

Remarks on Lighting the National Christmas Tree

December 10, 1992

Thank you, Joe, for being the President of the Christmas Pageant of Peace. And may I salute Lucie Arnaz and Lee Greenwood, Keshia Knight Pulliam; the world's greatest weatherman, who missed it tonight, Willard Scott; the Children's Chorus of Maryland; the cast of "A Christmas Carol"—great of them to come down; and of course, the U.S. Coast Guard Band.

Barbara and I are very pleased that all of you could be here tonight. It's wonderful to see so many smiling faces in spite of the adversity. It's especially wonderful to see the children. This is their holiday, an entire season dedicated to the impact of one child on the world. And there's a lesson to be learned from these young people here. Look at what's most important to them, the people they love.

Barbara and I want to dedicate this Christmas tree to the children of America, for they are more than our future; they are our present. And they remind us that we must love one another in order to achieve peace. We must love one another. Our prayers are with them and the ones they cherish.

May I simply say, let us think of the children of Somalia, too, the children everywhere who live in fear and want. Our prayers are with them, and may their families be safe and the sporadic fighting over there end soon.

Let us also say a special prayer for our Armed Forces who are doing their duty, vindicating the values of America and the spirit of Christmas in this far-off land. We salute them and their selfless devotion to country.

For Barbara and me and from our entire family, we wish you all a Merry Christmas, a happy and healthy New Year, and love that will outshine this tree year-round.

God bless you all, and God bless our great country, the United States of America. Merry Christmas.

Note: The President spoke at 5:50 p.m. on the Ellipse during the annual Christmas Pageant of Peace. In his remarks, he referred to Joe Riley, pageant president, and entertainers Lucie Arnaz, Lee Greenwood, and Keshia Knight Pulliam.

Remarks to the President's Drug Advisory Council Leadership Forum

December 11, 1992

What a nice welcome. Thank you very much. Normally I wouldn't say anything bad about Jim Burke, but he's got it backwards. I came over here to thank you people for this fantastic job, voluntarism at its very best. And that's what this is all about.

I am delighted to be here. Of course, I salute Jim. You take a man like that with a fantastic record in business and then in community service and ask him to do a big job, and he's done it as president now of our Drug Advisory Council, as well as chairman of the Partnership for a Drug-Free America. And I salute him. I don't

believe a lot of the action we've seen that's resulted in success would have been possible without his steadfast, determined leadership, and I salute him for all of that. I think particularly we owe him a vote of gratitude for what he's been able to do in lining up support in the media for getting this antidrug message out all across the country. Literally hundreds of millions of dollars worth of advertising that's on the air and has been on the air and is making a difference can be attributed to his steadfast leadership.

As for Alvah Chapman, the other man

here, the old theory is if you want to get a job done, get a busy person to do it. And when Miami was devastated by the hurricane, he stepped up, organized a volunteer coalition, and is doing a superb job in actually—an outfit known as Rebuild—rebuilding Miami. He's brought that same dedication to this work as each and every one of you know. And he's chairman of our National Coalition Committee, and he's hard at work rebuilding in the antidrug field just as he is in south Florida. So I'm grateful to him.

I want to salute Father Malloy over here. I'm surprised he's as pleasant to me as he is when I walked in because he's had a terrible time getting here, diverted I'm told, and landing off in some faraway city and ending up here at about 2 in the morning. But again, here he is with a full agenda, running one of our great educational institutions and yet finding time to give to this people's war. And I'm delighted about that.

And of course, I see Bill Moss here. And I think we owe him a vote of thanks as the founding chairman of the PDAC.

I really did come here to give my heartfelt thanks to the members of the Drug Advisory Council for this outstanding work that you've done to rid the Nation of illegal drugs. You've given tireless service and a service to others, and that is deeply appreciated. And to all the drug coalition leaders and members that are with us today, I hear from all across the country, I'm told over 200 cities in 40 States, let me just add a few words to these thanks.

Charles de Gaulle once said that France was not her true self unless she was engaged in a great enterprise. Well, the same is true here. And you have led America in a great enterprise, truly becoming involved in a cause larger than yourselves. And you are part of a growing movement that is sweeping across this Nation.

Today there are more antidrug coalitions than ever, over a thousand, a thousand across the country, because of your efforts. And that means a thousand communities aided by Federal, State, and local governments have accepted the responsibility to work side by side with their neighbors to get drugs out and keep drugs out of their neighborhoods. Block by block, street by

street, home by home, ordinary people are doing absolutely extraordinary things.

