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(Malibu, California)

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
DEDICATION CEREMONY FOR
FIRESTONE FIELDHOUSE

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

12:03 P.M. PDT

Dr. Bill Banowsky, Ambassador and Mrs. Firestone, distinguished academic delegates, special guests and ladies and gentlemen:

Today, you conferred upon me the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws and granted me the status of an honorary alumnus of Pepperdine University. Obviously, these honors are very deeply appreciated, and I am equally grateful for the especially warm welcome here in Southern California.

Actually, I have been looking forward to visiting the campus here at Malibu. Some of you may know, I like skiing and swimming, and here in Malibu one of the big things is surfing, which combines a little of both. (Laughter) Skiing when you do it right and swimming when you do it wrong. (Laughter)

But, I never realized how popular surfing really is until just before the program when I asked President Bill Banowsky how many minutes he wanted me to speak, and Bill just said, "Mr. President, hang 10." (Laughter)

Last May, when my wife Betty returned from her trip to this beautiful State, she gave me a very enthusiastic report on her visit to Pepperdine's innercity Los Angeles campus and Pepperdine's rapid growth from a small college in Southwest Los Angeles to a multipurpose university has been a success story in the best Hollywood tradition.

I am impressed with your distinguished faculty, with your fine academic student body, and with your balanced budget of \$35 million. (Laughter) Then again, coming from Washington, I am impressed with a balanced budget of any size. (Laughter)

Let me also add a very special word of praise for your President, Dr. Bill Banowsky. Bill's great, great capacity for leadership has been a guiding force in Pepperdine's phenomenal progress in the pursuit of excellence. He is the man most responsible for this Malibu miracle campus which represents a testament to his skills and diligence and I congratulate you personally, Bill.

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Today we gather to dedicate this most impressive structure, the Firestone Fieldhouse, made possible by the generosity and commitment of two of my very good friends, Leonard and Nicki Firestone. I join with all of you in saluting these two outstanding Americans in admiring this proud building, their fine gift to Pepperdine University.

As Dr. Bill Banowsky was reeling off all of the athletic accomplishments of Pepperdine's times on the competitive field of athletics, I thought to myself there wasn't one single sport where I could qualify for the first time, even fifty years ago. (Laughter)

So I thank you for the opportunity to participate in this ceremony because of my personal interest in competitive athletics, but also because Firestone Fieldhouse stands as a splendid centerpiece for this superb campus. It symbolizes the vitality, the exuberance, and the strength of Pepperdine students, indeed the students throughout this country.

Pepperdine University is a symbol itself. It is an outstanding example of those voluntarily supported institutions which have contributed to much to America's greatness and to our country's progress. Such great universities as Paris, Oxford and Padua dating back to the middle ages have a rich heritage as institutions of independent education. America proudly celebrates its 200th birthday next year and we would have to reach back still another century to mark the founding of Harvard College, Massachusetts Bay Colony or William and Mary in Virginia, or St. John's College in Maryland.

Twelve other great American universities were founded before the American revolution and all share in the distinguished traditions of private higher education.

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Independent schools in the United States exemplify the commitment of their benefactors to the American free enterprise system and, in a sense, to freedom itself.

You know, and I know, that it is the vitality and the competition of free enterprise that made America great. It is the wealth of the free enterprise that has done so much to help underdeveloped nations throughout the world, and it is free enterprise that in the long run will do the most for the underdeveloped nations of the world and the disadvantaged people throughout this great world.

It is the strength of the free enterprise that has given the greatest challenge to Communism and Statism and every other dogma which would crush individual freedom.

The independent colleges and universities have played a very major role in America's history. They represent a sound investment in America's future. Thanks to the vision and dedication and commitment of private citizens and organizations, there are now more than 1,500 independent colleges and universities in America, with a combined enrollment of more than two million fortunate students.

Today, as in the past, these institutions serve as a great reservoir of national leadership in the arts, in the science, in law, medicine, religion, and in business, as well as in the Government.

Twenty-four Presidents of the United States were educated in private colleges and universities in our country, as were 287 Members of the Congress, Senators, Representatives serving in the present Congress today.

More than 40 percent of the board chairmen and presidents of the Nation's 100 largest corporations today were educated at independent institutions. The number of outstanding writers, musicians, judges, teachers, physicians, scientists, ministers and scholars produced by these institutions is almost beyond counting.

