

you'll put a label on every time when it isn't political?

The President. Well, yes, label this as a nonpolitical conversation this morning, but you'll know. [Laughter] It's like Potter Stewart on pornography: You'll know it when you see it. [Laughter]

Q. That's the quote.

The President. Now, would you all kindly fold the—hooks? [Laughter] It's been a joy. Now, get the—[laughter].

Q. We've got to go to work. [Laughter]
The President. Does this count as a press conference?

Q. No.

Q. No.

Q. Pretty close. [Laughter]

The President. Marlin? [Laughter]

Q. Pretty close, Marlin.

Q. We were told the President wasn't going to talk at all. [Laughter]

Note: The exchange began at 10:03 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House, prior to a meeting with the Republican congressional leadership. The following persons were referred to: John H. Sununu, Chief of Staff to the President; C. Boyden Gray, Counsel to the President; Senator John C. Danforth; Attorney General Dick Thornburgh; Potter Stewart, former Associate Justice of the Supreme Court; and Marlin Fitzwater, Press Secretary to the President. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks at the Presentation Ceremony for the Presidential Scholars Awards

June 19, 1991

Welcome. Good to see all of you. Welcome. Well, please be seated. It's a delight to have you all here at the White House. May I salute the Chairman, my old friend John Engler, who also doubles as the Governor from Michigan, an awesome assignment, but has found time like all of our committee to give to this worthwhile program. And I'm very grateful to you, John. And then, of course, on my right here, Secretary Lamar Alexander, our new Secretary of Education, a former Governor who's really bringing a new drive and a new focus on our program, America 2000, which I think has a real shot now at revolutionizing education in this country. And we need it. We need to start from scratch and take a new look. So, I salute both of them.

I particularly want to thank the members of the Commission and the corporate sponsors, and all of you, thank you for coming. Welcome to the White House and to an event that bestows the highest scholastic honor that a President can bestow.

First, I want to say that there's absolutely no rule here that says that the person giving the speech has to be as smart as the stu-

dents receiving the scholarships. [Laughter]
Thank heavens. [Laughter]

Which reminds me of what George Burns once said: "Smartness runs in my family. When I went to school I was so smart my teacher was in my class for 5 years." [Laughter] Well, even at 95—and he was here the other day—George Burns would salute this program, the Presidential scholarship program, now 27 years old. And today, I would like to discuss briefly how education can and must help prepare America's children to serve the Nation and the world.

Let me begin by asking you to look at yourselves and say, what do you see? You see some of our best and brightest young people. You see living educational success stories. You see our hope for an exciting and rich future.

You come from every sort of background, every race and creed. You live in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and in other lands. But as Americans, you revere learning, achievement, and the hope that both create.

California's Marisa DeSalles realizes all of

that. And she expects to be the first woman in her—where is she? Now, we've got to salute some of these folks, if I'm going to be talking about you. Okay. She expects to be the first woman in her family to earn an undergraduate degree.

And so does Jonathan Sievers. No, no? Okay, the guy didn't make it. Well, I'll talk about him anyway. There he is. Good. Good. He was born in Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands, and he is the third sibling in his family commended as a Presidential scholar. And that is really remarkable. And he knows who to thank. He thanks his parents—and let me just say how he phrased it—for “making me practice and for leaving the fish alone.” [Laughter] You have to be from Kwajalein, like I was once, to understand this inside joke. [Laughter]

Then there's another, Kai Ng of Illinois. Kai, where are you? Right there. Coming here from Hong Kong in 1974, she learned English from her sister and “Sesame Street.” She can tell you how you can do it. That's the same place I'm trying to learn how to run a computer. [Laughter]

Now, education traditionally has served as the ladder that enables individual Americans to reach beyond the clouds. And every time someone succeeds in going further, higher, we all reap initiatives. And we all reap the benefits.

Aimee Crago, a Presidential scholar from Louisiana—she's here with us. Aimee, now, we don't want to embarrass you, but stand up. And if you don't mind my quoting you, “I think that in order to be the person one wants to be, one needs to have a knowledge of all the people one could be, and education provides this knowledge.”

It's become something of a cliché to say that knowledge is power, but it really is. And knowledge, imagination, ambition—these form the pillars of our future. Education can help us keep our competitive edge and imaginative fires, here and abroad. It gives us the means to raise our standards, the standards of living, to improve the quality of our lives. It can lead us into a new golden age of information, understanding, and technology.

