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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

January 18, 1990

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH
ASTRONAUTS ABOARD THE SPACE SHUTTLE COLUMBIA

The Oval Office

7:39 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Hello, Fred, can you hear me? Dan? Are we talking to space?

COMMANDER BRANDENSTEIN: Yes, sir, Mr. President. Welcome about Columbia. We hear you very clearly.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, Dan, is that you? The Captain, the boss of that outfit?

COMMANDER BRANDENSTEIN: Well, that's what they say, but everybody contributes a lot and I just kind of stay out of the way so they can get their jobs done.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, listen, I just was calling you to congratulate you. Dan Quayle is sitting here next to me in the Oval Office and, as you know, he's taken a very active role in this Space Council. But what I'm calling to do is to congratulate you and the crew -- after all those summersaults -- for doing a superb job up there on this mission. And we followed the LDEF and the very exciting grab, and I just wanted to hear first hand how it was going.

COMMANDER BRANDENSTEIN: Well, Mr. President, I think it's going very well. We've pretty much concluded most of the major objectives of this mission and, obviously, the retrieval of the LDEF was one of the highlights and we're very happy we have it back onboard. We believe it's a real treasure that's going to help very much in designing future space satellites and shuttles and space stations.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think that's wonderful. And how do all the new guys behave: Jim, Marsha and David? Can they talk, or are you doing the speaking for this crowd?

COMMANDER BRANDENSTEIN: I want to give them all a chance. In fact, we'll let G. David tell you how it is to be a new guy.

THE PRESIDENT: All right, fire away, Dave.

DAVID LOW: Well, Mr. President, it's a pleasure to be up here. I've enjoyed this flight very much. We've enjoyed a lot of success with a lot of help from all the folks on the ground. It's a real pleasure to be up here to contribute to our space program.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I'm delighted. How's Marsha doing? Is she near a mic there?

MARSHA IVINS: Yes, sir, I have a mic. I think, we new guys are really excited. We've waited a long time for this and it's sort of a dream come true. The world looking -- looking at it from up here is incredible.

MORE

THE PRESIDENT: I don't want to date your Commander -- the Captain there, Dan, but I dinner over at the White House two nights ago with Dick Truly who tells me that -- reminded me, that they had flown together sometime back. Dan, sorry about that.

COMMANDER BRANDENSTEIN: That's true. And in fact, I've been taking my share of hits this mission. I just had a birthday yesterday and I've been taking a lot of grief.

THE PRESIDENT: All right. Well, listen -- Is Bonnie there? Who else have we not -- I'd like to say hello to everybody.

COMMANDER BRANDENSTEIN: Certainly. We'll let Jim Wetherbee tell you. He's the other new guy, and we'll let him tell you what he thought of it, and then we'll turn you over to Bonnie.

JIM WETHERBEE: I'm proud to be here. It's a pleasure being part of this program. I'm happy to be part of watching Dan recover that satellite. He's about the best in the world at grabbing satellites at Mach 25.

THE PRESIDENT: Unbelievable. Well, I'm glad to see a Navy pilot -- Could you use a 65-year old Navy pilot up there?

COMMANDER BRANDENSTEIN: Navy pilots don't get that old.

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, yeah? I'm one. (Laughter.) Hey, listen -- There seems to be a long pause.

BONNIE DUNBAR: Well, I'm delighted to be here, Mr. President and feel fortunate to do it again. But I know that it takes a lot of work on the part of many, many people. And I want to thank all the people at Johnson's Space Center and NASA, in general, for making this possible. It's been an incredible mission.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you know, that's one thing that does come through. There you all are working, and people following very keenly what you're doing. But I think one thing the American people do see as a result of a highly-complex mission like this is this enormously effective teamwork. And I must say, I'd like to join you in saluting everybody involved. And I wish you well as you wrap it up now and come on back. But we're proud of you and I look forward to seeing you at the White House, as does the Vice President, when you can get around to getting up here after you get back.

So, well done. We're proud of you and we will follow the rest of the mission as we have the beginning with great interest. And, Dan, to you and your wonderful crew, congratulations.

COMMANDER BRANDENSTEIN: Well, thank you very much for taking the time and speak with us this morning, Mr. President. And we're proud to have had the opportunity to represent our country and to conduct this mission and along with all the other people that make up the NASA and the space team in this country.

THE PRESIDENT: Okay. Well, we'll let you go to work and well done. Thank you very much. Over and out.

COMMANDER BRANDENSTEIN: Goodbye.

END

7:46 A.M. EST