

June 28 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

Don't you think we ought to have somebody that understands this going into a future that—somebody that can shape our children's future? If we don't do something about this, it's going to flood the sugarcane fields in Florida—I mean in Louisiana. It's going to flood the Everglades in Florida. It's going to change the whole pattern of agricultural production in the Midwest. I think it's important. I want somebody plotting the country's future that really understands this stuff.

And the final thing I'd say is, we're Democrats because, whether we're more conservative or more liberal on this or that spending issue or this or that crime issue, we're inclusive. We want poor people along for the ride. We want middle class people to have a chance to catch up with everybody else. We want everybody's kids to have an education. And we're not for demeaning people because of their race, their

religion, their sexual orientation, or anything else. And I want somebody as President that I absolutely trust to take us all along for the ride.

So we actually made America a better place, and you guys have just gotten started. All the good stuff is still out there to be done, but you've got to win now to do it then.

Thank you, and bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:20 p.m. in the Ballroom at the Westin Fairfax Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Simon Rosenberg, founder and president, New Democrat Network; Dave McCurdy, president, Electronic Industries Alliance; Alan Khazei, cofounder, City Year; and former Gov. E. Benjamin Nelson of Nebraska, a candidate for U.S. Senate. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Remarks at a World War II Memorial Reception June 29, 2000

The President. Good morning, and welcome to the White House. I want to acknowledge especially Secretary Cohen, Secretary West, General Shelton. Chairman Gilman and Senator Lautenberg were here, and they had to go back to work. But I know we appreciate their being here, and their going back to work. [Laughter] I want to welcome all of the distinguished veterans who are here, especially, and thank General Herring, particularly. And I'll introduce Senator Dole and Mr. Smith in a moment.

I am very enthusiastic about this project, and I want to thank all of you who have already helped, including the schoolchildren who are here and all of you who will help.

One of the great pleasures of being President on warm nights and on the weekends is being able to sit out on the balcony that was built during President Truman's tenure here, and you can look out on The Mall and see the whole history of America, from the Revolutionary War, commemorated in the Washington Monument, to the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln. Now there are monuments to World War I, Korea, and Vietnam. We just celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Korean war. They teach us a

lot about our national history and our national character.

You also can see on The Mall the scientific genius of America in the Air and Space Museum, our Nation's heritage in the American Natural History Museum. You can see art in the National Gallery and the Hirshhorn. And I can see the Capitol, even on the days where I think they don't hear me down there. [Laughter]

And yet, the event that speaks most to the courage and character of America is World War II. It defined the 20th century. And until it has a place on our National Mall, the story of America that is told there will be woefully incomplete. This, therefore, in a real sense, is the last campaign of World War II.

Roger Durbin, who began it more than a decade ago, understands—understood that it's not just about the child that walks The Mall today whose grandfather served in the war. It is, in a larger sense, about the child who walks The Mall in a hundred years, tugging on his or her grandfather's sleeve, asking questions about the monument. That is the special quality of those monuments. It's how we learn from our past.

And so there must be a monument so that a hundred years from now those questions will be asked.

Roger Durbin knew that, and I want to thank his granddaughter, Melissa Growden, for being here with us today.

Four and a half years ago we came together on The Mall to sprinkle soil from America's overseas cemetery, to begin a drive to get this memorial built. I believe today, as I did then, that the site we dedicated is still perfect for the memorial. The distance traveled since is, in itself, a story of national resolve. And there are many people who deserve our gratitude, but I want to recognize just a few this morning.

First, I want to thank General Fred Woerner and Major General John Herrling for the terrific job they're doing at the American Battlefields Monuments Commission. It oversees 24 American military cemeteries and 27 memorials in 15 nations around the world. And I know they are anxious to add the World War II memorial to that list.

When this drive began, we were certain that one person we could count on was Fred Smith, the chairman of Fed-Ex and cochair of this memorial drive. This isn't the first time he's answered our country's call. He served two tours in Vietnam, and his father and three uncles all served in World War II. And I have known him for many, many years now, because we're from the same neck of the woods. Fred, I wasn't surprised you agreed to do this, but I was and remain very grateful. And on behalf of all the American people, we thank you for your service to the country.

Last week I had the privilege of presenting the Congressional Medal of Honor to Senator Dan Inouye and 21 other Asian-Americans who served with distinction in World War II. It was an amazing moment. I'm pleased that one of those—Senator Inouye's fellow Medal of Honor recipient Nick Oresko could join us today, as well as the president of the national Medal of Honor Society, Colonel Barney Barnum.

