AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

Remarks Following a Performance of "Messiah 2000" in Alexandria, Louisiana

April 8, 2000

Well, I am rarely at a loss for words. I use words for a living. I have done reasonably well at it. And I am virtually speechless.

First, I want to say to my friend Anthony—we were talking, oh, maybe 6 months ago, about how much I wanted to come down here one more time before I left office and see this "Messiah" service as President. And it worked out for me to be here. I wish Hillary could be here. I wish Chelsea could be here. We came, the three of us, 11 years ago. Chelsea and Miquell were just little girls; Gentry was so small he was almost invisible. [*Laughter*] And our friendship goes back long before that, to 1977.

So I just want to say how much this has meant to me. I thank you for acknowledging all the people who came down with me, and I'd like to thank the people from your church from Arkansas who came: my good friends Keith and Janice Sjostrand, and brother Bill Harden, Mrs. Harden, and the others who came. Thank you for coming to be with us tonight. I love you, and I'm glad to see you.

We've had an unusual relationship, Anthony and Mickey and Hillary and I and our kids. We're sort of an odd couple. I say that so that you will not hold him responsible for anything I have ever done you disagreed with. But we love each other a lot. I bet I cried through more of this tonight than anybody else here.

I want you to know something about this guy. There for a period of time, a day or two at least, there was some question about whether I would finish my term. He called me on the phone, and he said, "Mickey and I want to come spend 20 minutes with you. And we won't spend more than 20 minutes, because we know you've got a lot to do." I said, "You're going to come all the way to Washington, DC, from Alexandria, for 20 minutes?" And he said, "Yep. And we won't stay long." So I said, "Okay, come on."

So he shows up. She shows up. First thing they did was give me a tape of a song she sang, wrote and sang for me, that I was supposed to listen to every day to keep my head in the right place—[*laughter*]—which I dutifully did. Then he gives me about seven pages of points he wants me to study up on every day to make sure I know where I want to be. [*Laughter*]

Then he says, "I don't know how this is going to come out." But he said, "I know you. You are my friend. We have raised our children together. I love you. I was here when you were going up. If the ship starts to sink and other people start to bail out, you call me; I want to go down with you." He said, "I will be there. If not another living soul were standing there, I would be there."

And I say that not for some personal reason but because that was the embodiment of his Christian faith and the witness of the Pentecostal Church that I have been blessed by for 23 years now. And I just want you to know I'm grateful to you and your wife and kids and both sets of parents that are here and your extended family, for what you meant to me and Hillary and to our daughter.

And I'm grateful that you gave me the chance to help your church advance the cause of liberty in—last time I counted, three or four different countries, now. I would have done it for anybody, but you gave me the chance to do it for you.

And I'm grateful that one more time in my life I got to sit here and be bathed in the glorious love of all these singers and actors and all the people that put together this "Messiah" service. It was a blessing that I will have with me for the rest of my life.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:06 p.m. in the sanctuary at The Pentecostals of Alexandria. In his remarks, he referred to Rev. Garold Anthony Mangun, pastor, The Pentecostals of Alexandria; his daughter, Miquell Mangun Hennigan, his son, Gentry, and his wife, Mickey; Rev. Keith Sjostrand, pastor, First United Pentecostal Church, Lonoke, AR, and his wife, Janice; and Rev. Bill Harden, pastor, First Baptist Church, Picayune, MS, and his wife, Margaret. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.