

Remarks to the United States Academic Decathlon Winners

April 23, 1992

Welcome all. And first, may I greet our distinguished number two over at the Energy Department, David Kearns, coming down here from a fantastic leadership role in American business to help us in this important America 2000 education program. So I'm delighted he's with us here today.

I want to salute the president and the board of directors of the U.S. Academic Decathlon, all of them; thank particularly all of the corporate sponsors who make so much of this possible; and also single out Danny Ramirez, Chris Roorda, and Greg Rudnick, standing up here with me today; salute the coaches and the friends. And most of all, a warm Rose Garden welcome to our newest American champs, newest American heroes if you will, the 1992 Academic Decathlon champs, the team from J. Frank Dobie High in, yes, you guessed it, Houston, Texas. Now, where are they? Stand up. And they've got a good front-row seat, too. Thank you, guys, and welcome. It's a great feat for my hometown, the highest score, I'm told, in the history of the competition. And I'm very proud to welcome you all here. I hear that you wore "Rose Garden or Bust" pins. They work. And I'm wondering if you have an extra one for the fall. [Laughter]

Congratulations also to our silver and bronze medalists from Mountain View High in Mesa, Arizona, Whitney Young Magnet High in Chicago; our regional winners from New Jersey, Alabama, Ohio, Nebraska, and California; our small school winner from Wisconsin; and our 10 individual student scholarship winners, 9 from our top 3 winning schools, and then Mit Robertson here from Tupelo, Mississippi. Welcome all.

I want to send special good-luck wishes to those who will represent us at the International Decathlon in a couple of weeks, the Academic Decathlon, that is. And since you're the star decathletes, tell me who is going to win at Barcelona, Dan or Dave? [Laughter]

You've all done something remarkable. And this year's contest began with 30,000,

more than 30,000 students at 3,500 schools coast to coast. And now it's just you. And not only did you work all year to conquer environmental science in a range of 10 categories, you also survived the blizzard of 25,000 pieces of test paper out in Boise. And I was impressed by your Habitat Earth Super Quiz questions like this one: "In a molecule of methane, the carbon atom is at the center of what?" For you out there in the press—[laughter]—the answer is "a tetrahedron with four S-P-3 bonds." Did you get that one down? I'll be glad to repeat the question. Got it? Never mind.

That was easy—not! Actually, pretty tough. But I know a category I could enter: computers. I was just in there with Secretary Kearns talking about it. I've been learning how to work one because one of our education goals is that nobody is too old to learn. I wrote my first program a while ago. I'm not sure what happened to it. It was called "Michelangelo." [Laughter]

Now, you kids here today represent every team member from across the country. And I want to tell you and them what all of you have done for America. You've shown that great things can be achieved by commitment, perseverance, hard work, and yes, teamwork. And I salute you, and I envy you. And you've found the sheer joy of learning, beginning to understand the world.

One day a scientist will discover the cure for cancer, the cure for AIDS. Other people will find new ways to feed the hungry. And there will be writers whose wisdom will touch lives. And right now, those men and women are kids in our classrooms or maybe even sitting right here in the Rose Garden.

Remember, study hard, and one day one of you might grow up to be President. But let's face it, even then you'll never make as much money as your dog. [Laughter] Millie, who normally comes to events like this, but she used to just roll over on the grass, and now all she rolls over is her money market account with—in the street.

But look, you've shown your peers that it

is as exciting to root for an academic team as an athletic one. And that's a point I wanted to make for our entire country. You've shown that it takes skill, stamina, and intensity to achieve in the classroom as well as in the stadium. And you've given them a priceless gift—your peers—the belief in their ability to reach out and shape their own lives.

There is a new century coming, one with absolutely unlimited horizons. And we must make sure all our children enter this new world equipped with the skills that will let them dream dreams and know they can make them come true.

One of the things that impresses me most about this decathlon is that each team is made up of A, B, and C students. And there's a great lesson there. What matters is simply that each kid be the best that he or she can be. As George Patton said, "If a man has done his best, what else is there?" We don't want the moon for our kids. We want something more important, a future.

And so one year ago, I unveiled America 2000, our long-range strategy to achieve our six national education goals. And it's a challenge posed to each of us in communities throughout America to literally reinvent American education. It urges us to reach deep within ourselves to find answers so that our kids can reach for the stars.

Changing our attitudes about education is too important to wait or waste a generation. To be competitive in this changing world, we must realize that we succeed economically at home; if we're to do that, we must lead economically abroad. Open markets, free trade, they mean jobs for American workers and economic growth for American companies. But we must be prepared to compete, ready to take advantage of these high-tech opportunities in the global marketplace. We know our economic health, our economic survival depend on how we educate ourselves to face the challenges of a new century. So we've set these six education goals to reach by the year 2000, when today's third and fourth graders will be taking part in this event, this Academic Decathlon, by then.

