

136 Remarks at Vance Air Force Base, Oklahoma.

May 11, 1974

MRS. NIXON and I want to thank all of you for giving us this wonderfully warm—warm in terms of climate and also in terms of your enthusiasm—Oklahoma welcome.

As you probably noted, we have some very distinguished guests with us on the *Spirit of '76*. I know you have met them all before, but I think you ought to see them all—and first, of course, my wife Pat.

And somewhere in the crowd I saw

some Bellmon Belles, so Henry Bellmon better get up here. Where is he? Henry Bellmon. You can stay up here. You rank high enough. That is right.

And Dewey Bartlett, Governor and Senator now. It is a great team. Don't break it up, right?

Now, if these two Senators will step down, I would like to get a couple of other important people here. We have two Congressmen here. I will introduce them in

ords of their seniority. John Jarman from Oklahoma City.

And then another fellow that you all ought to know because he represents this district, Happy Camp.

Now, this is, of course, a nonpolitical gathering, and I want all of you to know, though, that as I went down the line meeting people, you wondered who I was shaking hands with. They were all Happy's relatives.

Let me just say a few words with regard to this crowd from the Enid area and also from the Vance Air Force Base.

First, with regard to the base. This is a training base, not one of our largest ones, but one of our most important. But I want all of you to know that Americans today—at a time that everyone in our Armed Forces is there because he wants to be, he is a volunteer—Americans today should stand tall and proud whenever we have men in uniform serving this Nation, serving as the peacemakers of the world. Let's give a hand to those at the Vance Air Force Base.

And let's always remember we want to keep that strength, because a strong America is essential if we are going to have peace and freedom for all these young people for this next generation, and they are our hope and your hope, as well.

And then finally, just a word about the Enid area. When people mention various cities in this country, they often wonder if I have been there. Well, it is very hard for me to find one of any size I haven't been to at some time or another.

I remember coming to Enid and receiving a very warm welcome. And I partic-

ularly appreciated it, because I came when I was out of office, with no political prospects, and when you received me so well then, let me tell you, it makes it doubly happy for me to come back and be received so well now. We thank you from Enid for coming out. This is such a great crowd.

And just a word, too: We sort of take for granted when "Hail to the Chief" is played by a band, and all the practice that went into it, because it isn't, you know, on the numbers that they usually learn, but I want to say that I have never heard "Hail to the Chief" played better than by the Enid High School band. Let's give them a hand.

And finally, there is such a huge crowd here that it is not possible for us to shake hands with everybody, as we would like to. I just wish we could go down the line and tell you how much we have appreciated your support in the very few minutes that we were here. To go by and have people say, "Hang in there; we are with you," believe me, that does your heart good.

And I can assure you in the presence of all of our good friends—and I know many here are perhaps from other States, but most of you are from Oklahoma—that I have that old Okie spirit, and I've got it deep down inside, and we never give up.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:53 p.m. at Vance Air Force Base, Enid, Okla.

In his remarks, the President referred to the Bellmon Belles, a group of women supporters of Senator Bellmon's 1974 reelection campaign.