

The original documents are located in Box D35, folder “Dinner in Honor of Congressman Bob Sikes, Pensacola, FL, June 14, 1973” of the Ford Congressional Papers: Press Secretary and Speech File at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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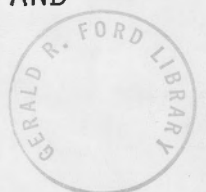
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REMARKS BY REP. GERALD R. FORD, R-MICH.
REPUBLICAN LEADER, U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
AT A TESTIMONIAL DINNER
IN HONOR OF CONGRESSMAN BOB SIKES
PENSACOLA, FLORIDA
THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 14, 1973

WE ARE GATHERED HERE TONIGHT TO HONOR A MAN WHO MERITS EVERY BIT OF PRAISE WHICH MAY BE SHOWERED UPON HIM. BOB SIKES IS -- AS WE ALL KNOW -- ONE OF FLORIDA'S MOST DISTINGUISHED SONS. WE HAVE SOME PROOF OF THAT IN THE BRIDGE THAT WAS DEDICATED JUST THIS AFTERNOON -- THE ROBERT L. F. SIKES BRIDGE -- FLORIDA'S GATEWAY TO THE GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE. IT IS MOST FITTING THAT THIS BRIDGE SHOULD HAVE BEEN NAMED AFTER BOB SIKES WHEN WE CONSIDER HIS MANY AND NOTABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING HIS 33 YEARS IN THE U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES -- NOT THE LEAST OF THESE BEING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL SEASHORE TO WHICH THE ROBERT L. F. SIKES BRIDGE LEADS.

BOB SIKES HAS LIVED A MOST REMARKABLE AND MOST PRODUCTIVE LIFE. HE HAS A LIST OF CREDITS AS LONG AS YOUR ARM -- PROBABLY THE LONGEST LIST OF CREDITS OF ANY MEMBER OF THE CONGRESS. TO REVIEW IT WOULD TAKE FAR MORE TIME THAN HAS BEEN ALLOTTED TO ME, SO I WILL ONLY TOUCH ON THE HIGHLIGHTS.

FIRST OF ALL, I WOULD SAY BOB HAS MADE ONLY ONE SERIOUS MISTAKE IN HIS LONG AND ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER. HE FAILED TO JOIN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY, CHOOSING INSTEAD TO HONOR MY LONGTIME AND ERSTWHILE OPPONENTS.



I MIGHT NOW QUICKLY MENTION THAT BOB AND I HAVE VERY OFTEN BEEN ON THE SAME SIDE OF THE FENCE ON VOTES IN THE HOUSE. WHENEVER, FOR INSTANCE, THE ISSUE HAS BEEN ONE OF A STRONG NATIONAL DEFENSE BOB AND I HAVE STOOD SHOULDER TO SHOULDER. WE SERVED TOGETHER ON THE DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE BEFORE I BECAME MINORITY LEADER -- AND BOB SIKES IS A TOWER OF STRENGTH ON THAT GROUP. AS YOU MAY KNOW, BOB IS VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE AND IS CHAIRMAN OF MILITARY CONSTRUCTION. HE HAS FIVE MILITARY BASES IN HIS DISTRICT, AND NEED I SAY THAT HE TAKES CARE OF THEM.

YOU KNOW OF COURSE THAT BOB SIKES IS A HOLDER OF THE LEGION OF MERIT AND IS A RETIRED MAJOR GENERAL. BOB NOT ONLY WAS A MAJOR GENERAL; HE LOOKS LIKE A GENERAL OUGHT TO LOOK.

EARLY ON I MENTIONED BOB'S ROLE IN ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GULF ISLANDS NATIONAL SEASHORE -- AND I KNOW HE IS PROUD OF THAT. THIS MIGHT BE THE PROPER TIME TO POINT OUT THAT BOB SIKES HAS ALSO BEEN A LEADER IN PROMOTING FORESTRY LEGISLATION. IN FACT, BOB SIKES' NAME IS ON JUST ABOUT EVERY PIECE OF FORESTRY LEGISLATION THAT HAS BEEN PASSED BY CONGRESS OVER THE LAST 30 YEARS. SMALL WONDER THAT LAST YEAR HE RECEIVED THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARDS OF THE AMERICAN FORESTRY ASSOCIATION AND THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE FORESTERS.

BOB SIKES HAS -- OVER THE YEARS -- RECEIVED SO MANY DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARDS FROM SO MANY DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONS

THAT THERE IS LITTLE WE CAN DO OR SAY HERE TONIGHT THAT WILL ADD TO THE TRIBUTES ALREADY PAID TO HIM.

BUT I THINK I KNOW WHAT WE CAN SAY THAT WOULD PLEASE BOB SIKES MOST TONIGHT. WE CAN HONOR HIM FOR THE SERVICE HE HAS GIVEN TO THE PEOPLE OF FLORIDA AND, PARTICULARLY, TO THE PEOPLE OF OKALOOSA COUNTY.

HE IS, AS YOU KNOW, THE DEAN OF THE FLORIDA DELEGATION IN CONGRESS AND HE HAS SERVED IN CONGRESS LONGER THAN ANY OTHER FLORIDIAN. ADD TO THAT THE FOUR YEARS HE SPENT IN THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE BEFORE HE FIRST WAS ELECTED TO CONGRESS AND YOU FIND A SUPERB RECORD OF 37 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE PEOPLE OF OKALOOSA COUNTY. WHAT A MAGNIFICENT RECORD OF SERVICE! THAT, THEN, IS THE GREATEST TRIBUTE WE CAN PAY TO BOB SIKES -- TO HONOR HIM AS A GREAT PUBLIC SERVANT, A MAN WHO HAS ALWAYS DONE WHAT HE FELT WAS BEST FOR "HIS PEOPLE."

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