And you all know these goals. One of them, the first one: Our kids will start

school ready to learn. That's more than Head Start; Head Start's a part of that. Our high school graduation rate must be 90 percent. The third one: Our students will be achieving world-class standards. And then fourth: We'll be first in the world in science and math, a particularly important one. And then the fifth one: Every adult will be literate; no one is too old to learn. And sixth: Every American school must be safe, must be disciplined, must be drug-free, in other words, an environment where people can learn.

You will help us meet those challenges. Real excellence demands commitment from everyone as we create a new generation of American schools that demands more of the same choices of schools, public, private, or religious, for middle class and poor Americans that wealthier families already have. Give them a chance to choose.

It demands new creative partnership among parents, teachers, businesses, and kids like the community involvement that encourages this decathlon and the local and national corporate partnerships that fund it. And by the way, I want to give a special note to the corporate sponsors with us today, whose leadership and vision make this decathlon possible. This bond really, I referred to it earlier, but this bond between industry and the individual is the keystone of the American spirit. The country needs to follow this decathlon's example in all these areas because for our future every citizen must now help every community develop a plan of action.

Already 43 States and over 1,000 communities across this country have answered the call and have joined America 2000. This isn't Democrat or Republican or liberal or conservative. It is literally a move to revolutionize education. And together we are reinventing American education, neighborhood by neighborhood, community by community all across this country. And at the heart of it are you students, you kids, a new kind of campus hero with the good values you learn from disciplined determination, from a sharp mind that is not wasted on drugs, and from the confidence and pride that comes from proving yourselves. And you will help this America 2000 dream come true.

Apr. 23 / Administration of George Bush, 1992

For a great example of this we don't have to look further than a woman who is not with us today, DC's Rhondee Johnson, a junior at Benjamin Banneker High who just won the National Academic Decathlon's Kristen Caperton Award for Inspiration and Courage. She takes her school responsibilities so seriously that she's helping her team at a track meet right now instead of joining us. And we all hope she wins the blue ribbon, but she's certainly winning it in life with her example. Rhondee's lived with the tragedy of violence. When her aunt was killed, her four children came to live with Rhondee's family, making 8-year-old Rhondee the oldest of nine kids in a single-parent household. She takes on a parent's duties, and she still manages a 4.0 average. She is an inspiration, accepting responsibilities and challenges and still striving to excel.

She and all of you give a 1990's example

of how Abraham Lincoln defined his own life when he said, "I do the very best I know how, the very best I can; and I mean to keep on doing so until the end." I am proud of the message all of you winning decathletes send, that personal dedication, effort, and teamwork lead to success.

And when one of you bright young people solves the problem of who created "Michelangelo," just remember, my name is Dana Carvey.

Thank you all very much for coming. Congratulations, and may God bless you all.

Note: The President spoke at 11:18 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Deputy Secretary of Education David T. Kearns; winning team captains Daniel Bruno Ramirez, Christine L. Roorda, and Gregory Rudnick; and comedian Dana Carvey.

Remarks at the Signing Ceremony for the Paper Market Access Agreement With Japan

April 23, 1992

The President. May I thank Ambassador Kuriyama for being here with us today, Japan's Ambassador to the United States, and also Mike Moskow up here. Everybody knows him, and we're grateful to him for his participation in all of this.

Today does mark a milestone for both the United States and Japan, a ceremony representing another step toward our two countries becoming equal partners in trade. The agreement I sign today is an important, positive development stemming from our January trip to Japan.

And I am pleased that since January, American companies have begun to enjoy a more positive atmosphere for doing business in Japan. The broader commitment which Prime Minister Miyazawa and I made during my visit was the Tokyo Declaration, and an important part that was the Global Partnership Plan of Action, an agreement to strengthen trade between our two countries, all part of our efforts to make the

relationship between us a true partnership. This is a very important relationship. And that all will ensure that U.S. firms have the same degree of access to the Japanese market that Japanese firms enjoy in the United States.

The Paper Market Access Agreement will increase opportunities and sales for foreign firms exporting paper products into Japan. And hereafter, the Government of Japan will encourage its paper distributors, converters, printers, and major corporate users to increase imports of competitive foreign paper products. That official encouragement will open the way for America's paper industry to export its products into Japan's \$27 billion market.

Today's action is good for all concerned: good for the Japanese consumer, good for American industry, and good for the American worker. And it is also an important step forward in our large global trading system. As William McKinley said back in 1897,