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THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS  
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT  
AND  
JACKIE GLEASON

INVERRARY COUNTRY CLUB

8:00 P.M. EDT

MR. GLEASON: Gentlemen, as you all know, we are honored with the President of the United States, and he would like to say a few words.

Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Jackie.

I don't know a day, since last August, where I have had a more enjoyable, a more wonderful time than today in this great tournament with you and Bob Hope and Elliott Kahn and Jack Nicklaus. You know, this is just one of those things that I will always remember, and I thank you and the others who participated.

I -- going a long time back -- have great respect for excellence, and I was playing with some people today who epitomize that, you and Bob, in the field of entertainments -- the unquestioned excellence in the field that you excel so beautifully in -- Elliott Kahn, a young man who has done superbly in the business world, and the one I envy the most, (Laughter) -- it is not you.

MR. GLEASON: I know.

THE PRESIDENT: It is not Hope.

MR. GLEASON: I know.

THE PRESIDENT: It is not Elliott. If I could just be half as good as Jack Nicklaus...(Laughter.)

A long time ago, back when the ball was round in football, I played a little football against another school in the Big Ten, and I loved the competition because Ohio State always represented a great skill, great competence, tremendous competitive urge and so forth. And as much as I hate to lose to them, I think they represent the best, and of course, Jack Nicklaus in golf represents the finest. And Jack, to play with you today and have you break the course record was a great thrill for me.

MORE

You and I didn't contribute one thing to our score.

MR. GLEASON: Yes we did; you broke a record today.

THE PRESIDENT: What did I do?

MR. GLEASON: We went around the entire course, and there was not one dissident voice or sign throughout the entire area. And that is a record.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I just want to thank you and everybody that was related, Mr. Fuqua and all of the others, who made a significant contribution to this.

I have a couple of serious comments to make. You know, as an office holder in the Federal Government, who carries a lot of weight in Washington -- in only Washington -- it gives me a great deal of pleasure tonight to say that I want to extend to you happy birthday, to a man who carries a lot of weight, anywhere, anywhere, Jackie Gleason. (Laughter.)

I did appreciate, as Jack Nicklaus and you and Bob and Elliott Kahn and the others know -- after a couple of hard weeks and a few more coming down the road, it was great to be here and participate. Still, I can't quite get all of the problems out of my mind, even on a delightful day like this.

You know, on the first tee, Jackie Gleason asked me this question: what was my greatest problem? I think he was referring to golf. (Laughter.) But I had what was really on my mind, and I said, "Congress." (Laughter.)

But I enjoyed playing with others in our fivesome; it was a great treat. All of them are far better, infinitely more competent than myself, but I am going to work at it. And if you are kind enough to invite Betty and me down next year -- that is a subtle way of asking for an invitation.

MR. GLEASON: You are not only invited next year, but if you follow me, I know where a martini is. (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, somebody asked me, out on the golf course, how I shot today, and I said I shot a 72. The truth was, that is before I asked for a rebate. (Laughter.)

But, let me say, I appreciate very much, Jackie, the opportunity to be with all of you, to be with Jack Nicklaus and to meet Barbara Nicklaus and their son, Steve, and daughter, Nancy, and to meet the others, who are here, and to be with people who are superb, the best. It is the kind of challenge that I think we in American have to seek and work to achieve. So, thank you very much on behalf of Betty and myself.

MORE

Page 3

You know, we have had more pickets outside of Washington concerning her than concerning me, but that is an indication of her character. And I am very proud to introduce to all of you the First Lady, my dear wife, Betty Ford.

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(AT 8:05 P.M. EDT)