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- THANK YOU , MR. SMYRNIIS / MR. CHIRGATIS
- MR. MINISTER
- MR. AMBASSADOR
- MEMBERS OF CONGRESS
- DISTINGUISHED GUESTS
- LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....

AHEPA BICENTENNIAL CONGRESSIONAL BANQUET

WASHINGTON HILTON HOTEL

MONDAY, APRIL 5, 1976

MR. CHIRGOTIS (SHER-GO-TUS),

MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

OF THE AHEPA "FAMILY."

IT IS A SPECIAL PLEASURE FOR ME TO GREET YOU --

AND THROUGH YOU / MORE THAN 65,000 ACTIVE MEMBERS OF AHEPA --

INCLUDING THE DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE (PEN-NELL-OH-PEE),

THE SONS OF PERICLES (PERI-CLEEZ), AND THE MAIDS OF

ATHENA (UH-THEEN-A) -- ON YOUR 22nd BIENNIAL GATHERING

IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL DURING OUR NATIONAL BICENTENNIAL.

IF MEMORY SERVES ME CORRECTLY I HAVE ATTENDED

14 OUT OF THE 22 MEETINGS YOU HAVE HELD HERE IN WASHINGTON.

(SHER-GO-TUS)

LAST YEAR I MET WITH BILL CHIRGOTIS AND YOUR OTHER

OFFICERS AT THE WHITE HOUSE AND JUST ABOUT TWO YEARS

AGO | HAD THE HONOR OF ADDRESSING YOU AS VICE PRESIDENT.

I ~~WANT TO~~ CONGRATULATE BILL ON HIS RE-ELECTION THIS YEAR

AS SUPREME PRESIDENT OF AHEPA.

YOU KNOW, I HAVE BEEN A MEMBER OF AHEPA MYSELF

FOR MORE THAN A QUARTER CENTURY -- AND PROUD OF IT.

I HAVE FELT GREEK IN SPIRIT, IF NOT BY ~~ANCESTRY~~ ANCESTRY,

FOR A GOOD MANY YEARS SINCE I FIRST STUDIED THE GLORIOUS

HISTORY OF GREECE. FURTHERMORE, AMERICANS OF GREEK

HERITAGE HAVE OCCUPIED A VERY SPECIAL PLACE IN MY LIFE.



WHO CAN EVER FORGET THEIR FIRST REGULAR PAYING JOB?

MY PRESENT JOB IS PRETTY IMPORTANT TO ME --

BUT SO WAS MY FIRST JOB. IT WAS GIVEN TO ME WHEN I WAS

IN SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL IN GRAND RAPIDS BY ALEX DEMAR --

A DISTINGUISHED AHEPA MEMBER OF LONG-STANDING.

ALEX AND I WERE REMINISCING ABOUT IT JUST THIS AFTERNOON

IN THE OVAL OFFICE. I TOLD HIM THE PAY WAS A LOT LESS

BUT THE HOURS WERE A LOT BETTER THAN I HAVE NOW.

[AD-LIB ABOUT YOUR FIRST JOB.]

Alex  
Coke  
Hot Dogs  
the pay was good for three days  
But ~~the~~ <sup>that</sup> friendship, which began almost 50 yrs  
ago, was more important than the  
compensation.

TONIGHT WE MEET TO CELEBRATE YOUR 54th YEAR

OF SERVICE TO AMERICA.

I AM NATURALLY VERY PLEASED

AND PROUD THAT MRS. FORD WILL BE HONORED BY THE DAUGHTERS

OF PENELOPE'S (PEN-NELL-OH-PEE'S) ANNUAL "SALUTE TO WOMEN" AWARD.

YOU KNOW HOW PENELOPE WAS RENOWNED FOR FAITHFULLY

WAITING AT HOME FOR HER WANDERING HUSBAND TO RETURN FROM

THE WARS. NOW BETTY USED TO DO THAT. BUT LATELY

WHEN I RETURN FROM CAMPAIGNING / I FIND THAT SHE IS ON

HER WAY OUT THE DOOR TO CAMPAIGN FOR ME SOMEWHERE ELSE /

AND I AM DELIGHTED THAT SHE GOT BACK TONIGHT IN TIME

FOR AHEPA TO REUNITE US.

I WAS ALSO DELIGHTED TO LEARN THAT AHEPA'S  
HIGHEST HONOR - THE SOCRATIC (SOW-CRA-TICK) AWARD -  
WILL BE BESTOWED AT A LATER DATE UPON ONE OF THE WESTERN  
WORLD'S MOST DISTINGUISHED STATESMEN + PRIME MINISTER  
CONSTANTINE CARAMANLIS OF GREECE.

IT WAS MY GREAT PLEASURE TO MEET TWICE  
WITH PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS IN 1975 AND I AM VERY MUCH  
LOOKING FORWARD TO OUR NEXT MEETING. DURING OUR EXTENSIVE  
AND WIDE-RANGING CONVERSATIONS LAST YEAR, I REAFFIRMED  
WITH HIM THE VERY GREAT IMPORTANCE THE UNITED STATES ATTACHES  
TO CLOSE AND HARMONIOUS RELATIONS WITH GREECE.

I ALSO EXPRESSED MY ADMIRATION FOR THE ACTION HE HAS TAKEN  
TO STRENGTHEN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT IN GREECE  
AND TO FIND PEACEFUL AND JUST SOLUTIONS TO THE DIFFICULT  
AND COMPLEX PROBLEMS IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN AREA.

