

he said to me so many years ago, Maurice, it'll be all right; God has promised you mercy because you were merciful to us; kindness because you were kind to us; forgiveness because you forgave us; love because you loved us with all your heart. So, farewell, old friend. I say to you what you said to me so many years ago: It'll be all right; you done good; we'll be together again before you know it.

May God bless his soul.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:05 p.m. at Wynne Presbyterian Church. In his remarks, he referred to Mr. Smith's widow, Jane; his son, William Maurice (Mark) Smith III; his daughters, Murray Smith Johnson and Annette Smith Stacy; and William E. Clark, owner, CDI Contractors.

Exchange With Reporters Aboard Air Force One

December 5, 1998

[The President's remarks are joined in progress.]

Death of Former Senator Albert Gore, Sr.

The President. —his father was—for people like me, growing up in our part of the country, Al Gore was the embodiment of the—Albert Gore, Sr., was the embodiment of everything public service ought to be. He was a teacher; he was a progressive; he helped to connect the South with the rest of America; he was progressive on race; he was courageous in standing up for what he believed in—Vietnam. You know, he might have been, himself, in national office if he hadn't been just a little too far ahead of his time.

He was a remarkable, remarkable man, and I'm very grateful that I had the chance to know him and his wife and spend some time with them as a result of our relationship with the Vice President. The country has lost a great patriot, a great public servant, a man who was truly a real role model for young people like me in the South in the 1960's.

Q. How far did you go back with him, sir? When did you first meet him?

The President. Oh, I don't know that I met him, except maybe to shake hands with him, until 1988. But I knew who he was in 1968—'66, when I was working as a young

student in the Congress. And I knew who he was when I was in high school.

You know, keep in mind he was talked about for national office from the fifties on. He and Estes Kefauver were both prominently mentioned. And Tennessee had these two very progressive, very articulate and very effective voices in the Senate. It was a remarkable partnership. So I always knew who he was, from the time I became at all politically aware.

Q. How did people like Senator Gore, Sr., influence up-and-coming young Southern politicians like yourself?

The President. Well, first of all, they were progressive, and they cut against the grain and the image that the South had in the fifties and sixties of being, you know, anti-civil rights, discriminatory, undereducated, underdeveloped. He was progressive on education, progressive on civil rights, and sponsored the interstate highway bill. He wanted to connect the South to the rest of America, educate the children of the South, stand up for civil rights. He was a remarkable man. And he was brilliant, full of energy.

And the amazing thing was what a life he had after he left the Senate. When his son and I ran in 1992, he and Pauline—Mrs. Gore—they went all over the country, and he'd give these stemwinding stump speeches, you know. I remember once, in 1988, I spoke at the Oklahoma Democratic dinner, and he came to speak for his son. There were seven speakers that night. He gave by far the best speech, including mine. And everybody would have said that. So he was alert and active and contributing and remarkably free of bitterness or rancor even after he left the Senate and his elected life was terminated.

But his greatest impact may have been the inspiration that he provided to countless young people from the time he became a prominent figure in Tennessee.

Q. Did you speak to the Vice President tonight? How is he doing?

The President. I just found out a few minutes ago, so I'm going to go call him now.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:55 p.m. en route to Washington, DC. These remarks follow the text as released by the Office of the Press Secretary. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

**Remarks at the Kennedy Center
Honors Reception**

December 6, 1998

Thank you very much. The next time there will be three, and then four. *[Laughter]*

Hillary and I are honored to have you back again for another Kennedy Center honors. You know, the conviction that our land of liberty should also be a home for creativity in the performing arts goes all the way back to the very first President ever to live in this great house, John Adams. He wished for an America where, and I quote, “pomp and parade, shows and illuminations flourish from one end of this continent to another.” Today, the illumination of our performing arts shines not only across the continent but, indeed, across the world as a life force of our free society.

Dostoyevski defined the mission of artists as “incessantly and eternally to make new roads, wherever they may lead.” All the artists we honor tonight have traveled lifetimes across our stages, each in their own way, making those new roads. Their gifts of talent, heart, and spirit are joyous, indelible threads in the fabric of our national life. It is my honor to introduce them.

The Tonight Show has seen a lot of comedians come and go, but one night in 1963, a young man by the name of Bill Cosby took the stage and took the Nation by storm. His hilariously deadpan descriptions of Noah loading the ark with animals—*[Laughter]*—I still remember it, too; it was pretty funny—launched his career. But it was his deeply personal, universally funny caricatures of his childhood friends—like Fat Albert and Weird Harold—that made him famous. One critic wrote, “No comic ever entered a child’s mind with so much empathy and gusto.”

Bill Cosby’s remarkable gift is to be able to look inside the human experience and all its depth and diversity and hold it up to the universal light of laughter, and in so doing, to allow all of us to return to our child’s mind. For more than 30 years, he has made the ordinary business of life extraordinarily funny business—in best selling books like “Fatherhood” and “Time Flies,” blockbuster movies like “Uptown Saturday Night,” eight gold records, and, of course, there were some

minor successes in television along the way—*[laughter]*—“I Spy,” “The Cosby Show,” his new hit series.

Bill once said he wanted to make jokes about people’s similarities, about what’s universal in their experience and, in so doing, to bring us closer together. That is exactly what he has done. We thank him for the lessons and the laughter.

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Bill Cosby. *[Applause]*

The curtain parted, the painted face popped out, and “Cabaret” forever changed the musical theater. John Kander and Fred Ebb have given us dark and gleaming shows suffused with metallic melodies. Their musical left the happy days for the harder passages of our century—Germany at the decadent edge of the Nazi nightmare, a desperate dance marathon in the Depression era of Atlantic City, a jazz-age murder in Chicago, a jail cell in revolutionary South America. The New York Times wrote that they shook the ground under our feet—and they certainly set them tapping.

With “Cabaret,” “Chicago,” “Steel Pier,” and “Kiss of the Spider Woman,” Kander and Ebb took us a long way from “Oklahoma” and “South Pacific.” It has been a relentlessly syncopated journey, with lyrical wit, musical drama, bold and lovely songs that infiltrate our minds and never leave. One of those songs, known to every American, has become the anthem of “New York, New York.” *[Laughter]* After all, what good is sitting alone in a room when you can go out and see hit revivals of “Chicago” and “Cabaret”?

Fred Kander and John Ebb have entertained us, challenged us, and touched our consciences. Tonight we salute them for all the daring, all the shows, all the razzle dazzle.

Ladies and gentlemen, John Kander and Fred Ebb. *[Applause]*

Willie Nelson’s music has been a part of my life—like everybody from my part of the country—for a very long time now. After years of campaigning, we can always identify, Hillary and I, with what it’s like to be “On the Road Again.” *[Laughter]*

Willie Nelson is like America—always in the process of becoming. He changed all the rules about what country music was supposed to be. The granite-faced, long-haired man of