

a bruiser. Cornerback Ketric Buffin, Rowlett, Texas—you think I'm only going to talk about Texans, don't you—[*laughter*]—had an interception in each of the first four games. He's the first player in school history to accomplish that feat.

Zerbin Singleton, now there's an inspirational story for all. He faced great challenges growing up. He overcame injuries from a car accident to make it to the Naval Academy. And during the season, he received the Disney Wide World of Sports Spirit Award as college football's most inspirational figure. He's the brigade commander of all 4,200 midshipmen at the Naval Academy. He'll soon begin flight training as a Marine aviator.

Proud to welcome all the individual stars here. But no question, this team played well because you played as a unit. I want to thank every football player for agreeing to put on the uniform of the finest military ever. You've signed up after 9/11. You knew the stakes involved in the war against ex-

tremists and radicals. You knew that your country depended on you, and you didn't hesitate to wear the uniform.

I welcome you as stars on the football field, and I welcome you as soon to be sailors and marines who have a major responsibility to protect the United States from harm and spread the great blessings of liberty so we can have peace. I cannot wait to be able to say to you someday, I'm proud to be your Commander in Chief.

And so I welcome you to the Rose Garden. I congratulate you on being fine football players. More importantly, I congratulate you on being patriotic Americans. May God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:16 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Ken Niumatalolo, head coach, U.S. Naval Academy football team; Vice Adm. Jeffrey L. Fowler, USN, superintendent, U.S. Naval Academy; and Pope Benedict XVI.

Statement on the Death of John A. Wheeler *April 14, 2008*

Laura and I are saddened by the death of John Archibald Wheeler, one of America's greatest physicists.

During his distinguished career, Dr. Wheeler collaborated with scientists such as Albert Einstein and Niels Bohr on projects that changed the course of history. His early work with Bohr on how nuclei split apart, his vision of the possibilities of Einstein's curved space, and his work on quantum theory demonstrated his innovation and brilliance. And he will always be remembered for giving the phenomenon of black holes its name.

Dr. Wheeler was also a great teacher who understood that educating young minds would be one of his most significant contributions. As a professor at Princeton University and the University of Texas—Austin, Dr. Wheeler inspired generations of students, such as the late Nobel Prize winning physicist Richard Feynman, to transform their curiosity into scientific discoveries.

Today our thoughts and prayers are with the Wheeler family.

Remarks Honoring President Thomas Jefferson's 265th Birthday April 14, 2008

Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. Welcome to the White House. Laura and I are so honored you are here. I welcome members of my Cabinet, Members of the United States Senate, folks who work in the White House, the Governor of Virginia, and Anne Holton. Thank you all for coming, really happy you're here.

We're here tonight to commemorate the 265th birthday of Thomas Jefferson, here in a room where he once walked and in a home where he once lived. In this house, President Jefferson spread the word that liberty was the right of every individual. In this house, Jefferson sent Lewis and Clark off on the mission that helped make America a continental nation. And in this house, Jefferson was known to receive guests in his bathrobe and slippers. [*Laughter*] Laura said, "No." [*Laughter*] I don't have a bathrobe. [*Laughter*]

With a single sentence, Thomas Jefferson changed the history of the world. After countless centuries, when the powerful and the privileged governed as they pleased, Jefferson proclaimed as a self-evident truth that liberty was a right given to all people by an Almighty.

Here in America, that truth was not fully realized in Jefferson's own lifetime. As he observed the condition of slaves in America, Jefferson said, quote, "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just [and] that His justice cannot sleep forever." Less than 40 years after his death, justice was awakened in America, and a new era of freedom dawned.

Today, on the banks of the Tidal Basin, a statue of Thomas Jefferson stands in a rotunda that is a memorial to both the man and the ideas that built this Nation. There, on any day of the week, you will find men

and women of all creeds, colors, races, and religions. You will find scholars, school-children, and visitors from every part of our country. And you will find each of them looking upward in quiet reflection on the liturgy of freedom, the words of Thomas Jefferson inscribed on the memorial's walls.

The power of Jefferson's words do not stop at water's edge. They beckon the friends of liberty on even the most distant shores. They're a source of inspiration for people in young democracies like Afghanistan and Lebanon and Iraq. And they are a source of hope for people in nations like Belarus and Burma, Cuba, Venezuela, Iran, Syria, North Korea, and Zimbabwe, where the struggle for freedom continues.

Thomas Jefferson left us on July 4th, 1826, 50 years to the day after our Declaration of Independence was adopted. In one of the great harmonies of history, his friend and rival John Adams died on the very same day. Adams's last words were, "Thomas Jefferson survives." And he still does today, and he will live on forever, because the desire to live in freedom is the eternal hope of mankind.

And now it's my pleasure to welcome Wilfred McClay to the stage.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:05 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Timothy M. Kaine of Virginia and his wife Anne Holton; and Wilfred M. McClay, SunTrust Bank chair of excellence in humanities and professor of history, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.