

all-time high of \$3,750. That's up nearly \$1,500 since 1993.

If we continue to invest in our people and create opportunities for them, if we continue to honor and reward work, our possibilities are truly without limit. By reaching out and working together, our best days still lie ahead. This budget proves it. The work of the American people prove it. The successful desire of people to move from welfare to work proves it.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:49 a.m. on December 15 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 16. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 15 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Remarks at a Memorial Service for Charles F.C. Ruff December 16, 2000

Sue, Christy, Carin, Maggie, other family and friends. I was sitting in this service listening to Chuck's family members, friends, partner speak about him, and I was thinking he'd be fairly embarrassed by all these attempts to canonize him. So they put one client on the program. [*Laughter*]

I have been on the receiving end of all this wisdom you have been celebrating, and he always told me what he thought, especially when I did not want to hear it.

Chuck Ruff became the White House Counsel at an unusual point in history, when the White House was in the hands of the Democratic Party and the Congress was in the hands of a particular wing of the Republican Party, and a lot of the work of the White House Counsel was generated by the attempts of Congress to turn every political difference into a legal issue.

And Chuck had to be calm in the face of all of it: Attempts to prove that our policy on climate change, for example, was actually a secret socialist plot to destroy the free enterprise system; serious questions from a person who believed that a good form of criminal investigation was shooting bullets into a watermelon in his backyard. And Chuck never lost his cool, never lost his temper, and never let me entirely lose my sense of humor about what often was a patently absurd situation.

And then there were the serious issues beneath all the rancor and back-and-forth. And every single day—every single day—I was so profoundly grateful that my Counsel was so strong and wise and good and that he believed

so profoundly in our Constitution and rule of law.

As others have said, he never sought the spotlight, but when the moment came, he certainly shined. Millions of Americans saw him at work, mind and spirit. He cared about justice. He taught it; he shared it; and he lived it. His whole life was about doing good and doing right.

Others have commented on his propensity for doing two things at once. I liked that. He once said that he finally understood that he had been picked as the White House Counsel because he was the only person who was not distracted by my doing crossword puzzles when we reviewed our latest strategy in dealing with the congressional requests.

He was famous in the West Wing for watching football and listening to opera at the same time. But really, that captures the best of who he was, a competitor with passion, equal parts grace and guts, someone determined to make the most of every moment.

For those of us who knew and loved him, Chuck Ruff may have been in a wheelchair, but he had more moves than Magic Johnson or Michael Jordan, and when he heated up, he could hit any ball further than Tiger Woods, because he was so intensely committed to doing right and doing good.

I also would like to say a special word of appreciation, in front of his family and friends, for the fact that, in spite of all of the high-profile things Chuck did as the White House Counsel, one of the things that I most appreciated was that he was always there for the people in the White House, especially for the

young people. He was always there with a calming and reassuring word, even in the craziest of times. He could always help people stop and take a breath, listen a little better, think a little harder, gather up their energies, and go on. In a town so often contentious, it was truly amazing to be reminded that you can be civil and effective at the same time.

I'd also like to thank him publicly for how much he loved the District of Columbia and how strongly he supported our administration's efforts to be a good neighbor and a good partner. Who can forget that he began his closing statement last year in the well of the Senate: "My name is Charles Ruff. I'm from the District of Columbia. And we don't have a vote in the Congress of the United States."

I wish, in a way, this platform today in this house of God could be shared by every person in the White House who loved him. And I wish so much that every person out there on the streets of Washington, DC, whom he loved

could know just a portion of what he labored to do for them. The reason I was proud to have him as my White House Counsel is that he was not a power lawyer; he was a powerful lawyer for people who had no power.

No matter what he was asked to do, he did it with grace and honor, as if that alone was what God put him on Earth to do. And for that I am profoundly grateful.

Chuck Ruff left us far too soon. But you can hear in the words and see in the voice of every person who has spoken today that he is still here. I hope he thinks we did all right by him today. I hope he is pleased by this vast assemblage of people, because he certainly always did more than all right by all of us.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:25 a.m. at the National Cathedral. In his remarks, he referred to Mr. Ruff's wife, Sue, his daughters, Christina Ruff Wagner and Carin Ruff, and his mother, Margaret Carlson.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With European Union Leaders

December 18, 2000

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, are you making any progress on the Middle East, and do you think you may try to make a trip in that direction before you leave office?

President Clinton. Well, let me say, first of all, the parties are reengaging, and they've asked us to be involved, and that's good. But we're going to be on their timetable, so I can't say for sure. I'm willing, as always, to do whatever I can, and I will do whatever I can. But the timetable will be up to them.

President's Future Plans

Q. Mr. President, millions of people at home, in France, and in Europe are wondering: What is Bill Clinton going to do after the 20th of January? So, outside the library and the Democratic Party's future, are you set onto anything international?

President Clinton. Well, I hope that I will be able to be involved in a lot of the things that I have cared greatly about here. I'm very

interested in the economic empowerment of poor people around the world. I'm very interested in efforts that President Chirac and President Prodi and we're all making together to try to fight AIDS and deal with public health problems around the world.

But I think it's important that at least that, for a time, that I do what I can to help President-elect Bush have a good transition and that he have the chance to do his job in a way that is uninterrupted by me or anyone else, and I need to find an appropriate way to continue my activities.

And of course, now I have a Senator to support. I have to go out and make a living, so I'll do that, too.

European Union-U.S. Relations

[At this point, a question was asked, and President Jacques Chirac of France answered in French.]

President Clinton. Will you translate what he said to the press? We've got some Americans