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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT

AT THE

SWEARING-IN CEREMONY

OF

RON SARRO

AS PRESIDENT OF THE WASHINGTON PRESS CLUB

HOTEL SHERATON-CARLTON

7:50 P.M. EDT

Thank you very much, Wauhillau, Miriam, Ron, Betty, all of you. Obviously it is a great privilege and a great pleasure for me to be here tonight.

When I received the printed invitation for this affair this evening, one phrase in particular caught my attention. It said, "Come honeymoon with us." (Laughter)

You people sure know how to hurt a fellow.  
(Laughter)

As you might imagine, I don't agree with those who have called me the Evil Knievel of politics, but I do think beyond a doubt, beyond the shadow of a doubt, you don't need to have a pool at the White House to get in deep water. (Laughter)

Really, I didn't realize how much the honeymoon was over until this morning when the Metro started to build a new station in the Oval Office. (Laughter)

When I first said "yes" to being here tonight, I was then Vice President and had a lot more time on my hands. You know people say a lot of nice things about Vice Presidents. But it is almost like being the best man at a wedding -- you never get a chance to prove it. (Laughter)

As all of you know, on August 9 I became President, and I wasn't sure that my schedule would allow me enough time to be here with all of you tonight. But then three weeks ago, Maggie Hunter -- she cornered me at Ron Nessen's Sunday pool party, and who can say "no" to Maggie Hunter in a bathing suit? (Laughter)

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And frankly, I am very glad she did ask me because it is a real pleasure to be here and see so many familiar faces in the audience.

For instance, I saw, as I came in, my very good friend, Sarah McClendon. Some people say that Sarah is very outspoken. Not by anyone that I know. (Laughter)

But anybody in public life is well aware of how important the judgments of the press are. I am firmly convinced that if the good Lord had made the world today, he would have spent six days creating the heavens and the earth and all the living creatures upon it. But on the seventh day, he would not have rested. He would have justified it to Helen Thomas. (Laughter)

I also want to say a special "hello" to all my fellow survivors of Air Force 2 who are here tonight, and I see many in the audience. Be honest, now, all of you who flew with me in Air Force 2. Don't you really miss it? (Laughter)

This is the only plane that the Air Force has that has to stop for red lights. (Laughter)

When Governor Nelson Rockefeller saw this plane, he was really in a state of shock. As a matter of fact, I think he thought about reconsidering the nomination. (Laughter)

He said, "Is this Air Force 2? I have something that goes much faster."

And I said to Nelson, "Is it a jet?"

Nelson said, "No, it is a lawn mower." (Laughter)

Before closing, I would like to congratulate the very popular Ron Sarro on the occasion of his being elected to the Presidency of the Washington Press Club. I understand that Ron really put his heart and his soul into this campaign. He was even going to set up a campaign organization called "The Committee to Re-elect Ron President" until somebody pointed out that is CRERP spelled sideways. (Laughter)

But when it comes to a reporter's intuition, and really being ahead of his time, you just can't beat Ron Sarro.

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Do you know that in 1970 -- that is quite a while ago -- Ron wrote a book called "Are You Safe from Burglars". (Laughter)

I don't know how many people bought it -- obviously not enough -- but I do deeply appreciate your asking me to be here tonight on this very historic occasion, the inauguration of the first male president of the Washington Press Club.

As one President to another, Ron, I salute you and I also salute the members of the Washington Press Club for breaking down the barriers of sexual discrimination. (Laughter)

I think all of you know where I stand on this issue. As I prove every morning at breakfast time, I certainly don't believe that a woman's place is in the kitchen. (Laughter)

If our country is to survive and prosper, we need the best efforts of all Americans -- men and women -- to bring this, I think, proper attitude and atmosphere and results in America.

And besides, as one of the great philosophers once said--and it was Henry A. Kissinger--(Laughter), "Nobody will ever win the battle of the sexes. There is just too much fraternizing with the enemy." (Laughter)

Thank you very much.

END                    (7:50 P.M.    EDT)