

I got a fascinating letter the other day from the mother of a soldier stationed in Camp Eagle, Specialist Christina Campbell. And the mother said, "So as you get busy spreading holiday cheer, don't forget the peace-keepers and those they hold dear." And Specialist Campbell actually wrote a poem. So I want to tell you, I took just a little bit out of it, because I want you to know that at this Christmas you are in the hearts of the American people. And her words are your words. Listen to these, she says, "No, this is not our soil, and it's not our own fight. But if you've seen what I have, then you know that it's right."

God bless you all, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:30 p.m. at Club 21. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. Larry R. Ellis, USA, commander, 1st Armored Division.

Message on the Observance of Christmas, 1997

December 22, 1997

Warm greetings to everyone celebrating Christmas.

At this time of year, when the nights grow longer and often colder, our lives are brightened and our hearts warmed by the lights of Christmas. So much light surrounds our memories and celebration of Christmas: candlelight in the windows, colored lights twinkling on the tree, children's faces lit with a joy that is reflected in their parents' eyes. The beloved Christmas story itself is a story of light, for, as the Gospel of John tells us, Jesus came into the world as "the true Light" that illumines all humankind.

Almost 2,000 years later, that Light still shines amid the dark places of our world. It is reflected in the lives of so many quiet and generous people who strive daily to make life better for others—feeding the hungry, caring for the ill and elderly, cherishing and nurturing children. It radiates from the hearts of those who work for peace and justice in their communities, our nation, and the world. It shines in the efforts of men and women striving to break down the walls of fear, ignorance, and prejudice that cast shadows across too many lives and prevent us from becoming the people God intended us to be.

May all who celebrate Christmas this year rejoice in the special gifts of light that it brings: the love that warms our hearts, the faith that lights our journey, and the hope that promises us a bright future. Hillary and I wish you joy and peace during this Christmas season and much happiness in the New Year.

Bill Clinton

Message on the Observance of Kwanzaa, 1997

December 22, 1997

Warm greetings to everyone observing Kwanzaa.

As America embarks on a season of renewal and reconciliation, the principles of Kwanzaa—unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith—ring true not only for African Americans, but also for all Americans. By emphasizing the importance of family in our lives and the blessings that come with a true commitment to community, opportunity, and responsibility, the celebration of Kwanzaa can help us to enter the future as a stronger nation and a more compassionate and united people.

The symbols and ceremony of Kwanzaa, evoking the rich history and heritage of African Americans, remind us that our nation draws much of its strength from our diversity. As millions of Americans observe Kwanzaa this year, let us renew our commitment to realizing America's promise as a land where all people are free to pursue our common dreams—to live in peace, to provide for our families, and to give our children the opportunity for a better life.

Hillary joins me in sending best wishes for a joyous Kwanzaa.

Bill Clinton

Statement on the Death of Esther Peterson

December 22, 1997

Hillary and I were saddened to learn of the death of Esther Peterson. She was the mother of the modern consumer movement,

a woman who dedicated her life to improving the standard of living for all Americans. In her long career, she was a trusted adviser to President Kennedy, President Johnson, and President Carter. I was grateful for her sage counsel and for her service to this country. As a member of the United States delegation to the United Nations, she was dedicated to promoting American values at home and abroad. She will be greatly missed. Our thoughts and prayers are with her children and grandchildren.

Statement on the Death of Dawn Steel

December 22, 1997

Hillary and I were saddened to learn of the death of Dawn Steel. She was a pioneer in the film industry, blazing a trail for a new generation of young women, and setting a standard of achievement for all. Our lives have been enriched by her talent, and she will be missed. Our thoughts and prayers are with her husband, her daughter, and with all her family.

Remarks in a Celebration of Hanukkah and an Exchange With Reporters

December 23, 1997

The President. Hello, everybody. Before we light the menorah, I'd like to make a brief statement. First of all, I'd like to welcome the Jewish Primary Day School students here and their principal, Susan Koss. I'd like to thank Mayrim Baram, who is not here, who lives in Israel, who did this magnificent, magnificent menorah for us. It's very, very beautiful. Dr. Amatzia Baram, his son, and Mrs. Baram are in the audience today, and through them I'd like to thank his father for this really beautiful menorah. I will treasure it always. And it's been up in the White House during the holiday season, so many people have come in here and have seen it.

This evening I join the rest of the country in wishing you a happy Hanukkah. Tonight Jews across America and the world are celebrating the victory of the Maccabees over their oppressors and the Miracle of Lights

that marked their triumph. This joyous holiday also reminds us of our precious right to religious freedom, a right we all hold dear as Americans, a right that is the very first one written into our Bill of Rights. Like the Maccabees, we must vigilantly oppose religious prejudice whenever we find it.

I know that your teachers and rabbis have instilled in you the values of compassion, justice, and tolerance. And if you have courage to follow those values, you can be the Maccabees of our time.

This year we will also celebrate the 50th anniversary of the creation of the modern State of Israel, the land where the miracle of Hanukkah occurred such a long time ago. But our prayers to God this holiday will be for peace in the land of Israel, for the tranquility of its people, for a bright and hopeful future, for all the children of the Middle East, children that are very much like you.

Now as Danny Lew lights the menorah, I wish you all once again a very happy Hanukkah.

Danny.

[At this point, Danny Lew lit the menorah.]

Health Care Task Force Civil Case

Q. Mr. President, can we—if we have time for just one question. A Federal judge the other day had some very tough words for Ira Magaziner. But so far there's been no public comment from the White House. It seems like if that accusation was unfair, Mr. Magaziner is entitled to a public defense. And if it was fair, the public is entitled to an explanation of why somebody on the White House staff might mislead a judge.

The President. First of all, it's a fair question, but because of what we've been doing the last few days and because of what we've been—the holiday season, I honestly haven't read the judge's opinion, nor have I asked anyone on the staff for a response to it. So I'd like to ask you to just give me a pass until tomorrow or so. I'll be happy to answer it, but I don't want to give you the wrong answer.

I was a little skeptical when I read the news story because I believe I know what the facts were, so I was quite skeptical when I read the news story. But I think it's a very fair question; we should answer the question.