I also want to welcome all the veterans of World War II who are here. And I want to acknowledge the veterans from Congress—as I said, Senator Lautenberg and Congressman Gilman had to go back to work—Congressman Hall, Congressman Hyde, Congressman Regula, Congressman Sisisky, all veterans. And then the former Republican leader of the House, Congressman Bob Michel, is still here today, and

I want to welcome him and thank him. And Senator Harry Byrd, it's nice to see you, sir.

And I'd like to say a special word of thanks to Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, who first recognized the vision of her constituent, Roger Durbin, and introduced the legislation to establish the memorial. I think they're voting on Capitol Hill, and she's not able to come. And Senator Sasser, we're glad you're here today, too, and we thank you.

I'd like to thank two people who aren't here, who have been a great deal of help, Tom Brokaw and Tom Hanks, who worked to bring attention to this cause. And their ability to do so, as you know, grows out of one's book and the other's movie, both of which were, I think, very important to increasing the understanding of Americans about the character and courage of those who fought in World War II.

More than 1,900 World War II veterans and their colleagues at Wal-Mart have undertaken a special effort, and I thank them. I understand they're represented here today by veteran Jean DeVault. I want to recognize the men and women, thousands of them, who formed community action councils across the country, represented here today by Viola Lyon and Linda Johnson, from the Quad Cities; Christine Dialectos, from Reading, Pennsylvania; and Deb Ellis, from Littleton, Colorado.

And finally, I want to say a special thanks to 11-year-old Zane Fayos from Fayetteville, New York. Last April, he was 10 then, Zane saw Tom Hanks in an ad for the memorial and decided to get involved. He wrote a letter that said he was very interested in World War II, that he was reading books about Normandy and D-day, that his mother said he could go see "Saving Private Ryan" when he finished his books, and that he had managed to save \$195 in 10 short years, and he wanted to donate the entire amount to building the memorial. If he is representative of the young people of America, I'd say we're in pretty good hands. I'd like to ask him to stand today. Zane, stand up. [Applause] Bless you, young man. Thank you.

Now, Zane gave everything he had for the memorial. And I know this violates some law the Counsel's office gave me, but we still need a little more money. [Laughter] So somebody else is going to have to give, not everything they have but a little more, until we get right over the top. And I'm going to help, and any

of you in this room who can give us a little more, I'll be grateful to, as well.

I'd like to now introduce someone who has given everything he had for our country, Senator Bob Dole. All of you know that his service in World War II was enough for three lifetimes, and then he gave us the next 50 years, as well.

In 1997 he agreed to lead this campaign, and that was a great blessing for the cause and for the country. Whenever I see Senator Dole and we share a joke or a story or a common cause or sometimes a common disagreement, I understand why his generation of Americans has been called the greatest generation.

Ladies and gentlemen, Senator Dole.

[At this point, former Senator Bob Dole, national chairman, and Frederick W. Smith, cochairman, World War II Memorial Campaign, made brief remarks.]

The President. Well, ladies and gentlemen, this concludes this formal meeting. I've been listening to Senator Dole and to Fred. I just want to say two or three things.

On the way in, they were playing "Hail to the Chief," and I leaned over to Bob Dole, and I said, "You know, when we get out of here, I'd like to make commercials with you. I'll be your straight man." [Laughter] It's the only commercial venture I've discussed the whole time I've been President. [Laughter]

We tried to divide it up so that one of the three of us would mention everybody, but I do want to say again how grateful I am to all of you for being here, especially my friend of nearly 30 years Jess and Betty Jo Hay. And thank you, Ed. And I thank the Wal-Mart people and all the companies—the Hank Greenberg Company—all of them that have given.

Senator Dole said one thing. I don't believe I've ever told this story in public, but I'm going to do this. I want you to know why this is so important to me. Senator Dole said one thing that I think is really true. He said, "What would the world be like today if we had not fought and prevailed in World War II?" And there are lots of obvious big, geopolitical things you could say. But Senator Dole and Senator Inouye served in Italy, so I want to leave you with this story.

When we were getting ready to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the D-day invasion and then the end of the war—and there was a ceremony in Italy, too—I got hundreds of letters. So one

day I get this letter from this guy in New Jersey, with an Italian surname. And he says, "Dear Mr. President," he said, "During World War II, I was an 8-year-old boy living with my mother. And we were starving to death, practically, and we didn't know what was going to happen to us. And the American soldiers came." And he said, "I was fascinated by automobiles, so I used to sneak down to the motor pool, where I met an American who taught me all about engines." And he said, "He also gave me chocolate. Then I would take him home, and my mother would make him pasta." And he said, "I decided that I wanted to go to America," and he said, "as soon as I was old enough, I came to America, and I opened my own garage. I met a wonderful woman. I had a great family. I raised two children. They both have college educations, all because I met an American soldier in a motor pool. I never knew what happened to the soldier until I read in our local paper a story about your father's experience in World War II, and there was a picture of your father, and I knew that was the man who had helped me. I think he would be very proud of me today."

