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Record Group/Collection: George H.W. Bush Presidential Records
Collection/Office of Origin: Speechwriting, White House Office of
Series: Smith, Curt, Files
Subseries: Chron File, 1989-1992

OA/ID Number: 13888
Folder ID Number: 13888-041

Folder Title:
National Endowment for the Humanities, Washington D.C., 11/6/89

Stack:	Row:	Section:	Shelf:	Position:
G	18	29	1	4

(Smith/Blessey)
October 30, 1989
Draft Three
HUMAN

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: NATIONAL ENDOWMENT
ROOSEVELT ROOM
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 1989

Secretary Cavazos, Members of the National Council for the Humanities, distinguished educators and honorees.

I want to welcome you to the White House. And say what a pleasure it is to be in such distinguished company. ((Today, I feel like a Little Leaguer standing in the locker room of the World Series champion)). //

Let me also say what a great honor it is to be able to honor you -- the first recipients of the National Endowment for the Humanities' Charles Frankel Prize.

You know, that great observer of America, Ralph Waldo Emerson, once wrote, "The scholar is the student of the world."

Well, the Frankel Prize was created this year to recognize those who have led a lifetime of study. And whose scholarship has brought history, literature, philosophy, and other humanities disciplines to a local, national, or often global audience.

Together, you've linked the humanities with farms, inner cities, and gentle small towns. Reaffirming the magic of the spoken and written word. And fostered a variety of public programs in museums, libraries, and schools. Showing how higher learning can spur Nation and neighbor.

As a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, Daniel Boorstein has told the American Story to millions around the globe. Not to mention his role as Librarian of Congress Emeritus. And as president of the Field Museum of National History, Willard Boyd -- former President of the University of Iowa -- made world-renowned collections available to more Americans each year.

Then, there's Americo Parades. Author. Folklorist. Professor Emeritus at the University of Texas. Making this Nation more conscious of Mexican-American culture. And Patricia Bates, a national consultant on reading programs. Her scholar-led teaching and discussion groups have become a model for thousands of programs across the country.

And, finally, Clark Jenkinson. His characterization of Thomas Jefferson has enchanted audiences from schoolkids to senior citizens. And he's led the revival of the Chautauqua -- that institution which teaches the ideas, and lives, of giant figures in history, philosophy, politics, and the arts.

((You know, the story goes that Benjamin Franklin was dining out in Paris. And one of the other diners posed a question: "What condition of man most deserves pity?" Each guest gave an example of what that condition may be. Then came Franklin's turn -- and here was his answer: "A lonesome man on a rainy day who does not know how to read.")) //

Well, for decades you have shown the value of reading. And thinking. Of probing. And questioning. And by instilling a

greater understanding of the text, themes, and ideas of the humanities, you've inspired countless others to do the same.

For that, my congratulations. And let me commend, too, the hundreds of nominees considered by this endowment. The 26 members of the National Council on the Humanities, which reviewed the nominations. And, yes, NEH Chairman Lynn Cheney, who made the final selections. Each of you reflects ^W that Samuel Johnson called "the salutary influence of example." Each of you underscores the reason we gather today.

That reason, of course, is ~~a~~ ^{one man's} life. A very special life. The life of Charles M. Frankel. Professor at Columbia. And assistant secretary of state for educational and cultural affairs. Network television writer, host, and narrator. And author of 12 books, including "The Case for Modern Man."

As the first president and director of the National Humanities Center, Charles Frankel symbolized the best in man. He symbolized it through his values and idealism. And through enduring scholarship and concern.

In honoring him, we honor the concepts of teaching and learning -- in short, how knowledge can lead the way. So let me present the first Charles Frankel Prizes for distinguished service to the humanities. And say on behalf of every citizen: America thanks you, God bless you, and God bless the Nation that is so proud of what you've done.

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