America has no natural resource more precious than its intellectual resources. And that's why recently I announced this pro-

gram I referred to earlier called America 2000. It's an education strategy. It is really—look at the details—it's a pioneering crusade to make and keep American education number one.

For today's students, we must make existing schools not only better but more accountable. For tomorrow's students, the next generation, we must create a new generation of American schools. And for all of us—for the adults who think our school days are over—we've got to become a nation of students, recognizing that learning is a lifelong process. Finally, outside our schools, we must make our communities places where learning can occur.

Our education strategy realizes that education can help us practically. For over 200 years, America's genius has created innovations like the wireless, the Model T, and integrated circuits. I'm reminded of the man who was asked what he would take if his house was on fire and he could only remove one thing. He answered, “I would take the fire.” American scholarship works. [Laughter]

Yet education must also shape us morally, providing the grounding ideas and values crucial to democracy. I have said, and I really believe this, that in America the definition of a successful life must include serving others. But you cannot serve if you can't think. You cannot serve if you can't separate good from bad, true from false, practical from dreamy.

Just as many have labored to share their knowledge with you—parents and teachers and administrators and friends—you must follow suit. Give of yourselves: as a tutor in a prison, at a local school, in a homeless center. You will share something far more profound than little scraps of information. You will share a way of looking at the world and, in the process, of looking at yourself.

So, this may be hard to put in focus, but you are today's trailblazers and leaders. What you learn today and in years to come will help us make the 21st century the next American century. It won't be easy. I recall once, marvelous story of a professor who left Yale just before I got there. He was marking an examination paper shortly before Christmas—and for those of my gen-

June 19 / Administration of George Bush, 1991

eration, I'm talking about William Lyon Phelps, and the noted scholar that he was—came across a note. The note read: "God only knows the answer to this question. Merry Christmas." The guy handed his paper in like that. Phelps returned the paper with an annotation: "God gets an A. You get an F. Happy New Year." [Laughter] True story.

I guess what I'm saying is, you can't bluff your way through the future. And you have to face it squarely and take it on. And you will encounter obstacles, but you will overcome them. And you will conquer through resilience, through scholarship and, above all, the example of your lives.

And as you do, think of those in this program again who deserve our thanks. Our Governor here, Governor John Engler, who is Chairman of this White House Commission. Think of the Commission sponsors who enable you to do this. And let me salute the Commission members who choose 141 honorees from among all of America's high school seniors.

But also remember the teachers who inspired you, the friends or adults who coun-

seled you, supported you, gave you the confidence to achieve great things. Kathryn Cunningham, a scholar from Vermont, has said, "I thank my parents for their advice that achievements mean nothing if they don't help anyone else." All your parents ought to be proud. While this is your day, I kind of think it's also theirs.

And to every Presidential scholar, my heartfelt congratulations. And in closing, a challenge: Let us not only move mankind into the future, let us better it, ennoble it. Make the best of the special blessings bestowed upon you. God bless you all and your wonderful families. And may God bless the United States of America. Thank you, and congratulations to all of you.

Note: The President spoke at 2:35 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. John Engler of Michigan, Chairman of the Commission on Presidential Scholars; Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander; comedian George Burns; and Presidential scholars Marisa DeSalles, Jonathan Sievers, Kai Ng, Aimee Crago, and Kathryn Cunningham.

Remarks by President Bush and President Collor of Brazil on Signing an Enterprise for the Americas Initiative Multilateral Trade Agreement

June 19, 1991

President Bush. Well, first, let me welcome everybody here—a most distinguished guest list from all across our treasured hemisphere, and we're delighted to have you here. Of course, I want to single out our guest of honor, who's been here for what the United States feels has been a terribly important visit, President Collor of Brazil. I want to salute Foreign Minister Di Tella; Foreign Minister Rezek; Foreign Minister Frutos; Foreign Minister Gros; and the Secretary General of the OAS, our distinguished friend Baena Soares; and Secretary Brady and Secretary Mosbacher. Of course, Carla Hills here at the table for the United States, and so many distinguished Ambassadors. We're delighted to

have you here.

This is an occasion to be proud of. We want to refer to this, and will refer to this, as the Rose Garden Agreement. For those who are new here, this is a very special place, this Rose Garden. Many historic events have happened here; many current events take place here. But we view this agreement as one of significance, and I would refer to this as the Rose Garden Agreement. It represents the culmination of a great deal of negotiating work. It represents a new departure for our trade and investment relations with Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

And more importantly, this agreement demonstrates how a new cooperative spirit