

Remarks at a State Dinner in Bangkok

November 26, 1996

Your Majesties, Your Royal Highnesses, Privy Counselors, Prime Minister, members of the Cabinet, the diplomatic corps, distinguished guests: The First Lady and I are deeply honored by the welcome we have received in Thailand. We are proud to visit during the year that celebrates His Majesty's 50th year on the throne.

We Americans claim a special connection with His Majesty because he was born in Massachusetts, where his father was studying at Harvard and his mother was a student at Simmons College. And of course, I feel a particular admiration for His Majesty, whose love of music, especially jazz, and whose skill on the saxophone are universally renowned. In his lifetime, the late Duke Ellington was called the King of Jazz. Now it seems to me that His Majesty can lay legitimate and literal claim to that title.

Our stay here, Your Majesty, is far too brief. But we have had time to appreciate the wonder of your country. Hillary saw it when she visited two northern provinces and shared the enchanting beauty of the ceremony of Loy Kraphong. We both have marveled at Bangkok, the City of Angels, where we see both the proud traditions of the past and the shining promise of the future.

Your Majesty, when you addressed the United States Congress 36 years ago, you noted that for all the distance that divides our people, still one thing unites us, the love of freedom. You were right then, and you are right today. Thailand's struggles for liberty at home and abroad have inspired nations all over the world. Thailand is one of our oldest friends and strongest allies. The treaty the United States signed with the Kingdom of Siam in 1833 was the very first treaty forged by our young Nation with any Asian nation.

In the last half-century we have fought side by side in Korea and Vietnam. We have stood together in promoting security in this region and around the world. Our nations have been partners in prosperity as well. And now we are working to build a new Pacific community where open societies, linked and

invigorated by open markets, give their people the tools, the confidence, the opportunity to make the most of their own lives.

Your Majesty, Thailand's growing role on the global stage is a fitting tribute to your leadership. You have guided Thailand through political crises. You have helped to secure a climate in which democracy can flourish. Your tireless efforts, and Her Majesty's, to advance rural development have been a model for all the world. Your integrity and devotion to your people has made you a symbol of unity and pride. To me it was especially telling that when your country's Olympic boxer won Thailand's first-ever gold medal this year in Atlanta, he strode triumphantly around the ring with a framed picture of you. So in celebrating our nations' partnership, we celebrate you as well.

Your Majesty, our great author Somerset Maugham once said as he gazed at this marvelous palace complex, "It makes you laugh with delight to think that anything so fantastic could exist on this somber Earth." So here, amid the brilliant colors, the heavenly spires of this wonderful place, the friendship between our people springs forth more vibrantly than ever.

Therefore, I ask that all of you join me in a toast to that friendship, to our alliance, and to long life for His Majesty, the King.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:36 p.m. in the Chakri Throne Hall at the Grand Palace.

Remarks at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska

November 26, 1996

Thank you. Thank you very much. You may have noticed from the news, I'm a little hoarse. But if you will be patient with me, I will try to say what is in my mind and heart for you.

First, Governor and Mrs. Knowles, General Gamble, Colonel Lake, Mayor Mystrom, Lieutenant Governor Ulmer, to the other distinguished leaders of our Air Force and Army who are here. All of you know that when I tell you I just couldn't go home without stopping here, I'm telling the truth. *[Laughter]*