AS PRESIDENT, MY POLICY TOWARD GREECE IS A POLICY

OF POSITIVE ACTION BASED ON THE MANY INTERESTS WE SHARE

BILATERALLY, / ON OUR IMPORTANT TIES AS ALLIES /

AND ON THE VERY GREAT TIES OF FRIENDSHIP AND KINSHIP BETWEEN

OUR PEOPLES. THIS IS MY POLICY, / THIS WILL CONTINUE TO BE

MY POLICY, / AND I AM DELIGHTED TO HAVE THIS OPPORTUNITY

TO REAFFIRM IT TONIGHT.



I AM DELIGHTED ALSO THAT YOU ARE HONORING

MY FORMER COLLEAGUES IN THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE

OF REPRESENTATIVES WITH BICENTENNIAL SOCRATIC AWARDS

THIS EVENING. IN SPITE OF WHAT YOU MAY HAVE HEARD,

WE STILL GET ALONG VERY WELL TOGETHER - MOST OF THE TIME.

I WILL ALWAYS HAVE GREAT LOVE AND RESPECT FOR THE LEGISLATIVE

BRANCH OF OUR NATIONAL GOVERNMENT.

BACK IN THE DIFFICULT DAYS AFTER WORLD WAR TWO

WHEN I FIRST ENTERED POLITICAL LIFE, MY MENTOR AND HERO WAS

THE LATE SENATOR VANDENBERG OF GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN.

SOME OF YOU WILL REMEMBER HOW SENATOR VANDENBERG,

A REPUBLICAN AND A FORMER ISOLATIONIST, STOOD SHOULDER

TO SHOULDER WITH PRESIDENT HARRY TRUMAN IN THE GREAT

CHALLENGES THAT FACED THE COUNTRY IN THAT POST-WAR PERIOD,

PARTICULARLY IN THE THREAT TO THE FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE

OF GREECE.

WITH SUCH STRONG BIPARTISAN SUPPORT / OUR FOREIGN POLICY

OVER THE PAST 30 YEARS HAS PREVENTED A THIRD WORLD WAR

AND ENABLED US TO CELEBRATE OUR 200th BIRTHDAY AS A NATION /

IN PEACE AND FREEDOM.

YOUR BICENTENNIAL MEETING IN WASHINGTON THIS WEEK

ALSO REMINDS US OF THE GREAT CONTRIBUTION GREECE

AND AMERICANS OF GREEK DESCENT HAVE MADE TO THE DEVELOPMENT

OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

-- GREEKS WERE AMONG OUR EARLIEST SETTLERS•

IN 1767 - JUST NINE YEARS BEFORE THE SIGNING

OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE - GREEK EMIGRANTS SETTLED

IN THE SOUTHEASTERN PORTION OF THIS COUNTRY / WHERE ONE CITY

STILL BEARS A DISTINCTLY GREEK NAME: NEW SMYRNA (SMER-NA)•

FLORIDA•

FOR THE PAST 54 YEARS, AHEPA HAS TAKEN

ON THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF INTERPRETING GREECE TO AMERICA /

AND AMERICA TO MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN OF GREEK HERITAGE

SEEKING A NEW START, A NEW BEGINNING, IN THE UNITED STATES.

FROM THE TIME OF NEW SMYRNA (SMER-NA)

TO THE PRESENT, HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF GREEKS HAVE COME

TO THIS COUNTRY. THEY AND THEIR DESCENDENTS --

THROUGH HARD WORK AND SACRIFICE -- HAVE BECOME WONDERFUL

CITIZENS AND MADE A TREMENDOUS CONTRIBUTION TO AMERICAN LIFE.



GREEK NAMES ARE HONORED IN VIRTUALLY ALL WALKS OF LIFE --

IN GOVERNMENT, / COMMERCE AND BUSINESS, / IN THE ARTS AND  
SCIENCES, / MEDICINE, \ THEATER, \ SPORTS AND MANY OTHERS.

WE NOW MARK THE BEGINNING OF OUR THIRD CENTURY

AS AN INDEPENDENT NATION AS WELL AS THE 200th ANNIVERSARY

OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION. FOR TWO CENTURIES OUR NATION

HAS GROWN, CHANGED AND FLOURISHED. A DIVERSE PEOPLE,

DRAWN FROM ALL CORNERS OF THE EARTH, HAVE JOINED TOGETHER

TO FULFILL THE PROMISE AND CHALLENGE OF DEMOCRACY.

THE BICENTENNIAL OFFERS EACH OF US THE OPPORTUNITY

TO JOIN WITH OUR FELLOW CITIZENS IN HONORING THE PAST AND

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE. IN THIS PERIOD, AHEPA CAN

REFLECT WITH PRIDE AND SATISFACTION ON WHAT GREECE AND

GREEK-AMERICANS HAVE GIVEN THIS COUNTRY.

YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS NOT ONLY PERPETUATE THE GLORY

THAT WAS GREECE -- YOUR PATRIOTISM AND PRIDE IN AMERICA

WILL ALSO PERPETUATE THE GLORY THAT IS AMERICA, /

A LAND IN WHICH THE NOBLEST IDEALS OF DEMOCRACY LIVE AND

FLOURISH FOR THE HOPE AND FUTURE OF ALL THE PEOPLES

OF THE WORLD.

END OF TEXT