

preserve.” [Laughter] I don’t have the slightest idea what I was saying there. [Laughter]

Or how about this one: “More and more of our imports come from overseas.” [Laughter]

Now, most people would say, in speaking of the economy, we ought to make the pie bigger. I, however, am on record saying, “We ought to make the pie higher.” [Laughter] It is a very complicated economic point I was making there. [Laughter] But believe me, what this country needs is taller pie. [Laughter]

And how about this for foreign policy vision: “When I was coming up, it was a dangerous world, and we knew exactly who the ‘they’ were. It was ‘us’ versus ‘them’. And it was clear who the ‘them’ was.” [Laughter] “Today, we’re not so sure who the ‘they’ are, but we know they’re there.” [Laughter]

John Ashcroft, by the way, attributes the way I talk to my religious fervor. In fact, the first time we met, he thought I was talking in tongues. [Laughter]

Then there is my most famous statement: “Rarely is the question asked, is our children learning?” [Laughter] Let us analyze that sentence for a moment. [Laughter] If you’re a stickler, you probably think the singular verb “is” should have been the plural “are.” But if you read it closely, you’ll see I’m using the intransitive plural subjunctive tense. [Laughter] So the word “is” are correct. [Laughter]

Finally, let’s see you wordsmiths out there diagram this sentence: I said—this may sound a little west Texan to you—“but when I’m talking about myself and when he’s talking about myself, all of us are talking about me.” [Laughter]

Now, ladies and gentlemen, you have to admit, in my sentences, I go where no man has gone before. [Laughter]

But in closing, the way I see it is, I am a boon to the English language. I’ve coined new words, like, “misunderstanding” and “Hispanically.” [Laughter] I’ve expanded the definition of words themselves, using “vulcanized” when I meant “polarized,” “Grecians” when I meant “Greeks,” “inebriating” when I meant “exhilarating”—[laughter]—and instead of “barriers and tariffs,” I said, “terriers and bariffs.” [Laughter]

And you know what? Life goes on. [Laughter] My wife and my daughters still love me. [Laughter] Our military still protects our shores. [Laughter] Americans still get up and go to work. [Laughter] People still go out and have fun, as we’re doing tonight.

I don’t think it’s healthy to take yourself too seriously. But what I do take seriously is my responsibility as President to all the American people; it’s the office I hold. And that is what I came tonight to tell you.

Thank you for inviting me, and thank you for your “horspitality”. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:40 p.m. in the National Ballroom at the Hilton Washington and Towers. In his remarks, he referred to Lew Ketcham, chairman, Radio and Television Correspondents Association.

Remarks Honoring Members of the Baseball Hall of Fame

March 30, 2001

The President. Well, thank you very much. Laura and I are delighted to welcome you all to the people’s house. The Vice President is delighted to welcome you to the people’s house, too. [Laughter] This is an exciting day for my administration and all the baseball fans that live here in Washington.

I first want to thank the commissioner for coming. Mr. Commissioner it’s good to see you again, sir. You’re doing a great job in shepherding our national pastime through some pretty tough times. And I appreciate your leadership, and I appreciate your friendship.

Speaking about Wisconsin, I’m glad to see my Cabinet Secretary is here. [Laughter] Thank you for coming, Tommy; and Mel Martinez, as well. I appreciate you all being here.

We’ve got some huge fans, baseball fans here. Billy Crystal, I’m honored you’re here. I appreciate the movie you’re making. I’m looking forward to maybe getting to see it here in the White House. If you would let us do that, it would be such an honor. I don’t know if Costas is here yet.

Bob Costas. Here, Mr. President. [Laughter]

The President. Where is he? [Laughter]

Mr. Costas. Sometimes it's hard to see me, Mr. President. [*Laughter*]

The President. Representing all the traditionalists in America. [*Laughter*]

Secretary Abraham, I'm sorry—a fine Detroit Tiger fan. Congressman Boehlert, whose district is the Hall of Fame.

I also want to thank Jane—it's good to see you again. I remember coming up to the induction ceremony when my friend Nolan Ryan got inducted. So your hospitality is great. And, Dale, thank you for thinking of this.

One of the great things about living here is, you don't have to sign up for a baseball fantasy camp—[*laughter*—to meet your heroes. It turns out, they come here. [*Laughter*] I want to thank the players, the former players, the managers, and the wives who are here. I think we're going to have a great day.

There are some familiar faces here, but none more beloved than Yogi Berra. Yogi's been an inspiration to me—[*laughter*]—not only because of his baseball skills but, of course, for the enduring mark he left on the English language. [*Laughter*] Some in the press corps here even think he might be my speechwriter. [*Laughter*] I don't know if you know, Yogi, but I quoted you when I went to the Congress the other day to deliver my budget address: "Relieved you made it. We were afraid you might have taken the wrong fork."

And of course, Big Texas here, and Ruth, thank you all for coming—friends of ours who remind us of glorious days we had in baseball. The reason I like to keep Nolan around is, he is a reminder that when we got done with the Sammy Sosa trade, there was still some talent left on the Rangers. [*Laughter*]

But along with Nolan, we've got people like Sandy Koufax and Bunning and Ford and Gibson and Marichal, some of the greatest arms in the history of the game. Seeing all the pitchers here brings to mind Lefty Gomez's definition of a complete pitcher. They asked Lefty once to share his secret. He said, "It's easy, clean living and a fast outfield." [*Laughter*] And we had some pretty fast outfielders behind us, too.

