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Collection/Office of Origin: Speechwriting, White House Office of
Series: Smith, Curt, Files
Subseries: Chron File, 1989-1992

OA/ID Number: 13889
Folder ID Number: 13889-009

Folder Title:
All-Star Gala, Washington D.C., 3/25/90

Stack:	Row:	Section:	Shelf:	Position:
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(Smith/Blessey)
5 P.M.
March 20, 1990
ALL-STAR

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: ALL-STAR GALA
FORD'S THEATER
SUNDAY, MARCH 25, 1990

On Barbara's behalf, let me thank you for a Star-Spangled program. // Being surrounded by so many wonderful performers makes me realize a little how Ed Sullivan must have felt. //

Tonight, we salute the Fourth of July -- freedom's Star-Spangled birthday. A day John Adams said should be marked "with pomp and parade from one end of this continent to another, from this time forward evermore."

Well, through the technology of television, this show has indeed been seen across the continent. // ~~that~~ one hundred and twenty-five years ago -- or, as he might have said, six score and five years ago -- President Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address echoed across a continent ~~to~~ in two.

It is impossible to forget the words he spoke that day -- "With malice toward none, with charity for all." And it is just as one cannot to come to Ford's Theater without thinking of that terrible day Lincoln lost his life. But we are also reminded of a happier fact about the Great Emancipator -- that he loved entertainment. // It was entertainment, after all, that often brought him to this theater. And how he would have enjoyed this program.

Diaries of Lincoln's friends tell of a President who cherished music. ((Believe me, I know how he felt. You know, I

have two hotlines in the Oval Office: One is a direct hotline to Moscow. // The other is a direct line to Nashville to keep me up to date on the latest country and western hits.)) //

We won't soon forget tonight's music -- country and otherwise. Nor its humor -- that, too, Lincoln would have ^{appreciated} prized. Once, he observed that if he couldn't tell stories, he felt his heart would break. // Like a story he was fond of -- and which circulated during the Civil War. //

Two ladies were discussing the merits of Lincoln and the president of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis. The first said, "I think Jefferson will succeed because he is a praying man." The second answered, "But so is Abraham a praying man." // "Yes," replied the first lady, "but the Lord will think that Abraham is joking." //

Lincoln would have loved this evening's comedy: It's produced more laughs than my last fishing trip. // Indeed, all of you have shown why Ford's Theatre is a national treasure. And why America has marveled at its nationally televised galas since the restored Theatre reopened in 1968. Events which provide the financial support to keep Ford's open as a living theatre.

Let me especially thank those who made this program possible. The performers, of course. Executive producer Frankie Hewitt. Tonight's chairwomen -- Ann Simpson, Peatsy Hollings, and Mary Jane Wick. // And, yes, its honorary chairwoman -- the lady to my side. //

All of them -- and you listening at home -- are inheritors of Lincoln's love of the performing arts. And his abiding belief in the triumph of the human spirit. // This evening's programming embodies that belief. And the freedom it has carried to every corner of the world.

For every person who cherishes freedom, let me thank you for this wonderful program. God bless our beloved land -- the United States of America.

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