My own background, as Dr. Banowsky indicated, included two experiences in higher education; one at the University of Michigan, the other at Yale University Law School; one public, the other private.

I value what I learned from both, and I am all for an open marketplace for ideas and learning experiences. Private institutions both compliment on the one hand and compete on the other with public education in America. Millions of Americans have enjoyed the diversity of benefits this dual system has produced.

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I believe that every American who has a desire to learn should be given the chance to learn. Today, California's independent four-year colleges and universities have an outstanding record of providing such great opportunities.

They have enrolled, for example, a higher percentage of black students than any public sector of higher education in this State. Further, independent four-year colleges rank very high in the percentage of Mexican-Americans enrolled, and they provide more students with more scholarships than any public segment of California education.

They have proven this point, which we should emphasize: They have proven by their own example that the road to quality higher education need not be a narrow one traveled only by a select few.

As Aristotle said centuries ago, "All who have mediated on the art of Government and the art of governing mankind have been convinced that the fate of political communities depends upon the education of youth."

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But today one segment of America's educational capacity is in serious trouble. The institutions of private education in the United States are being battered and buffeted in ways that may ultimately jeopardize their survival.

We should remember and never forget that the term private education is misleading because those institutions, through privately endowed, serve important public functions and at a great savings to the American taxpayer.

We should remember that this is something that is too often forgotten. California, for example, now counts about 100 independent colleges and universities within its great borders. It is estimated that these institutions carry 30 percent of the State's post secondary education workload. Each year they provide, with almost no cost to the taxpayer, more than one billion dollars in educational research and related services in California alone.

In return, these institutions and their students received less than three percent of the total State funds spent for higher education in California. It is through the support of alumni and friends such as Leonard Firestone, Margaret Martin Brock, Frank Seaver and so many others who have helped Pepperdine build this magnificent campus that independent education survives and grows in California and throughout the United States. And we thank them all for it.

California's independent schools have amassed two and a half billion dollars in capital assets and in dollars. Each year they attract an additional \$400 million from private non-governmental sources. If these institutions should suddenly close, shifting the burden from private donors to public taxpayers, the tax load would be heavy indeed. American taxpayers and America as a whole would suffer the consequences. We must not allow this to happen.

In recent years the Congress has considered a number of proposals which would discourage private charitable contributions to these institutions. Fortunately, most have been rejected thus far. But there is a certain persistence in these proposals which must be constantly monitored and rebuffed. Today, let me repeat what I have said to many educators who have visited me in Washington, I approve, support and encourage the principle of volunteer giving to help finance higher education.

And I will oppose any legislative proposals which discourage such support, including those which would limit charitable tax deductions, disallow the full value of appreciated assets, or exclude the State tax deductions.

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Firestone Fieldhouse, and literally thousands of other facilities which grace independent college campuses across America, testify vividly and in concrete ways to the wisdom of those existing tax policies. These facilities will be built either with private capital or with taxpayer's money, but they must and they will be built and I will do all that I can on a personal basis to encourage the use of private funds for the public good.

Today we have all been a part of a proud and fulfilling moment in Pepperdine's history. Students, faculty, friends and community have all joined together in this celebration of this achievement. It is a good feeling and one that should be experienced as often as possible.

Bill, is that a good suggestion? (Laughter)

In some circumstances also it is considered very in to be cynical and somewhat disdainful of the basic motivations that have inspired and sustained mankind throughout the centuries. A love of family a love of country, a love of labor, a love of learning, a love of God. These values are not outdated and from the spirit that I feel is here today, I am sure that all of you agree most wholeheartedly.

I know from my many conversations with Bill Banowsky and others that this is the spirit of Pepperdine University, its founder, its faculty and its students. It is a wonderful worthy spirit. A spirit to which Daniel Webster gave expression when he wrote "If we work upon marble, it will perish. If we work upon brass, time will efface it. If we rear temples, they will crumble into dust. But if we work upon men's immortal minds, if we imbue them with my principles, with the just fear of God and love of their fellow men, we engrave on those tablets, something which no time can efface and which will brighten to all eternity."

Thank you for letting me share this thought with you.

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(AT 12:22 P.M. PDT)