REMARKS OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR JOHN A. CARVER, JR.,
AT EXERCISES MARKING THE DEDICATION OF THE VISITOR CENTER AT
CHANCELLORSVILLE BATTLEFIELD, VIRGINIA, MAY 5, 1963, 2:30 p.m., (EST)

Mr. Chairman, Governor Godwin, distinguished guests, ladies and
gentlemen:

My well-known preference for the historical units of our National
Park System amounts almost to favoritism. The Park Service's legis-
lative charter is to conserve the historic as well as the national parks,
and to provide for the enjoyment of the same, now and for future genera-
tions. The National Historical Park at Independence Hall in Philadelphia
and the Minute Man effort at Boston, which commemorate courage and sac-
rifice demonstrated by those who built the Nation, mean much to me and
all Americans.

Although I hold no great enthusiasm for some aspects of our cen-
tennial memorialization of fratricidal warfare, there is authentic
history in the areas themselves and the Nation is the richer for their
preservation and interpretation.

We have preserved and restored the scenes of Fort Sumter and
Manassas, Vicksburg and Shiloh, and of Antietam and Petersburg and
Chickamauga. Neither Antietam nor Manassas meant more to me after the
re-creation of the horror of the fratricide itself. Soon the centennial
period of the war itself will pass and we shall enter a period that
parallels by a century the time of America's greatest expansion. I
hope we can be similarly engrossed in drawing upon the constructive
accomplishments which both preceded and followed the darkness of a
century ago. I hope we will devote our time and attention and financial resources to the preservation of some of the natural beauty of this country.

We are here specifically to dedicate a visitor center, an instrument or tool of continuing interpretation. We will dedicate another one at Gettysburg in July. Perhaps only one visitor in a hundred will get the feel of Chancellorsville by walking the ground itself—by "walking through" the maneuvers conceived by the brilliantly audacious Lee and carried out by Jackson and Stuart; or by standing in Hooker's tracks to grope for the secret of his paralysis.

The other ninety-nine will remember Chancellorsville by the visitor center itself.

The visitor center we dedicate today may or may not satisfy you or me and whether it does or doesn't may not much matter. These judgments are made over time and they are the business of minds more schooled in aesthetics than my own.

It is undeniably a responsibility of the National Park Service and of the Department of the Interior, however, to keep in mind always that good design is an obligation we owe to the public. Whether it be at one of our great natural parks like Yellowstone or Yosemite or at the smaller jewels of history or archeology like Painted Desert, Petrified Forest or Colonial National Historical Park, we have governmentally an obligation to bring to the visitor a quality of warmth and friendliness
and aesthetic response for these structures which of necessity must intrude. In these days of commercialism and mass production we have developed a great proficiency at producing functional products. This kind of mass produced functionalism, the Chief Architect of the National Park Service has written in a fine paper on the subject, is not oriented to national park and recreational development.

The National Park System means so much to the United States it seems incomprehensible to me that the fine designers in America would not want to bring their talents to bear upon our projects, as a matter of patriotic duty.

Perhaps you will deduce from this that I as one individual am less than enthusiastic about the "modenness" of this particular structure. You are right.

So let me conclude my part in the program today by returning to the subject to say something more about the event we here recall, the Battle of Chancellorsville. I would not want my contribution to be entirely in sour notes.

Of all the centennial ceremonies, this one, in my historical perspective at least, has unique significance in the struggle for American unity.

We mark here the high tide of Confederate military fortunes. From here the road led to Gettysburg and the climactic struggle which made Appomattox inevitable. Indeed, the outcome at Gettysburg was
in large part decided here—for who knows what might have happened had Jackson's discipline occupied the critical center before Cemetery Ridge?

But the almost legendary Stonewall could not answer Lee's call for an attack capable of splitting Meade's line. He had fallen on this field—where his and Lee's genius had not only blunted the drive toward Richmond and the Confederate heartland, but permitted the Army of Northern Virginia to launch an all-out thrust into Union territory. The Army of the Potomac was soundly beaten in this wilderness, but the same factors of terrain which Lee used to achieve victory also prevented him from administering the coup de grace. That was left to a day that never came—possibly because the price paid in Jackson's loss at Chancellorsville was greater than the ranks of Confederate leadership could afford.

This seems to me to be the significance of the events we memorialize today. It is not for me to reconstruct those events in detail or to evaluate them in military terms, but only to see in them the turning point toward ultimate national unity. This is a political reality with which I feel competent to deal. From these fields emerged the stream of history in which an adolescent nation was transposed from a pawn of world politics into the symbol of hope for those who aspired to be free.