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(Smith/Blessey)
Draft Four
September 20, 1989
FILM

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: FILM INSTITUTE
WASHINGTON, D.C.
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 1989

Chairman Jankowski, Director Stevens, Director Firstenberg, Mr. Wolper, Mr. Valenti, Other Trustees of the American Film Institute, Distinguished Guests, Friends and Fans of the American Film.

Thank you for your warm reception. I've looked forward to this night for quite awhile. ((In fact, to put us in a movie mode, we arranged to come over here in a special car. It was a tight squeeze getting me, Barbara, the driver and three Secret Service men into the Batmobile.)) ((PAUSE))

((First, I'd like to say a word, in particular, about this distinguished audience. I don't think so many well-dressed people have gathered together since the Beverly Hills Court began jury selection for Zsa Zsa Gabor's trial.)) ((PAUSE))

I also appreciate that kind introduction. And let me say how pleased I am to see so many notables in this evening's crowd. Artists from Spacek to Spielberg to Stallone. Surrounded by all these household names, I wish I'd brought along my autograph book.

Barbara and I are delighted to be here. ((But I'm obliged to extend regrets from what some have called the most charismatic

speaker in the Bush family.) Yes, our springer spaniel, Millie.)) X

((PAUSE))

((Nothing personal, you understand. It's just that Millie doesn't often get the White House theatre to herself. Well, tonight she's making up for lost time.

Now, make no mistake: I can't argue with Millie's selection, For The Love of Benji. It's just that I'm afraid all this good press is going to her head. Last night, we got to talking about what Millie should serve her guests. Barbara picked milk bones [PAUSE] . . . I chose Alpo [PAUSE] . . . Millie asked to see the wine list.))((PAUSE))

Well, this evening, Millie, eat your heart out. For there's no place that Barbara and I would rather be than here, with you.

((We meet at the end of quite a summer for movies -- with Ghostbusters Two, Karate Kid Three, Lethal Weapon Two, Indiana Jones Two, and Startrek Five. With all those numbers, I wasn't sure if I was at a movie or a budget meeting.)) ((PAUSE))

((And it was a summer, too, when ~~all through my vacation, a movie I saw last May kept going through my mind.~~ The way things were going, it was starting to look like A Fish Called Wanda was as close to a fish as I was going to get.)) ((PAUSE))

But thankfully, that's all behind me. And I'm pleased to join you at an event which salutes the 24th anniversary of the American Film Institute. For almost a quarter-century, the AFI has nurtured and celebrated the art of the moving image. In doing so, it has nourished the mind and soul of America.

For the moving image is not merely entertainment -- in a darkened theatre, or on a TV set. It is also a part of America's rich inheritance. The American film is not only the mirror of America. It is also the conscience of America.

Who can forget how Grapes of Wrath immortalized the dignity of America's impoverished? Or how Gentleman's Agreement¹ exposed anti-Semitism? Or on a personal note, the courage amid adversity embodied in Knute Rockne's² All-American. Embodied by a friend of ours. Yes, Ronald Reagan as the Gipper.

When President Johnson signed the bill 24 years ago to create the National Endowment for the Arts, which created the American Film Institute, he was talking about such works. And those who make them, past and present.

He was referring to actors and actresses. Producers and writers, directors, craftsmen, artisans. And this Institute, he said, would bring them "together . . . these artists, outstanding educators, and young men and women, who wish to pursue the 20th century art form as their life's work."

It did, and does today. Helping to spur the art form so uniquely American. The art form invented in America. And which, in turn, America has expanded to the world -- allowing peoples on every continent to freely see film's diversity. And to inspire those peoples to build on what America has begun.

That is the major reason why this Administration has conveyed to the governments of the European community our steadfast belief in mutual access to movie and TV program

markets. Quotas of any kind are unacceptable. Our government does not intrude on private decisions and public choices in TV programming. Neither should theirs. Consumer choice must be expanded, not reduced.

Secretary of State Baker, Secretary of Commerce Mosbacher, and U.S. Trade Representative Carla Hills have made our position quite clear. No enterprise achieves creativity when competitors are locked out. Good trading partners have neighborly access to each other's territory.

In short, let the consumer decide. And let him prosper through competition. We want more movies made -- foreign, and domestic. Like these movies made, for example, since AFI was born. Think of Coal Miner's Daughter, where the human spirit bested poverty. Or Hoosiers, that brilliant portrayal of small-town America. ^{Or think of the} ~~Or~~ Lean on Me, Clean and Sober, and I'm Dancing As Fast As I Can. ^{Mommy} ~~let me~~ ^{to those of} ~~thank you in the film industry~~ Movies which assault the scourge of drugs. And ~~who are helping to stop~~ this assassin of our kids.

These movies -- like thousands of others -- have been America's Ambassador to the World. And by boosting the health of the industry as a whole, AFI has helped make them possible.

First, AFI trains young filmmakers. Allowing them to apprentice under the tutelage of masters. Second, it helps preserve historic and classic films of yesteryear. Working to find -- and save -- these priceless pieces of our national life; leading countless Americans to a career in film.