You're showing that every citizen has a role to play in eliminating drugs from our neighborhoods. You're enriching our Nation's future. You've got to look at it that way. You are enriching our Nation's future through community-based programs, the very backbone of America's drug policy.

That noted philosopher, who I wish were with me here today, Barbara Bush—[laughter]—said, what happens in your house is more important than what happens in the White House. And as I think back over 12 wonderful years in the Vice Presidency and then in the Presidency, I am absolutely convinced she's right. There are certain things Government can do, but there's things that you can do in your own house and in your own neighborhood, in your own community that Government cannot possibly do. And so she's right when she makes a statement like that. And the people with the most influence are not here in Washington, DC. It's the people back home, the friend, the pastor, the patient, the parent, the teacher, whoever it is, somebody on the team, and the doctor or the daughter, who can stir the soul of somebody that's needing help.

So it's a team effort. And our ability to solve the drug problem in America depends on the extent to which we can convince individuals not to try drugs or use them and to help those individuals addicted to get into treatment. We've got a lot to do in that addicted category, as Jim and Alvah, I'm sure, have shared with you. And perhaps you know it better from your own experience. But this understanding is the very basis for the enormous progress that's been made in reducing illegal drug use and simply must be the foundation of any future drug strategy.

In the span of this administration—and I don't think most people know this across the country, and I bear, obviously, my share of the responsibility for the fact that they don't—but in the span of this administration, we've seen drug use go down. Overall drug use decreased by more than 12 percent between 1988 and 1991; occasional cocaine use went down 25 percent, twice the goal that we all set; adolescent cocaine use,

we'd hoped to reduce that by 30 percent, and the facts are clear that it's fallen by more than 60 percent.

When a neighbor's front yard became the front line of a drug war, rather than looking to government for solutions you looked to each other to meet the drug problem in your community head-on. And because you did, today a little girl isn't afraid to ride her bike over to the park, or a senior citizen once again sits on his front porch in the afternoon without fear. We've got to keep going until that is universal. But there's some wonderful examples of how your work has already paid off. And so what you're doing in the workplace and in the schoolyard and the corner grocery store is work-

ing.

I am very grateful to you because, as I look at this, you are restoring hope, you're saving lives, and you're healing our country one person at a time. And for that you have the gratitude of your community, your country, and certainly your President.

May God bless you all in this wonderful work. And thank you very, very much for what you're doing for the United States. God bless you.

Note: The President spoke at 9:20 a.m. at the Washington Hilton. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Edward A. Malloy, C.S.C., President's Drug Advisory Council Leadership Forum chairman.

Remarks on Presenting the Presidential Medals of Freedom

December 11, 1992

Barbara and I thank you all very much. Barbara and I are just delighted to have you here on this special occasion. Welcome to the White House. I'm going to keep this relatively short today because afterwards Richard Petty and I are going to take a few laps around the Ellipse in number 43—*[laughter]*—so we've got plenty to do. Mr. Vice President and Mrs. Quayle and members of our Cabinet, a special welcome to all of you.

One of the great privileges of being President is being able to recognize and honor some of our finest Americans. And that's exactly what I'm doing today by awarding the Presidential Medal of Freedom to 10 people who have made extraordinary contributions to our country.

Today, freedom is mankind's North Star. And I am grateful that more people have breathed their first breath of freedom over the last 4 years than at any time in history. And the great question of the cold war was whether people would put their faith in the state or in themselves. Freedom won, and America enjoys the fruits of victory as people around the world join in the great democratic experiment that we began some 216 years ago.

History honors those people who wrest the torch of freedom from the hands of their oppressors. But in America, that torch lies safely in the hands of the people. And the Presidential Medal of Freedom honors those who carry that torch. And our light of freedom is bright enough to light the world.

Today, every man on the street in Moscow realizes what Americans have always understood. It is human nature to be free. And just as nature abhors a vacuum, so does human nature abhor the absence of freedom. So today in essence, by awarding people from these various different pursuits, we celebrate the triumph for freedom, by recognizing these 10 American greats who have set an example for the world.

The Presidential Medal of Freedom was reestablished by President John F. Kennedy who tragically did not live to award it. And when President Johnson awarded the medal to its first recipients, he said that President Kennedy had intended the awards as, and here's the quote, "a means of national thanks and encouragement for the selfless effort and the brilliant task." In a sense he was talking about what we refer to here as Points of Light, as a Point of Light, because