

All of us can help. All you really need to do is roll up your sleeves, sit with a child, and open a book together. And remember, you'll be doing more than just reading, you'll be writing an exciting new chapter in America's progress.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner April 26, 1997

Thank you very much. Mr. Hunt, thank you so much for reading the notes that I wrote you. [Laughter] Just like every other journalist, make all my memos public. [Laughter] To Larry McQuillan, Arlene Dillon, Jon Stewart, who will make us glad we came in a few moments, to all the distinguished head table guests, and ladies and gentlemen.

I tried to fulfill Terry Hunt's agenda as President. Those are real notes I wrote him. And I will try to fulfill Larry's agenda. I think it's terrible the conditions in which the White House press corps labor. It really is. It reminds me of Nurse Ratched's office in "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest." [Laughter] And it's really a tribute to the futility of a politician pandering to the press, because that used to be an indoor swimming pool that brought joy to FDR and JFK and Presidents in between. Richard Nixon gave it to you. [Laughter] And he got such good press in return. [Laughter] Maybe this is his final revenge, the miserable conditions of it. We could uncover it, but let you keep it. [Laughter] I could build a cabana. Well, you think about it.

Before I get into my jokes, I have some important, serious news. [Laughter] Senator Lott and I have broken the gridlock over the budget. A deal now appears imminent. Miraculously, the \$56 billion—[applause]—thank you—the \$56 billion gap that has separated Democrats and Republicans has been bridged. And ladies and gentlemen, we owe Senator Dole a huge debt of gratitude. [Laughter] And the best part is, we don't have to start paying it back until 2005. [Laughter] And that's outside the budget window. Bigger tax cuts, more money for the Justice Department, whatever—just sign up, you can have it. [Laughter] You know, if I had known

Bob Dole was that generous, I'd have invited him over for coffee. [Laughter]

I want to congratulate awardees tonight: Byron Acohido, who has come from so far away and did such good work; and then there are the local winners, Ron Fournier, Mara Liasson, Todd Purdum. Of course, I'm not familiar with any of your work, but I'm sure it's very good. But this Purdum guy's name sounds familiar. Purdum, Purdum—I think I read it in the engagement announcements recently. Hillary and I congratulate Todd and Dee Dee on their marriage next month.

You know, Dee Dee and I started together on a little plane in New Hampshire, and we made it all the way to the White House. Then she sort of strayed over to your side for a while, and I was kind of disappointed. Now she's getting on a 747 and going to Beverly Hills. They grow up so fast, don't they? [Laughter]

Oh, I got another serious thing I want to talk about. Something that I know—really, you all are on me about all the time. Many of you are distressed that you're not notified in a timely fashion about breaking news, like my knee breaking. And that's valid, and I've been doing some work to make sure it never happens again. In fact, in the spirit of reinventing Government that the Vice President has so indoctrinated me with, starting tonight we have decided to give you advance notice of upcoming mishaps. [Laughter]

Mike McCurry has asked me to inform you of the following. While engaging in some volunteer work tomorrow in Philadelphia, I will be on the receiving end of a painful encounter with a ball-peen hammer. [Laughter] And I will do my best to do it before your filing deadline at 5. On May 22d, I will be visiting the home of Tiger Woods to celebrate his recent victory

in the Masters. Please be advised: There is a loose brick on the patio. [Laughter] On July 8, during the fifth inning of the All Star game in Cleveland, I will attempt to catch a foul ball from Rafael Palmeiro. Stay tuned. [Laughter] Look, Mark Knoller is running out to call his editor now. [Laughter]

I know we're here to honor you tonight because of the work you do, but this dinner is a pittance compared to the testament to your profession last week which opened its doors, called the Newseum—the Newseum, the Newseum. What really surprised me, for any event in Washington, this opening actually got a lot of favorable press coverage. [Laughter] Evidently, you journalists have a lot of friends in the media. [Laughter]

But there are a bunch of exhibits I'm dying to see. I want to see the portrait gallery of unnamed sources—[laughter]—the Gergen and Shields retrospective—[laughter]—the museum's crown jewel, the hall of pundits. [Laughter] Modeled after the Hall of Presidents at Disneyland, it features mechanized mannequins mouthing contentious blather. No wait, that's the McLaughlin Group. [Laughter]

There is also an absolutely amazing collection of historical artifacts: C-SPAN's gavel-to-gavel etchings of the Constitutional Convention; CNN's very first "Crossfire"—from the left, Alexander Hamilton, from the right, Aaron Burr, topic, gun control. [Laughter] There is an actual press corps travel manifest from Stage Coach One. Guess what, the film they showed was "Fargo." [Laughter] The 30 people in the White House press corps are laughing at that. [Laughter]

