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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
SUN NEWSPAPER GOOD NEIGHBOR
AWARD BANQUET

MARRIOTT HOTEL

7:45 P.M. EDT

David, Governor Rhodes, Mayor Perk, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

It really is a great honor and a very high privilege to congratulate the Good Neighbors selected in 46 suburban neighborhoods in the Greater Cleveland Area, to congratulate not only the winners but the families, as well, and your distinguished mayors and your community leaders.

I commend David, the 12 Sun Newspapers, as very good neighbors, for providing this good recognition to all of you for bringing a good ray of sunshine into the lives of others. It is a wonderful occasion and I am honored to be here.

My understanding is that none of the winners of the Good Neighbor Awards sought the nomination. (Laughter) In politics you have to do that. But, no politics were involved in your selection. Nevertheless, you won the popular vote and all of the electoral votes in each and every one of your communities. Believe me, as I understand it, there was no apathy on each and every one of you.

I recall the many good neighbors that Betty and I had in communities where we lived. Of course, our home is Grand Rapids, Michigan, but our four children were brought up in Alexandria, Virginia. Believe me, good neighbors in both places were essential and just wonderful as far as our young family was concerned in Betty's and my married life. The spirit in both of those communities I know firsthand is still alive. But it is also alive here in Ohio, but more importantly, it is alive throughout the United States.

Our traditional values in this great country just haven't gone out of style. As individuals, I understand you noticed that snow needed to be shoveled off the sidewalks of some elderly neighbors, that hot meals were required by people stricken by illness, that a blind person needed a ride to a shopping center, that neighborhood teenagers needed help with their school work, if someone was away and their pets needed some food, that a disabled veteran and a new neighbor needed friendship.

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You didn't refer them to some Government office or agency, whether it was local, State or Federal, for assistance. You responded as a human being to other human beings. And I think that is what makes America work; it always has. It is what America really is all about -- neighborliness, kindness, homes, families, religious values -- all adding up to that special quality of what we proudly call Americanism.

As I look around this room tonight, it is obvious to me that Americanism has not died. Americanism is alive; it is well. It is living from Cleveland to Rocky River, to Parmis and North Royalton, to Richmond Heights, to Shaker Heights, Garfield Heights. Gosh, I can't think of all the other communities. (Laughter) But they are all wonderful communities in this great State of Ohio, and it is similar, I am sure, in all the communities throughout the United States.

I am proud to say that as long as I am President I will do all that I possibly can to keep that wonderful spirit alive.

(The President was presented with the National Good Neighbor Award.)

Thank you very much, David.

I could make quite a speech about John Collins -- even before he nominated me. (Laughter) You might be curious, he is 90-something now. He was the mayor of East Grand Rapids, I don't know, countless years, and he was a very hard-working, dedicated, religious man. He worked for -- some of you may have used their products -- the Bissell Carpet Sweeper Company for years and years and years -- I mean years.

But John Collins lived out in East Grand Rapids, which is a suburb like Shaker Heights in Cleveland. John Collins, every day that he was employed, walked from East Grand Rapids, rain or snow or sleet, down to his factory where he was employed. He would drive down and you would say, jump in. Oh, no, John walked that route for about 50 years every day, about five or six miles, home and back.

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But he was a super mayor because he was interested and concerned with people and he finally, on the orders of his family and his doctor, was convinced that he ought not to seek continued public service.

But John is the kind of a person that really ought to get that award, and I feel honored that he would think that highly of me. But, I really accept that award, and I say this sincerely on behalf of all of the American people because I find as I travel around this wonderful, wonderful country where we live that we are all good neighbors with one another. We can disagree without being disagreeable. We can work to keep America moving.

Probably the most inspirational day that I ever spent in my life, certainly as President, was the Fourth of July last year -- or this year, I should say -- when we celebrated our 200th birth'ay. I had the privilege of making a few remarks at Valley Forge and reminding the people there of the sacrifices that were made on our behalf by George Washington and that cold and scraggly army and then in Philadelphia where it all kind of began, culminating in New York City and seeing those tall ships from all over the world.

But those three affairs were not the only ones that were held in America to show the rebirth of our spirit and the rekindling of our faith and the rejuvenation of what America stands for. We have a new direction. We are in motion. We are moving forward. All of the anger and divisiveness of a few years ago has disappeared.

We are all together, and I know that as we enter our third century, we have an opportunity through good neighborliness, through dedication to our principles as a country, not only to read history as we can -- and it is the history of 200 years -- but to make history in our third century, to make the history that our forefathers gave to us as their vision, to make it a reality for us, but more importantly for our children and our grandchildren.

That is the mission that we have. That is the responsibility we bear, but we do it because we are proud of America and proud of what it stands for and honored to have, each and every one of us, the opportunity to do for America what we feel so deeply to make it the reality of the dreams of our forefathers.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 7:57 P.M. EDT)