

# Ronald Reagan Presidential Library

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*Last Updated: 08/06/2025*

395647

FG 013-06

Mar 86

The President has seen 3/7



CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

4 March 1986

*No Return - Helmer*

*RR*

Honorable Ronald Reagan  
President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As a relative newcomer in the Washington struggle to focus public discussion of defense issues on the military realities we confront, I deeply appreciate your own efforts to raise those facts above the facile fiscal rhetoric that has tended to capture the headlines in debate about the budget. Themes from your State of the Union Address and from your television presentation last week have been most helpful to me with audiences that I have addressed.

My encounter with "Meet the Press" this weekend reaffirmed my conviction that public clarification of security imperatives will be key to the success of the defense program--not just for this year but, more importantly, for the long term. That encounter also demonstrated for me, again, how difficult the clarification task can be.

The Nation can be grateful that it has a President who takes the lead on the toughest challenges and does what's right.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CROWE, JR.  
Chairman  
Joint Chiefs of Staff

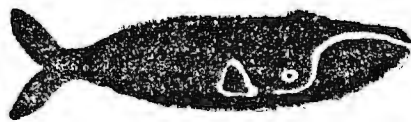
395647

Eni  
case  
File

394108  
67002

Mar 86

The President has seen 3/10



Mr. Bush /

March 6  
1986

Dear Mr. President,

You were kind to have written as you did. I'm of course sure that your last day in office will be as glorious as the first -- I just couldn't resist! I had hoped you would forgive me since I devoted the rest of the book -- 220 odd pages -- to having some fun at the expense of a very liberal administration.

Long may you wave. Please give my best to Mrs. R. Tell her boys will be boys.

As ever,

Christopher (Buckley)

End  
Case  
File

396344  
61002

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 7, 1986

Dear Paul:

Thank you very much for sending us the script of that heartwarming evening you provided for us. It truly was an "All Star" party, one we'll always remember. And now we'll have a much cherished reminder.

We thank you, too, for your generous words.

Sincerely,

*"Dutch" Reagan*

*P.S. Thanks for your great help  
on my Mission Street.*

Mr. Paul Keyes  
135 Screenland Drive  
Burbank, California 91505

March 7, 1986

Dear Paul:

Thank you very much for sending us the script of that heartwarming evening you provided for us. It truly was an "All Star" party, one we'll always remember. And now we'll have a much cherished reminder.

We thank you, too, for your generous words.

Sincerely,

**DUTCH REAGAN**

Mr. Paul Keyes  
135 Screenland Drive  
Burbank, California 91505

RR:jz (3PMNA)

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Mr. President:

You already signed this "Dutch Reagan", however, it was torn in a mail room machine so we had to re-do it.

Can you please re sign.

Thanks.

Kathy

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 7, 1986

Dear Paul:

Thank you very much for sending us the script of that heartwarming evening you provided for us. It truly was an "All Star" party, one we'll always remember. And now we'll have a much cherished reminder.

We thank you, too, for your generous words.

Sincerely,

*Dutch Reagan*

Mr. Paul Keyes  
7674 Woodrow Wilson Drive  
Hollywood, California 90046

Mr. Paul Keyes - I don't think that is current  
address but we have one I have, Don R. says ~~the~~ Paul is  
working on material for me for The Builders.

Dear Paul

Thank you very much for sending us the  
script <sup>of</sup> ~~for~~ that heartwarming evening you provided  
for us. It truly was an "All Star" party, one  
we'll always remember. And now we'll have a  
much cherished reminder.

We thank you too for your generous words.

Sincerely ~~Paul~~

Dutch Ragan

*All Star Party For*  
**'DUTCH' REAGAN**

February 27, 1986

Mrs. Ronald Reagan  
The White House  
Washington, D. C. 20500

Dear Nancy:

I am very happy to enclose for you and the President a copy of the As-Edited script reflecting all editing and a record for your files of exactly how our Variety Club program went on the air.

I also send with this my warmest affection and deepest respect for you both.

*With love,*  
*Paul*



**VARIETY CLUBS INTERNATIONAL**

Unit 3, Suite 301, 1111 East Coast Highway, Suite 301, Pacific Rim, France, Australia  
VARIETY CLUBS INTERNATIONAL - HELPING THE CHILDREN

End  
Case  
File

FROM  
THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Mr. Thomas J. Lankford  
Capitol Hill Club  
300 First Street, Southeast  
Washington, D.C. 20003



To Kim Lankford  
With best wishes, Sincerely  
Nancy & Ronald Reagan

860310

395646

11 5



# Capitol Hill Club

300 First Street, Southeast  
Washington, D. C. 20003  
(202) 484-4590

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Mrs. George M. O'Brien  
Mrs. Ronald Reagan

2/21/86

Mr. Astor -

would you be so kind as to have the President and Mrs. Reagan autograph this picture to my daughter Kim Lankford.

