

I'd like to thank you, as a former Governor, for always being there for the cause of the education of our children and for the economic development for people and places who were left behind in the 1980's, places like Althemier and Hope.

And I'd like to thank you, too, for being willing to come back and help out this law school, and for the role you all had in deciding to build this building here around the old university building, to make a contribution at once to tomorrow's lawyers and to historic preservation and to the character of the McArthur Park Area, which is so important to me and to so many others in this audience.

You could have done something else with the last couple of years of your life, and no one would have been able to criticize you. You could have decided that after succeeding as a lawyer, a banker, a public servant, and a public citizen, you didn't need to prove that you could succeed as a law school dean. But it is true that of all the people I know, no one embodies the continuing energy and imagination for tomorrow any better than you do. So I wasn't surprised when you agreed not to grow old but to help the young. [Laughter]

I told somebody one time that Bill Bowen made me look absolutely passive—[laughter]—and that I didn't believe anybody could possibly be as aggressive as he was and still be likable—[laughter]—but he managed to do it. And I think today answers the question why. Because

I always had the feeling that whatever he was pushing for was something that was going to be good for everybody else, too. And through a long and rich life, it's always been true.

Thank you, Connie, for your friendship. I thank all the members of the Bowen family for loving him and keeping the rough edges sanded and giving him the anchor that every person needs. But most of all, Bill, I thank you for being my friend, for being a good citizen, for being a good man, and for being a very powerful example.

Ladies and gentlemen, our honoree, Bill Bowen.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:03 p.m. on the lawn at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, future site of the law school. In his remarks, he referred to Derrick Smith, president, Student Bar Association, who introduced the President; former White House Chief of Staff Thomas F. (Mack) McLarty; William H. Bowen, former dean, and Rodney K. Smith, Donaghey dean and professor of law, University of Arkansas at Little Rock School of Law; J. Thomas May, board of trustees chairman, and Charles E. Hathaway, chancellor, University of Arkansas at Little Rock; B. Alan Sugg, president, University of Arkansas System; State Attorney General Mark Pryor; former Senator Dale Bumpers; Mayor Jim Dailey of Little Rock; Mr. Bowen's wife, Connie; and former Senator David Pryor and his wife, Barbara.

Remarks at a Luncheon for Nordic Leaders

April 28, 2000

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the White House. Let me also say that we are very honored to be a part of the opening of this magnificent exhibition at the Museum of Natural History. I am grateful to the Nordic Council, to all the museums and the nations represented in the exhibit, and especially grateful to the extraordinary assemblage of dignitaries who have joined us today from all the Nordic nations.

There are quite a few competing answers to the question, who discovered America—and by the way, when, and exactly what America was—some would say, is. [Laughter] Now, Italian-

Americans revere Columbus and point out the word "America" comes from the famed map-maker Amerigo Vespucci. Anglo-Americans argue for the primacy of Jamestown and Plymouth as the first colonies in the original United States. Franco-Americans remind us to honor Champlain, Cartier, and La Salle alongside all others. And of course, our Native Americans consider all these people insignificant late-comers.

With the opening of this important exhibit, we expand the debate and learn more about ourselves. The remarkable explorations across

the North Atlantic at the turn of the last millennium constituted a crucial first step. These brave voyages under perilous conditions brought a dawning awareness on both sides of the Atlantic that our world is, in fact, many worlds.

There was something profoundly heroic about their desire and their ability to make the crossing. To go across the Atlantic to Vinland was as earthshaking and expansive an achievement as the most expansive, ambitious space launch today. It is indeed fitting that our first expedition to Mars in 1976 consisted of two spacecraft called Viking 1 and Viking 2.

All Americans should know more about this fascinating early chapter of our history. The Viking voyages are an essential part of the long process by which all of us in our different ways came to be here. The legacy of the Vikings has always been with us, from scattered archaeological evidence to the legends that thrilled poets like Longfellow.

These legends have been nurtured especially by the descendants of the Vikings. I don't suppose I can use the term "Viking-Americans," but I do mean people from Norway and Sweden and Finland and Denmark and Iceland, who showed the same courage when they immigrated here in the modern period to build new worlds for themselves. The settlers of places like New Sweden in Delaware; Oslo, Minnesota; Denmark, Iowa; or Holland, North Dakota, all brought a deep love of democracy and freedom stemming from their own egalitarian traditions. In fact, a new National Geographic cites a case where the Prince of the Franks sent an envoy to parlay with a group of invading Vikings and came back saying, "I found no one to talk with. They said they were all chiefs." [Laughter]

Now our awareness of our Nordic past will go far beyond legends and traditions. This exhibition will deepen our knowledge of the rich

history we share. It will shape our future by strengthening the bonds between Americans and their kin in the Nordic nations.

I am grateful for all that we have done together in the last decade, from our support for the peaceful expansion of democracy and freedom in Central and Eastern Europe to our concerted actions in Bosnia and Kosovo. Europe's future has never looked brighter, thanks in no small measure to your contributions.

When we entered the new millennium a few months ago, it was reassuring to dramatize our progress by portraying the year 1000 as a dark time in human history, a time then dominated by fear and superstition. But this exhibition helps to tell a fuller story: that for all the challenges and superstitions men and women faced 1,000 years ago, they still had the daring and enterprise to look beyond the horizon, to begin to build a world that measured up to their imagination. This is an old lesson that always offers fresh inspiration.

It is amazing to me to look at the Viking ships and imagine that they made it all this way 1,000 years ago. And I am so glad that, with the leaders of all these nations here today, you have clearly decided to make this a tradition. And you're welcome back in the year 3000. [Laughter] We are delighted to have you. Welcome. Thank you.

I'd like to now invite His Majesty, the King of Norway, to come and make a few remarks on behalf of all the Nordic nations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to an exhibit at the National Museum of Natural History entitled, "Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga." The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of King Harald V of Norway.

Remarks Announcing a Gun Buyback Initiative

April 28, 2000

Thank you very much. First of all, let me say a word of appreciation to you, Chief Ramsey, for your outstanding leadership of this very fine department. Thank you, Mayor Williams, for the energy and direction you have

brought to city hall and to this entire city. Thank you, Eleanor Holmes Norton, for always advocating for Washington, DC. I think no one will ever know how many times you have called me or been to see me in the last 7 years and 3