There are artifacts of contemporary Washington journalism as well. There is the stack of Bibles upon which Joe Klein swore. [Laughter] There is Johnny Apple's expense reports, a transcript of Anne Rice's interview with Bob Novak, the contract where Bob Woodward insists on Robert Redford being cast as him. [Laughter] There is a haunting photograph from the 1961 White House Correspondents' dinner of young Brian Williams shaking hands adoringly with Chet Huntley. [Laughter]

And then there is a whole wing dedicated to historic scoops. For example, did you know that Helen Thomas broke the story about the Lincoln Bedroom—while Lincoln was still sleeping in it. [Laughter]

However, the most important part of the museum is an exhibit which poses an utterly fascinating question, both contemporary and historical: How would current White House correspondents and columnists have covered past Presidential administrations? Have you seen this? I mean, this is an incredible thing. In the exhibit, everyone in the current press corps is making fun of Millard Fillmore's name—that's everyone except Wolf Blitzer. [Laughter] David Letterman keeps calling William Howard Taft "Tubby" and Teddy Roosevelt "Old Four Eyes." [Laughter] Maureen Dowd writes a column dismissing the first Presidential election as politics as usual. [Laughter] Sam Donaldson makes fun of George Washington's wooden teeth but completely ignores the obvious fact that he's wearing a wig. [Laughter] The New York Times calls for a special counsel to look into George Washington's winning campaign in the Revolutionary War—because Lafayette was French. And Barbara Walters asks the Father of our Country, "If you could chop down a tree, any tree at all, what kind of tree would it be?" [Laughter]

All right, now we're going to tell some stuff on us. I know you give me grief from time to time, but really we work around the clock trying to help you do your job. I mean, really, what other administration would make thousands and thousands of internal memos and official documents available for your daily enjoyment? [Laughter]

But you did miss a couple of good stories. Roll it in, boys; come here. Where are they? Where are my documents? [Laughter] Come here! I hope no one is in contempt for ignoring these. This is just a representative sample. You'll have them all tomorrow. [Laughter]

Here's a memo from Harold Ickes to Leon Panetta: "Leon, FYI, Maxwell House coffee is on sale this week for \$3.49 a pound." [Laughter] Here's a copy of a check we mistakenly thought was a small campaign contribution from AT&T. It turns out that by cashing it, we authorized a switch in our long distance service. [Laughter] Here's a memo outlining the DNC's high donor program. It's pretty embarrassing—business class upgrades for Air Force One. Mr. Speaker, it could have been you. [Laughter] And let's see, here's one: For \$10,000, you can have a private meeting with Vice President Gore to discuss reinventing Government. And for \$20,000, you don't have to go. [Laughter] And this is the most embarrassing one of all, from the White

House visitor log last year. I can't believe any of you missed this. It seems that during the period of time when the First Lady was recording her Grammy Award winning album, Milli Vanilli came to the White House 32 times. [Laughter]

Now, I don't know how this got in here. This is a letter of acceptance to Chelsea, saying that she will—from Chelsea, saying that she will attend—no, that's privileged. [Laughter] But look, the bad news is, our only child is going off to college. The good news is, it opens up another bedroom. [Laughter]

But now look, you all know I want a bridge to the future, not the past. I'm interested in the future, so I want you to just forget about the documents. [Laughter]

Now, we know how important technology is to our future, and the White House has always been the center of new technological developments, ever since John Adams occupied it. There was the electric lights, the telephone, the telegraph, the tape recorder—[laughter]—and the Clapper—[laughter]—and, most recently, the computer.

Now, just last week the Vice President and I used a computer in the Oval Office. I felt like a kid who first got to drive; he actually let me do some things on it. [Laughter] And it's clear that we are once again at the threshold of a new era that will forever change the way Presidents conduct matters at home and abroad. As of this week, I have been working around the clock trying to balance the budget with Quicken. [Laughter] And I want you to consider this. In the post-cold-war era, the introduction of the computer has raised a profound question: Whose finger do you want on the control-alt-delete button? [Laughter]

You know what my favorite button is? F2, search and replace. [Laughter] I have enjoyed the daily press clips so much more since I discovered F2. [Laughter] I read them on-line now, and then I search and replace. Thanks for showing me that, Al. I mean, after all—look, your news reports are just the first rough draft of history anyway, and I'm just doing the F2 thing to do a little editing. Let's take some of the news stories you've written just in the last month: F2, search for "budget standstill"; replace with "prosperity at home and peace abroad." [Laughter] It's better, isn't it? It is.

