

gun laws. Last month I asked Treasury Secretary Rubin and Attorney General Reno to find ways to close this loophole.

Reducing crime has been one of the American people's greatest achievements in recent years. A decade ago no one thought we could do it. But we did. We must not retreat on this hard-won progress. Instead, we must do even more to support the people and the laws that protect our children and families.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 6:54 p.m. on December 4 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 5. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 4 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

## Remarks at the Memorial Service for William Maurice Smith, Jr., in Wynne, Arkansas

December 5, 1998

Jane, Mark, Murray, Annette, all the members of the family and the friends of Maurice. I stayed up late last night and got up early this morning, and I was trying to think of what I should say. I told Maurice I'd be here, and I figured somebody might ask me to talk. So I thought, well, I ought to start with what he would say to me. Some of it is not repeatable in the church. *[Laughter]* But it would go something like this: Expletive deleted, don't say too much. *[Laughter]*

I think all of our lives we will remember a small man with a craggy face, a gravelly voice, a blunt manner, a keen mind, a kind heart, and powerful emotions; a man who was not always good to himself but was always good to others; a man who could say more with fewer words, or just a grunt or the tip of that crazy old hat of his, than anyone we ever knew.

Now, I collected stories the last 3 or 4 days, and this was the odds-on winner: Bill Clark reminded me that in 1984 we had our first meeting in the Governor's office about the '84 campaign. And we were sitting there, and I began the meeting by saying that I had been so impressed with Hillary's no-smoking policy at the Governor's Mansion I was going to apply it to the Governor's office. Maurice got his hat, put it on, stood up, and started walking. I said, "Where you going?" He said, "Birdeye." *[Laughter]* I said, "I am applying the no-smoking policy of the Governor's Mansion to the Governor's office the day after this next election." *[Laughter]*

He loved to help people. He loved a good fight. But he never sought to destroy his adversary. He loved political campaigns and legislative sessions. He never met a road or a bridge or a levee he didn't like. *[Laughter]* He loved the Fair Board and the University of Arkansas. He loved the land and the water and the people of this State. Most of all, he loved his family and his friends. He loved us. And how we loved him—often more than I think he knew.

Hillary was home a few weeks ago, and she went by to see Maurice in the hospital. And when she came back to Washington, she looked at me, she said, "I just love that man." And she said, "It seemed to me like everybody else in the hospital did, too."

I tried to call him over Thanksgiving, and then he called me back, and finally I got him back. We talked twice in the last week. The first time he said, "I wanted to talk to you one more time. I don't think I'm going to get out this time, and I just want you to know I'm proud of everything we did together, and I love you."

Well, all of you know that I owe him a lot. He was the finance chairman of all my campaigns, the master of ceremonies at my inaugurations—ensuring that they would be brief—my chief of staff. He served on the university board; he ran the highway department; and on the side, he always lobbied for Jane's causes for the disabled.

But when I was flying down here on Air Force One today, thinking I wouldn't be on this plane if it weren't for him, I thought of

a day 18 years ago, when some of us here were standing on the backyard of the Governor's Mansion after the 1980 elections. And I had just become the youngest former Governor in the history of America—[laughter]—a man with limited future prospects. And that's pretty much the way I felt. And he put his hand on my shoulder, and he looked me in the eye, and he said, "It'll be all right; we'll be back."

I wrote this before I knew the pastor was going to read to us from Luke today. I was thinking of that day today, as we all say farewell to this small man who had such a large impact on all our lives. We say to him, as he said to me so many years ago: Maurice, it'll be all right; God has promised you mercy because you

were merciful to us; kindness because you were kind to us; forgiveness because you forgave us; love because you loved us with all your heart. So, farewell, old friend. I say to you what you said to me so many years ago: It'll be all right; you done good; we'll be together again before you know it.

May God bless his soul.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:05 p.m. at Wynne Presbyterian Church. In his remarks, he referred to Mr. Smith's widow, Jane; his son, William Maurice (Mark) Smith III; his daughters, Murray Smith Johnson and Annette Smith Stacy; and William E. Clark, owner, CDI Contractors.

## Exchange With Reporters Aboard Air Force One December 5, 1998

[The President's remarks are joined in progress.]

*Death of Former Senator Albert Gore, Sr.*

*The President.* —his father was—for people like me, growing up in our part of the country, Al Gore was the embodiment of the—Albert Gore, Sr., was the embodiment of everything public service ought to be. He was a teacher; he was a progressive; he helped to connect the South with the rest of America; he was progressive on race; he was courageous in standing up for what he believed in—Vietnam. You know, he might have been, himself, in national office if he hadn't been just a little too far ahead of his time.

He was a remarkable, remarkable man, and I'm very grateful that I had the chance to know him and his wife and spend some time with them as a result of our relationship with the Vice President. The country has lost a great patriot, a great public servant, a man who was truly a real role model for young people like me in the South in the 1960's.

*Q.* How far did you go back with him, sir? When did you first meet him?

*The President.* Oh, I don't know that I met him, except maybe to shake hands with him, until 1988. But I knew who he was in 1968—'66, when I was working as a young student in the Congress. And I knew who he was when I was in high school.

You know, keep in mind, he was talked about for national office from the fifties on. He and Estes Kefauver were both prominently mentioned. And Tennessee had these two very progressive, very articulate, and very effective voices in the Senate. It was a remarkable partnership. So I always knew who he was, from the time I became at all politically aware.

*Q.* How did people like Senator Gore, Sr., influence up-and-coming young Southern politicians like yourself?

*The President.* Well, first of all, they were progressive, and they cut against the grain and the image that the South had in the fifties and sixties of being, you know, anti-civil rights, discriminatory, undereducated, underdeveloped. He was progressive on education, progressive on civil rights, and sponsored the interstate highway bill. He wanted to connect the South to the rest of America, educate the children of the South, stand up for civil rights. He was a remarkable man. And he was brilliant, full of energy.

And the amazing thing was what a life he had after he left the Senate. When his son and I ran in 1992, he and Pauline—Mrs. Gore—they went all over the country, and he'd give these stemwinding stump speeches, you know. I remember once, in 1988, I spoke at the Oklahoma Democratic dinner, and he came to speak