I did not want to impose on him with it when he visited the Club today.

Thanks for your assistance -

Tom Lankford

Let Nancy.

Encl  
Case  
File

396341  
TR154

March 10, 1986

Dear Major Shaffer:

I'm sorry to be so late in acknowledging your letter of December 23rd, but it has only just reached my desk. Apparently, it got bogged down somewhere in the bureaucracy.

Thank you for writing and for the information about Mrs. Stubbs, the sister of Private Shook who was one of the victims of the tragic crash in Gander. I'm getting off a line and photo to her right away. You were very kind and I'm most grateful.

Sincerely,

Major D. Kirk Shaffer, USA  
Department of the Army  
U.S. Army Trial Defense Service  
Fort Campbell Field Office  
Fort Campbell, Kentucky 42223

RR:AVH:SEV:pps

RR Dictation (Sample)

To Major D. Kirk Shaffer - Dept. of the Army

U.S. Army Trial Defense Service

Ft. Campbell Field Office - Ft. Campbell Ky.

Dear Major Shaffer

41223

I'm sorry to be so late in acknowledging your letter of Dec. 23<sup>rd</sup>. But it has only just reached my desk. Apparently it got bogged down in somewhere in the bureaucracy.

Thank you for writing and for the information about Mrs. Stubbs the ~~the~~ sister of Pvt. Shooks who was one of the victims of the tragic crash in Hander. I'm getting off a line o photo to her right away. You were very kind & I'm most grateful.

Sincerely RR



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
UNITED STATES ARMY TRIAL DEFENSE SERVICE  
FORT CAMPBELL FIELD OFFICE  
FORT CAMPBELL, KENTUCKY 42223

AFZB-JA-TDS

23 December 1985

Ronald W. Reagan  
President of the United States  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

I am taking the liberty of relaying to you the comments of the sister of Private James E. Shook, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), who was killed at Gander, Newfoundland.

Mrs. Hilda J. Stubbs, 5591 Heather Street, Hope Mills, N.C. 28306, travelled to Fort Campbell but unfortunately missed the memorial service which you and Mrs. Reagan attended. She was regretting that fact as I helped her with some legal matters. She stated in the very distinctive southern voice of a North Carolinian, "I just wanted to tell the President one thing because my family thinks so much of him. My brother was very proud to be a soldier and he was ready to kick ass wherever the President said."

Yours truly,

D. KIRK SHAFFER  
Major, Judge Advocate General's Corps  
Senior Defense Counsel

End  
Case  
File

RONALD REAGAN

FROM  
THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

4000

MEDD01-0-

PR0056

PR0050

Bill Oakley  
1201 East Elm  
Tucson, Arizona 85719

TR

860310

Dear Bill Oakley

Message-Your grandmother told

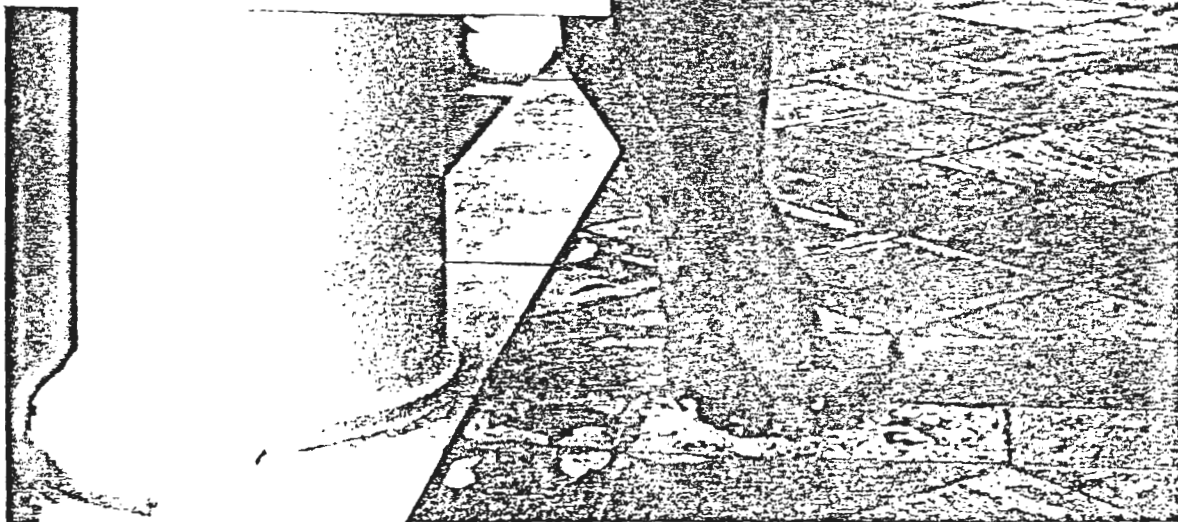
me about our birthdays,  
yours & mine, being on the  
same day. Unfortunately I've  
only just gotten her letter  
so I'm a little late.

