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PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: DISCOVERY ASTRONAUTS
WASHINGTON, D.C.
MARCH 24, 1989

Commander Coats and Crew, friends and families of the Shuttle Discovery.

America is a nation, and a family. And there are moments when we celebrate, as a family would: moments of remembering, and of pride.

Last Saturday, nearly half a million people welcomed your return to Edwards Air Force Base. They were there to pay America's respects to your courage and your enterprise.

Today, we, too, salute the story you have written. And I want to add two personal notes.

As Commander-In-Chief, I am specially proud of the way you represented your branches of the Armed Services. You've shown that teamwork works. And with only minor damage to the Shuttle Discovery, I want to thank you for taking good care of government's assets . . . Come to think of it: I hope the Congress follows your lead.

In a sense, your triumph is personal. After all, it's you who braved the elements and performed the tasks which made your mission a success.

But in a larger sense, the story of Discovery is as American as Opening Day and as timeless as our history. It says that to Americans, nothing lies beyond our reach. It speaks to our capacity to dare, and to dream the impossible.

My friends, this quality has graced every great moment of the American Story. And by enriching our lives, and our children's lives, it can shape America's dreams of the twenty-first century.

On the flight of Discovery, you showed, anew, America's genius in science and technology. You showed exactly where we are going, and why. We are exploring the new horizons of this nation's technological future. For, as Americans, we are driven, always, by a restlessness to do better.

This desire links the generations, and has pushed back the frontiers of science and exploration. For evidence, I point to the two students on my left and right. They show how tomorrow's technological promise lies in the youth of today.

John Vellinger was in 9th grade when he started work on an experiment, using chickens, to study how fast tissues develop in zero gravity. Last week, his experiment flew on the Shuttle Discovery. And so did the work of Andrew Fras. His experiment studied microgravity's effect on the healing of bones.

John Vellinger and Andy Fras show how America's future will depend -- in space, on earth -- on our most precious resource, our youth.

You know, Adlai Stevenson once spoke of "the awful majesty of outer space." And it was that other noted public speaker, Yogi Berra, who observed, "It's never over 'til it's over."

My friends, this voyage of the Shuttle Discovery is over. But its spirit lives, linking the majesty of outer space with the promise of man.

By investing in our children and, thus, America's technology, we can make that promise a reality. And as we do, we will honor the men, and the spirit, of Discovery: The men who, as today's pioneers, show how the individual matters; the spirit which throws open the possibilities of tomorrow -- and which points us toward the stars.

Thank you, may God bless you, and God bless America.

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