

Remarks Following the High School Commencement Exercises in Glassboro, New Jersey

June 19, 1986

The President. Thank all of you, but I want you to know that I am a great admirer of your good Governor, Governor Kean. So, a good afternoon and thank you to all of you. I can't tell you how honored I am that so many of you would come out here to say hello. And just let me say how grateful I am for you making me feel so much at home.

It's been so long since I've seen so many signs. I guess my favorite was the one I saw on the way in that read, "I Flip for Jelly Beans." Then there was a photo that appeared the other day in the Gloucester County Times, and it showed five fellows in high school with a message painted on their chests. The first fellow's chest had the letter "I," the second had a heart, and the rest had the letters "R - O - N" -- "I love Ron." Well, after seeing that, I peeled down a little bit and started trying to paint "I love Glassboro" on my own chest, but there wasn't room. [Laughter]

By the way, I thought you'd like to know that my pilot, Captain Jack Suter -- he was raised just down the road in Gibbstown. [Applause] And it means a lot to Jack to be here today, and I wonder -- well, you've already done it -- I was going to ask you to give him a cheer so that he could hear it over there in the helicopter.

I've been told that you all listened to my remarks that I made inside, and I don't want to keep you for another speech, especially since I know that some of you have been here since 3:30 p.m. And, besides, Jack Suter has his kids to get home to. Come to think of it, Nancy told me as I was leaving this afternoon not to be late for dinner. [Laughter]

Q. Keep up the good work, Ron!

The President. Thank you. Give me an audience like this and I just can't resist the temptation to say a few words. Flying over your town today and speaking to those young people who grew up among you and being here with you, it is -- all been a lesson in the great and essential goodness of our nation. Just think of the 300-year history of Gloucester County: first came the Dutch, and then the Swedes, then the English Quakers who were seeking religious liberty. And each, in turn, found here a gentle and fertile country -- a place here where, with hard work, the earth could be persuaded to treat man kindly. And today southern New Jersey is home to all of you, people of every background imaginable -- Irishmen and Italians, blacks and whites, Christians and Jews, all living in peace, living in prosperity, and, yes, living in freedom.

Now, I may be a few days late, but permit me to say it anyway: Happy birthday, Gloucester County! And I'm especially touched to have so many families here today. As I look out I can see some little ones sitting on, probably, their fathers' shoulders, and I can see some that aren't so little that are sitting on someone's shoulders, too. But certainly, it was their hopes for their children that brought our ancestors to America -- the love they felt in their families that sustained them in building our nation. And today our families give us strength still. And I have a feeling that Glassboro is a good place, a happy place for you and your families.

On the way in I saw your neighborhoods and your churches and schools, your baseball diamonds and swimming pools and football fields. And, you know, it really moved me and gave me heart. It put me in touch with America. But sometimes you can lose touch with -- when you're down there on the banks of the Potomac -- and all the basic values that we're working so hard in

Washington to defend. It even kind of reminded me of a town of about 10,000 in Dixon, Illinois, where I grew up. I guess what I'm trying to say is that Glassboro gave me a gift today and for that, my friends, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Well, I got to get Jack Suter back home, so I best we -- guess we better get going. But thank you again, and, believe me, I will always remember the good people of Glassboro. Thank you, and God bless you.

Note: The President spoke at 6:26 p.m. at the high school. Following his remarks, the President returned to Washington, DC. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1986/61986f.htm>