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Kathleen Battle; Representative Lewis' wife, Lillian, and son, John Miles Lewis; Gov. Roy E. Barnes of Georgia and his wife, Marie; Mayor Bill Campbell of Atlanta and his wife, Sharon; Brock Peters, master of ceremonies; former Representative George (Buddy) Darden and his wife, Lillian; Rev. Roderick Dwayne Belin, who delivered the invocation; media consultant Raymond D. Strother, who produced and directed a brief film biography of Representative Lewis; and former astronaut Neil Armstrong.

Remarks on Signing the Proclamation Establishing the Giant Sequoia National Monument in Sequoia National Forest, California

April 15, 2000

Thank you very much. Thank you, and good morning. I think we should all be very grateful for the beautiful day we have. I know it was exciting that it snowed here last night—[*laughter*]—but I was watching Alexander give his fine remarks, and I was thinking that growing older has some merit, but one thing it doesn't have is the ability to withstand cold better. [*Laughter*] We took this whole walk, and there he is in his short-sleeve shirt, and he never flinched, he never shivered, he just walked right on. I want to thank Alexander for his remarks and for his example and the work that he has done and the other young people he has exposed to this magnificent grove.

I want to thank Secretary Glickman and Art Gaffrey. Secretary Glickman did a lot of work on this, and he talked about it in advance, and I'll say a few more words about it, but I appreciate it. Art told me he's been here almost 5 years now.

And I want to thank Marta Brown, who is, herself, a remarkably devoted and accomplished public citizen. I wish George were here with us today. I think he's smiling down on us, and I'm glad you could be a part of this. Thank you, Mike Dombeck and Jim Lyons. And I'd also like to thank my main environmental adviser, George Frampton, who runs our Council on Sustainable Development, Environmental Quality, for being here.

I'd like to thank the representatives of the Tule River Tribe who are here, who also cherish these great trees. Thank you for coming.

About 100 years ago, Theodore Roosevelt dedicated America's first national monuments. He said he was doing it because we couldn't improve upon our native landscape. In his words, "The ages have been at work on it, and man can only mar it. What you can do is keep it for your children and your children's children."

Well, as we have already heard today, these giant sequoias clearly are the work of the ages. They grow taller than the Statue of Liberty, broader than a bus. They are the largest living things on this Earth, so perfectly adapted to their environment that one has never been known to die of old age. And as has already been said, many we have seen today are more than 1,500 years old. They began when America was not even imagined and Europe was in the Dark Ages.

Once these groves flourished all across the American West. Today, they exist only here in the Sierras. Our second national park was created in 1890 to protect them. Yet half the remaining groves lie outside the national park. And although sequoias on Federal lands are currently protected from logging, the environment around them must also be protected for the great trees to grow and reproduce.

That is why we're here today. We're looking forward to the first Earth Day of the 21st century, and I think the best way to celebrate it is to designate the Trail of 100 Giants, more than 30 nearby sequoia groves, and the magnificent forest that surrounds them, the Giant Sequoia National Monument.

These lands will continue to be managed by the Forest Service, as it once again embraces the conservation ethic that inspired its creation 95 years ago. More and more Americans are discovering our national forests, with places to hike, camp, ride horses, enjoy a few hours of quiet contemplation. Years from now, Americans will come here to do all these things, and these

majestic trees will continue, as John Muir said, to "preach God's forestry fresh from heaven."

I know there have been strong and sometimes conflicting views about the best way to manage these Federal lands. Secretary Glickman recommended that they be protected after careful analysis and consultation with the residents of the area, State, tribal, and local officials, and Members of Congress. The Forest Service will work with the local community closely to develop a long-term plan. We want to ensure that all of the interests are respected and that we help to bring jobs and opportunity to the area.

This is not about locking lands up; it is about freeing them up for all Americans for all time. We're here because we recognize that these trees, though they live to be very old and grow very large, like life itself are still fragile. The roots are surprisingly shallow, and the greatest threat to the trees' life is any disturbance to the tenuous balance between the tree and the ground that anchors it.

Thirty years ago next week, Americans celebrated the first Earth Day because they understood that we, too, have shallow roots on this planet and that our future depends upon balance among all living things. The story since then is a story of American progress to protect and preserve that balance.

Since 1970, we've cleaned up many of our worst toxic waste sites and waterways, cut toxic factory emissions almost in half. The American people have made environmental protection part of their daily lives. They have demanded that government and industry act to protect our national treasures.

I am profoundly grateful for the opportunities that Vice President Gore and I have had over this last 7 years and a few months to act as stewards of our environment. We have adopted the strongest air quality protections ever, improved the safety of our drinking water and food, cleaned up about 3 times as many toxic waste sites as the two previous administrations combined, helped to promote a new generation of fuel-efficient vehicles and vehicles that run on alternative fuels, launched new efforts to fight the sprawl that threatens so many of our quality of life. We've helped hundreds of communities to turn dangerous brownfields deserted by industry into safe, productive space. And yes, we have tried to protect a lot of our Nation's precious treasures.