Search for "beleaguered"; replace with "Lincolnesque." [Laughter] Search for "independent counsel"; replace with "the ice cream man." [Laughter]

I'll never forget how I found out about this incredible device, search and replace. I walked into the Vice President's office not very long ago, and he was there working on his computer—F2, search for Bill Clinton—[laughter]—I got there just in time.

James Thurber said that humor is one of our greatest and earliest national resources that has to be preserved at all cost. Well, I hope we've saved a little up tonight and enriched it. I thank you and come here to honor your indispensable part in our lively 225-year-old experiment in democracy. May we work together so that it continues to light and lead the world.

Tomorrow I'm going to Philadelphia, where this great experiment began, to open the Presidents' Summit for America's Future. We'll gather there to renew the spirit of service that built this country. Each of us must serve; you in your way, me in mine. You can start right now—by busing your own tables and helping with the dishes. [Laughter] Now, when Jon finishes, I'm going home.

Thanks, and good night. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 10:05 p.m. in the International Ballroom at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to White House Correspondents' Association outgoing president Terence Hunt, Associated Press, and incoming president Larry McQuillan, Reuters; Arlene Dillon, CBS News; comedian Jon Stewart; Byron Acohido, Seattle Times; Ron Fournier, Associated Press; Mara Liasson, National Public Radio; Todd Purdum, New York Times; former Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers, Vanity Fair; Mark Knoller, CBS Radio; Joe Klein, author, "Primary Colors"; Johnny Apple, New York Times; author Anne Rice; syndicated columnist Bob Novak; Bob Woodward, Washington Post; actor Robert Redford; Brian Williams, NBC News; Helen Thomas, United Press International; Wolf Blitzer, Cable News Network; and Sam Donaldson and Barbara Walters, ABC News.

Remarks at the Kickoff of the Presidents' Summit for America's Future in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania April 27, 1997

The President. Thank you. Thank you very much. Good morning!

Audience members. Good morning!

The President. Are you ready to go to work?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Are you warmed up?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Have you heard all the speeches you want to hear?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. I want to just say—let me say, first of all, how grateful I am to be here with all the people who have made this possible and with all of you. I thank the people of Philadelphia for being so good to me since 1992 and for being my friends and for giving me a chance to work with you to bring Philadelphia back. Thank you so much. I thank all your officials. I thank your wonderful Mayor.

General Powell told me when he retired from the United States Army as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the one thing he wanted to do more than anything else was to find a way to give every child in this country a chance at a good future, and I thank him for doing that.

I thank Colin and Alma. I thank George and Barbara Bush for their examples, Mrs. Bush with her literacy program, President Bush for A Thousand Points of Light. I thank President and Mrs. Carter for caring about the children of this country, for the work they've done with Habitat for Humanity and for going all over the world to rid the children of the world of dread diseases, to give them food to eat and a decent, humane place to grow up in. I thank all of you.

But let's face it—I want everybody to face it. Why are we here? We know that a lot of us would be doing a lot of this anyway. There are a lot of wonderful volunteers in America. Here's why we're here. This country has produced a lot of jobs in the last 4 years. The crime rate is going down; the welfare rolls are going down. But we're still losing too many kids to crime, to drugs, to not having a decent income in their home, and to not having a bright future. And we're here because we don't think

we have to put up with it, and we believe together we can change it. Isn't that right? [Applause]

I'm here because I want the young people out here to grow up in an America that is even greater than the America I grew up in. That is the eternal dream and promise, and every one of you deserves that. I'm here because, frankly, I believe that as children of God, we can never fulfill our own ambitions until we help our brothers and sisters to fulfill theirs.

I'm here because I want to redefine the meaning of citizenship in America. I want the children here, starting next week, and all over America—if you're asked in school, what does it mean to be a good citizen, I want the answer to be, "Well, to be a good citizen, you have to obey the law. You've got to go to work or be in school. You've got to pay your taxes, and, oh, yes, you have to serve in your community to help make it a better place."

And General Powell, since we're going to keep this going and we all have to make an account of ourselves, I'll go first. Here's my commitment to you and your project.

In the next 4 years, the Department of Defense will mentor, tutor, and teach one million children. In the next 4 years, the Department of Transportation and the private businesses who work with them will do that for one million more. We will adopt a total of 2,000 schools in the Federal agencies of this country. We will find one million reading tutors in the America Reads program, to make sure every child can read independently by the third grade. And our AmeriCorps volunteers will go across this country to recruit at least a dozen more volunteers for every one of them, to make sure that all of the items on your agenda succeed. That is our commitment.

Are you ready to keep your commitment?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. After today is over, do you promise to keep working tomorrow?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. And next year?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. And the year after that?