustic picnic areas; they vacation in attractive cabins; they enjoy group vacations in large organized camps; they enjoy a day camp program, including nature study, arts and crafts, and land sports and games, in safe attractive surroundings; the grownups who come to study nature and merely relax, find delightful, restful retreats.

With all these facilities and activities, South Carolina State Parks have become immensely popular. Since those days in 1934 when the first State park was established at Cheraw, the use of the parks has increased by leaps and bounds until today over a million visitors are recorded annually. Over twice as many people come as there are facilities available to adequately provide for. Crowded conditions prevail everywhere.

It is apparent that recreation must take its place to round out a well balanced society. If our people enjoy their increased leisure time in an uplifted manner, our society will flourish. The benefits are tremendous. Good recreation helps us to use our leisure time to the fullest—pleasantly and profitably. Good recreation is a bulwark against crime, will reduce delinquency in our communities, and lessen public expenditures for jails, sanitariums, hospitals and houses of detention. Good recreation develops clear minds, strong
healthy bodies and happy hearts. If we are strong in mind, body and spirit
no power or force on earth can conquer us, even in this atomic age.

Therefore, as we relax and ponder for a moment in this beautiful amphitheatre, our hearts and minds should offer a prayer of thanks to God for giving
us these blessings. We should look to the future with a keen, steady eye, and
resolve that the day will not be too far distant until all of our people who
wish to enjoy these surroundings will be able to do so. Because we dedicated
these areas and facilities to the recreation of the people, let us firmly resolve
that they will grow in beauty and usefulness under our thoughtful care and under-
standing.