The third way AFI spurs the film is through advocacy. Teaching our generation the beauty and value of the moving image. And finally, AFI will teach future generations. About how we lived. What we valued. Through the art of Michelangelo and da Vinci, we see today the world of Renaissance Italy. The motion picture can be our legacy.

In a sense, of course, it already is. Helping us smile -- as Shirley Temple did in the depths of the Depression. Or sing -- as Gene Kelly -- Gene, take a bow -- did in the immortal Singing In the Rain. Or dream dreams that no longer seem impossible. As the wondrous cast of The Wizard of Oz did in that magical movie year of 1939.

Movies can be romance, comedy, tragedy, drama. They have made us laugh. They have made us think. They've helped get us through the bad times. And made the good times even better.

For the American film is our mirror, and our conscience. In the White House theatre, in theatres around the world. So I ask you: Help AFI. Help it celebrate America. And this magnificent inheritance called the film. So that you and I, and an entire world, can always say: To feel the heart of America, just look at the American film.

Thank you for this wonderful occasion. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

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Thank you for your warm reception. ^{with enthusiasm} ((I'm just glad we could
make it here in time. After all, it was a tight squeeze getting
me, Barbara, the driver and three Secret Service men into the
Batmobile.)) OR ((And in particular, I'd like to say a word
about this distinguished audience. I don't think so many well-
dressed people have gathered together since the Beverly Hills
Court began jury selection for Zsa Zsa Gabor's trial.)) ((PAUSE))

I also appreciate that kind introduction. And let me say
how pleased I am to see so many notables at the head table. ~~And~~
Artists from Spacek to Spielberg to Stallone. Surrounded by all
these household names, I wish I'd brought along my autograph
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speaker in the Bush family. Yes, our springer spaniel, Millie.
((PAUSE))

Nothing personal, you understand. It's just that Millie doesn't often get the White House theatre to herself. Well, tonight she's making up for lost time.

Now, make no mistake: I can't argue with Millie's triple feature. Lassie Come Home. Old Yeller. And my personal favorite, For The Love of Benji. It's just that I'm afraid all this good press is going to Millie's head. Earlier tonight, we held a family meeting to choose the menu for her guests. Barbara picked milk bones [PAUSE] . . . I chose Alpo [PAUSE] . . . Millie asked to see the wine list. ((PAUSE))

Well, this evening, Millie, eat your heart out. For there's no place that Barbara and I would rather be than here, with you.

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Alu L. Brown

In short, let the consumer decide. And when they do, I believe, they will decide for America. Think of just these American movies since AFI was born. Think of Coal Miner's Daughter, where the human spirit bested poverty. Or Hoosiers, that brilliant portrayal of small-town America. Or Lean on Me, Clean and Sober, and I'm Dancing As Fast As I Can. Movies which assault the scourge of drugs. And let me thank you in the film industry who are helping to stop this ~~assassin~~ *terrible threat to* of our kids.

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And ^{finally} fourthly, AFI will teach future generations. About how we lived. What we valued. ^{we see today the world of} Renaissance Italy gave us the ^{through the} art of Michelangelo and da Vinci. The motion picture can be our legacy.


Let me close with two stories about the American film. One shows the amazing impact of movies on popular culture. The other concerns a fabled character of movie culture.

((The first happened last Friday, when I gathered with 11 of our Nation's former Attorney Generals to commemorate the bicentennial of their office. I told one of my grandkids that I'd be attending a celebration to mark the 200th birthday of America's top law enforcement officer. He said: "I didn't think Batman was that old.")) ((PAUSE))

((The second story happened when I was watching a film several weeks ago. No. Not Bridge Over the River Kwai. No. ~~Not even the soon-to-be released heavyweight blockbuster, Dueling Egos: Mike Tyson versus Zsa Zsa Gabor.~~ No, the movie I'm talking about was that cultural paragon, Ma and Pa Kettle in Wakiki.)) ((PAUSE))

((Some of you may remember Marjorie Main as Ma Kettle -- a tough, outspoken sort. Her character was once described as a "blend of Tugboat Annie, Carrie Nation, and Gorgeous George.")) ((PAUSE))

((Well, in this movie, ^{as will all,} Ma was on a steamboat cruise headed west from California. Whereupon a tourist, ^{trying} -- striving to strike up conversation -- asked, "Mrs. Kettle, have you tasted of Tchaikowsky?" With that, Ma raised her head, Set her jaw. And

which League 
~~as usual, was ready with a response.~~ Said she: "I ain't had
time yet for none of them Hawaiian dishes.") ((PAUSE))

Fellow movie-goers, millions of Americans have tasted of the
American film. They have had time for romance and comedy,
tragedy and drama. And today they make time still.

For the American film is our mirror, and our conscience.
In the White House theatre, in theatres around the world. So I
ask you: Help AFI. Help it celebrate America. And this
magnificent inheritance called the film. So that you and I, and
an entire world, can always say: This is America at her most
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Thank you for this wonderful occasion. God bless you, and
God bless the United States of America.

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