It seems to me that these last 7 years should finally have put to rest the idea that you can't have a strong economy and a cleaner, safer, more balanced environment. And I hope we will never have that debate again.

On this Earth Day I would like to emphasize three things: first, obviously, this national monument; second, what more we can do to preserve the most beautiful places in this country for all our children's futures. We have a lands legacy initiative to protect green spaces, from the most remote mountains to the nearest city park. This year I've asked Congress to provide $1.4 billion to protect those special places, including nearby Dillingwood Grove, the last privately held grove of giant sequoias. I hope we get the money for that, too. But the thing I want all of you to understand is that if this fund passes, most of the money will go to States and communities to help them pursue their own conservation priorities, including communities here in California. It will empower people all across America to protect those things that are most dear to them, close at hand, on a permanent basis.

I'm happy to report that there's strong bipartisan support for this. We had a great meeting last week at the White House with Republican and Democratic congressional leaders, and I think we've got a good chance to build the lands legacy initiative this year.

Second, we need to invest in the future of our environment not just at home but around the world. Tropical forests—where a lot of us would like to be right now—[*laughter*]—tropical forests are home to more than half the known species on Earth. Yet they're being lost at the rate—now, think about this; we came here to save these trees—tropical forests, the home of many indigenous peoples as well, are being lost at the rate of 50 acres a minute. This year I have proposed a greening the globe initiative to help developing countries protect their endangered forests and better manage their natural heritage.

And all these efforts to preserve biodiversity are important. But the last point I'd like to make is, they won't do much good—if I get killed by this falling ice—[*laughter*]— they won't do much good unless we band together to meet the greatest environmental challenge of the new century, climate change and global warming.

The 1990's were the hottest decade on record. Scientists say that the temperature rise is at least partly due to human activity, and that if

unchecked, climate change will result in more storms and floods, more economic disruptions, more permanent flooding of coastal areas, perhaps the entire flooding of island nations, and more threats to unique habitats such as the one in which we are today.

So the last point I want to make is, I hope all of you will help us to build a national consensus to cut down our emissions of greenhouse gases and to work with others around the world to use existing technologies to help them do the same. I urge those in Congress who have opposed our efforts to drop their opposition, to recognize that we now have the technology—and we will soon have much more—to cut emissions while continuing to grow the economy.

For example, we have the technology to reduce by 85 percent the amount of energy it takes to run a refrigerator. We will soon have cars on the street that routinely get more than 60 miles a gallon and new technologies such as fuel cells and biofuels to give us the equivalent of hundreds of miles from every gallon of gasoline. Just by changing the lights in the White House, I cut the power bills $100,000 a year. [*Laughter*] And we put in a new heating system, a more fuel efficient roofing system.

If the changes we made in the White House were made in every Federal building, which I'm trying to get done, we would take the equivalent—we would reduce greenhouse gases so much it would be the equivalent of taking 1.7 million cars a year off the road. These things are out there now. They will generate jobs; they will generate economic activity. And it is profoundly important that all of us who think about these things continue to talk to our friends and neighbors until we build a vast national consensus for concerted action.

Now, I've asked Congress for over $2 billion for this, to fund local, national, and international efforts to reduce greenhouse gases, to fund clean technologies, to provide tax incentives for those who produce and those who purchase these kinds of products.

Now, before I sign the proclamation, let me just remind you that for over 100 years, beginning with the residents of Visalia, California, Americans have sought to save these giant sequoias. Earth Day brought groups of Americans together on a crusade to save the treasures of our planet.

Today let's remember, even here on the Trail of 100 Giants, the global village presses even closer upon us. We have to look within our communities and beyond our borders for allies to deal with our common environmental challenges. We're doing our part today to make sure that the monarchs will be here after we're long gone, rooted strong in the web of nature that sustains us all.

It has been a great honor for me to be here. I thank all of you who have supported these decisions. I thank you, again, Secretary Glickman. But I ask you, when you walk out of here today, remember that not every person can come to this gorgeous giant grove, but every person can benefit from our continued efforts to improve our environment and sustain our natural heritage. And we still have a very great deal to do.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:10 a.m. on the Trail of 100 Giants. In his remarks, he referred to Eagle Scout Alexander Reed-Krase, who introduced the President; Arthur L. Gaffrey, forest supervisor, Sequoia National Forest; and Marta Macias Brown, widow of former Representative George E. Brown, Jr. The proclamation is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Exchange With Reporters in Sequoia National Forest
April 15, 2000

National Economy

Q. Mr. President—[*inaudible*]—inflation is becoming a problem again that's going to screw up the stock market as it did yesterday?

The President. Well, you know, I try never to talk about the movements of the market, but let me just say, I think the fact that oil prices