The consequences of what was done by the World War II generation are being felt today, in ways big and small. A country is known by what it remembers. This is a noble endeavor. A hundred million dollars sounds like a lot of money. It's peanuts. I meant to ask Secretary Cohen before I came up here, but if we had to fight World War II today, it would cost several trillion dollars—\$100 million is nothing. We ought to come up with the rest of the money, a little more if we need it, and do it right. And never forget.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:55 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. John P. Herrling, USA (Ret.), secretary, and Gen. Fred F. Woerner, USA (Ret.), chairman, American Battle Monuments Commission; Melissa A. Growden and Jess Hay, members, World War II Memorial Advisory Board; Mr. Hay's wife, Betty Jo; former Senator Harry F. Byrd, Jr.; former Senator James R. Sasser, U.S. Ambassador to China; NBC News anchorman and author Tom Brokaw; and actor Tom Hanks. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of former Senator Dole and Mr. Smith.

Remarks Announcing the Nomination of Norman Y. Mineta To Be
Secretary of Commerce and an Exchange With Reporters
June 29, 2000

The President. Good afternoon. I'm pleased to bring you here to announce my nomination of Norm Mineta to be the 33d Secretary of Commerce, to carry on the successful work of Bill Daley, Mickey Kantor, and Ron Brown.

I want to welcome Norm and his wife, Danealia, here. And I want to thank Secretary Daley for returning from his new duties to be with us and for the truly magnificent job that he has done.

I also want to thank our Deputy Secretary of Commerce, Rob Mallett, for being here today and for also being part of that same tradition of excellence—his leadership in improving the way the Department is run and especially his efforts to open Government contracting to women and to minority-owned businesses. We couldn't do it without you, Bob, and we thank you for your service.

Norm Mineta is a worthy addition to the Cabinet. He was, of course, a Member of Congress for 21 years, representing Silicon Valley, serving as chair of the House Committee for Public Works and Transportation. He was a leader on trade and technology and helping his colleagues understand and promote the emerging digital economy.

We worked closely together on trade issues but on others as well, such as family and medical leave, where his support was absolutely pivotal. And he has ably chaired my Advisory Commission on Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders.

Now, Norm thought he'd left politics for good in 1995 when he left Congress to work for Lockheed Martin. But politics and public service have a way of calling the best back. Norm is one of the best, a strong leader for the Department of Commerce, a highly skilled negotiator in Washington and throughout the world. He will play a crucial role in keeping our economic strategy on track, opening trade around the world, investing in our people, promoting high technology, bridging the digital divide.

He brings an indepth understanding of American business and a strong sense of the needs of our high-tech economy. But he also has a deep concern for people—for the people in

places who are not yet fully participating in this economy.

You see, Norm Mineta's family story tells a lot about the promise of the American dream and the power of one person's devotion to opportunity and to justice. As a young boy during World War II, he and his family were forced from their home and held hundreds of miles away in a desolate internment camp for Japanese-Americans. When he got home, young Norm vowed to work to make sure that kind of injustice could never happen to anyone else.

He grew up, went to college, served with the Army in Korea and Japan. Then he began a career of public service in the San Jose government, becoming the first Asian-Pacific American mayor of a major American city. He was elected to Congress in 1974 and became the first Asian-Pacific American to chair a major congressional committee. But he never stopped fighting for justice. His efforts led to the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which provided an apology and compensation for every survivor of the wartime internment camps.

I am proud to add to Norm's string of firsts by naming him the first Asian-Pacific American ever to hold a post in the President's Cabinet, proud to have a man of his qualities as a member of our economic team, as we work to make the most of this moment of unprecedented opportunity.

Recently I received a remarkable book called, "Asian American Dreams." Its author writes that Asian-Pacific Americans are "a people in constant motion, a great work in progress, each stage more faceted and complex than before. As we overcome adversity and take on new challenges, our special dynamism is our gift to America."

Well, that pretty well describes Norm Mineta's life and why I decided to name him Secretary of Commerce. I am very grateful to him, and to his wife, for giving up the joys and the remunerations of private life to come back into public service. And I hope he will be swiftly heard and confirmed by the United States Senate.

Norm.