I'm sorry that Ted Williams couldn't be here today. One time I had the opportunity

to watch a batting practice at an All-Star game, sitting right behind Joe DiMaggio and Ted Williams. For a baseball fanatic, it was an unbelievable moment. It might sound funny to you, but at that moment, I said, "Well gosh, all three of us have something in common. We wanted to be big league stars. One of us peaked a little early." [*Laughter*]

I know that we all join together in wishing Ted the very best as he struggles to overcome his illness.

Five decades of baseball are represented here in the White House, from Bob Feller to Duke Snider to Dave Winfield to Robin Yount. I'm just a little biased toward those of you who played back in the fifties. It was my prime as a baseball card collector in the fifties.

Monte Irvin is here. And I remember very clearly, seeing him at the first baseball game I ever went to. He was standing in the Polo Grounds, I might add, on grass. Monte, you probably didn't see me because I was up in the stands with my Uncle Buck. But I'll never forget it. And as I recall, Red Schoendienst was there, as well.

And gentlemen, if you're half as excited to be at the White House as I was that afternoon, I'm really glad to repay the favor. Everyone who loves baseball can remember the first time he saw the inside of a real Major League park, with real big league players. It stays with you forever, the greenness of the grass, the sight of Major Leaguers in uniform, the sound of big league swing meeting a big league pitch. And when you're a kid and you actually meet one of your baseball heroes or get an autograph on a ball, that's a big deal, too. It means a lot.

Each one of the stars who are here has been a part of that. Each one has given that gift to millions of children for generations. And speaking for all of the millions of boys and girls, I say, thank you.

When I was growing up, there were the Mantle kids—like Crystal and Costas—and there were the Mays kids. You'd think that with Mickey Mantle coming from Oklahoma, which is next door to where I was raised, that I would have been a Mantle kid. But no, for some reason I was a Mays kid, and I was really proud of it, by the way.

Years later when I went to work with the Rangers, I got to meet both of those players, and got to meet a lot of other good folks, like Nolan Ryan. And I began to appreciate what the life of a famous ballplayer is like, what a responsibility it is when so many youngsters look up to you. So much is expected of you, whether you're in uniform or not in uniform.

It isn't always easy to be worthy of a kid's devotion or a teammate's trust. But the folks behind us tried. They were successful, and that's what made them great. Baseball isn't just in the stats, though of course, that's part of it. It isn't just the money. It really isn't who makes the Hall of Fame. As much as anything else, baseball is the style of a Willie Mays, or the determination of a Hank Aaron, or the endurance of a Mickey Mantle, the discipline of Carl Yastrzemski, the drive of Eddie Mathews, the reliability of a Kaline or a Morgan, the grace of a DiMaggio, the kindness of a Harmon Killebrew, and the class of Stan Musial, the courage of a Jackie Robinson, or the heroism of Lou Gehrig.

My hope for the game is that these qualities will never be lost. Whatever else changes, even if the same nine innings run longer and the flyballs farther and the grass isn't always grass like it should be, those values are still what makes the boys and girls and the fans and players into legends.

In a small way, maybe we can help to preserve the best of baseball right here in the house that Washington built. After we moved in, I pointed out to a great baseball fan, the First Lady, that we've got a pretty good-sized backyard here. *[Laughter]* And maybe with the help of some groundskeepers, we can play ball on the South Lawn. She agreed, just so long as I wasn't one of the players. *[Laughter]* So, for the next four seasons, we're going to invite kids here from the area to play tee-ball on the South Lawn of the White House.

And so, my congratulations are to not only the new crop of inductees of the Hall of Fame—Winfield, Puckett, to the family of Hilton Smith, and Bill Mazeroski—but congratulations to the Hall of Famers who have made the game what it is. It is such an honor for us to welcome you here. Thank you for coming, and I hope you enjoy the lunch as much as I know I'm going to.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:46 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Major League Baseball Commissioner Allan H. "Bud" Selig; entertainer Billy Crystal; sportscaster Bob Costas; Jane Forbes Clark, chairman, and Dale Petroskey, president, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum; and Ruth Ryan, Nolan Ryan's wife.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil and an Exchange With Reporters

March 30, 2001

President Bush. Thank you all for coming. It's my honor to welcome our friend from Brazil. Mr. President, we are honored—we're honored to have you here. We've got a lot in common. Brazil is a vast nation. It's a democracy. It's a country with a huge economic potential. It's a Government run by a good man.

We've had a good, frank discussion about a lot of subjects. There's no question in my mind that we'll have good relations over the next years. And there's no question in my mind that as we cooperate together, the people of both our countries will benefit.

We've discussed a lot of topics, including trade. We've agreed to work closely together to see if we can't come up with a way for our nations to continue to interface with each other. This country invests a lot of money in Brazil, because Brazil's a safe place to invest money. And we're going to keep it that way, keep our relationship strong. So Mr. President, welcome, glad to have you here.

President Cardoso. Thank you very much, sir. Let me say that I am very glad to be here, be with you. I knew your father. Now I'm very glad to see the way you are. As I said yesterday, I will put—take out my glasses to see your eyes, because you said that you would like to see my eyes directly.

President Bush. That's right. *[Laughter]*

President Cardoso. I must say that it was a very pleasant conversation about several issues. And I do agree with you, sir, on the sense that Brazil and the United States have to be close and close not just in terms of