I hope it was a truly  
Happy Birthday for you.

Best Wishes

Ronald Reagan

(4 auto photo)



To Bill Oakley - I hope it was a happy Feb. 6.  
It was for me - the 36<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my  
39<sup>th</sup> birthday. Every good wish & Best Regards.  
Ronald Reagan

March 11, 1986

Dear Mrs. Oakley:

I have just mailed a photo to your grandson Bill. I'm sorry I was too late to send him a birthday greeting, but your letter and your birthday card to me have only just reached my desk. This sometimes happens here. Thank you for your good wishes and your letter.

What you did with your Bible on that night back in 1932 took me back in memory. My mother believed very much in what you did. I have seen her many times in those days of our poverty, closing her eyes, opening the Bible and putting her finger on the page. More often than not she found an answer to the problem bothering her. We, too, belonged to the Church of Christ.

I'm grateful to you for sharing this experience with me, and I promise not to use your name or reveal your identity in relating this wonderful story.

Again, my thanks.

Sincerely,

RONALD REAGAN

Mrs. A. H. Oakley, Sr.  
738 Flora Street  
Prescott, Arizona 86301

RR:WVE:SEV:pps

ENcl: Inscribed RR Photo

RR Dictation (Sample)

To Mrs. A. H. Oakley Sr. 738 Flora St.

Prescott Ariz. 86301

Dear Mrs. Oakley

I have just mailed a ~~photo~~ photo to your grandson Bill. I'm sorry I was too late to send him a birthday greeting but your letter and your birthday card to me had only just reached my desk. This sometimes happens here. Thank you for your good wishes & your letter.

What you did with your bible on that night back in 1932 took me back in memory. My mother believed very much in what you did. I have seen her many times in those days of our poverty, closing her eyes, ~~opening~~ opening the bible & putting her finger on the page. More often than not she found an answer to the problem bothering her. We too belonged to the Church of Christ. I'm grateful to you for sharing this experience with me and I promise not to use your name or reveal your identity. ~~I hope you won't mind if I relate this story however and in such a way as to not never give details that~~ in relating this wonderful story. Again my thanks.

Sincerely RR

Honorable Ronald W. Reagan  
President  
The United States of America  
Washington, D. C.

*Give me this letter back.*

RR January 27, 1986

Dear President Reagan:

*Run - I sent a message & photo to her grand son, but didn't answer her letter - no address. Here is a fine letter. My mother used to use the words as she said. RR*

I know your birthday is coming up - it's on February 6, and I have a grandson whose birthday is the same date. Mine happens to be February 8, so I always say that all important people were born in February! You will be 75; my grandson will be 21; and I will be the ripe old age of 84!! I would appreciate it very much if you would send birthday greetings to my grandson, who is a student (a senior) at U of A in Tucson, in the field of medicine, following in his father's footsteps. My grandson's name and address are:

*Pic. →*

Bill Oakley  
1201 E. Elm  
Tucson, Arizona 85719

But the foregoing is not the reason for writing you this morning - and I shall go into details as follows:

Away back in post-depression days (1932 to be exact) I was the mother of two little boys - one just 3 yrs. old and the other not quite 15 months old, when I realized I was again pregnant! Now we were very poor and were actually on welfare, back in St. Louis, Mo. Now I love children, and do firmly believe they are a gift from above, but I knew, too, that I would be severely criticized for not "knowing any better" than to permit myself to again be with child. So - after much heart searching and secret conversations with some of my closest friends, I decided to follow the suggestion of one of these friends, who told me how and where to get a certain medication that would bring on an abortion - if I wasn't too far along (and I wasn't)! Well, it so happened that my husband had gone to Cleveland, Ohio, where he had an uncle living, who offered to give us living quarters on his farm, in return for my husband's work there. I knew it wasn't at all to my husband's liking, but we were rather desperate, as he had been out of work for sometime now. So, I bought the medicine - I was to take it at a certain time of the month - and I waited for the appointed time, and when that time came, I planned to use the medicine after the children had been put to bed. Incidentally, I was working - as a secretary, at \$16.20 per week! - I could always get a job. I was a good secretary-, took shorthand and could operate a dictaphone, as well as compose my own letters! Well, around midnight of the appointed time, I went into the kitchen, closed the door so that the light would not awaken the boys, and took my Bible with me. Now I'm not a religious fanatic but I do believe in the Almighty (am a member of the United Church of Christ - from the Evangelical-Reformed persuasion). So, after praying for guidance, I closed my eyes, opened my Bible, and put my finger down on wherever He led me to place it. You can believe this or not, President Reagan, but when I opened my eyes, my finger was smack dab on the sixth commandment - THOU SHALT NOT KILL! So - with that warning from Him, I threw away the medicine, carried my unborn child to fruition - and I had another baby boy, born on November 26, 1932.

But that isn't the end of this story - the most exciting part is still to come. We named him John, and today John is a physician-surgeon out here in Prescott, Arizona. Not only does he enjoy a very full life (he, himself, has six children) but he is a very popular person here, sitting on many committees - both in the medical field as well as educational and civic affairs. But most of all - he of all my children (and I have a total of 5 - 4 boys and 1 girl - and 15 grandchildren) but John is, by far, the most successful, financially. Now that doesn't mean I love him more, but, because he is able to do so better than the rest of my family, he persuaded my husband and me to move out here back in 1971, and we

moved into a home which he purchased and furnished for us - and we lived rent-free (my husband died now almost 12 years ago and I still live in this little cottage) and John provided all our medicine and doctor and hospital bills, and will until I leave this world for my mansion above.

So, when I heard you say, last week, that you are against abortion, I just felt compelled to write and tell you why I am - and always have been (although I did almost weaken way back in 1932) - because I realize, more and more, that He knew what this baby was going to become, and what he would do for me and my husband.

Praise be to God for all His blessings, and I do hope the Supreme Court rescinds its decision about a "woman's right"! Her body is not her own, but a God-given temple of His, and should be used accordingly.

You may use this little testimony, if you ever have occasion to do so, but PLEASE - no name. I have told my son John of this incident, but I wouldn't want his name (or mine) brought into the public by the use of our name in this story.

God bless and keep you, President Reggan, guide you in your decision-making in these very trying times. But, if we truly search the scriptures, we will find all this unrest is truly predicted - and that the "end time" is not too far off.

With my greatest admiration  
and respect,

*Theda Oakley*

*I did not tell John of this incident  
before he was born, until a few years  
after he offered me his ~~guaranty~~ of security,  
(guaranty)*

*Again - Happy Birthday*

*Mrs. A.H. Oakley Sr.  
738 Flora St.  
Prescott Ariz. 86301*

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Mrs. A. H. Oakley, Sr.  
738 Flora Street  
Prescott, Arizona 86301



To Hilda Oakley - With appreciation, every  
good wish & Very Best Regards.  
Ronald Reagan

HH

A basket full of wishes  
now that your birthday's here  
For happiness and dreams come true  
through every day all year!

Happy Birthday

Hilda Dancy

End  
case  
File



our trading partners in international programs such as the World Bank & the International Monetary fund. It is not a handout by our country.

As for the 80,000 foreclosure notices - so-called - that too is a little more complicated than the over simplification in the media. During my terms here in Wash, financial aid to farmers is & has been at a higher level than anytime in our history. The 80,000 notices to farmers were to those who have exhausted every possible means (including Fed aid) & are still in ~~def~~ default to their creditors. With those notices went information as to where & how they could seek further help.

Thank you for writing & expressing your concern and for giving me an opportunity to explain.

Sincerely  
RR

396348  
F0003-02

March 10, 1986

Dear Mr. Robinson:

I'm sorry to be so late in responding to your letter of January 3rd, but I have only just received it. It does take a while before letters can make it through the bureaucratic process and to my desk.

With regard to your concern over a possible four billion dollar handout to Mexico at the same time 80,000 of our farmers were being notified of foreclosure, I'm afraid the press was a little less than accurate. The matter of credits to help some of the debtor nations has to do with our participation, along with our trading partners, in international programs such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. It is not a handout by our country.

As for the 80,000 foreclosure notices -- so called -- that, too, is a little more complicated than the oversimplification in the media. During my terms here in Washington, financial aid to farmers is and has been at a higher level than anytime in our history. The Department of Agriculture did send 65,000 letters -- not 80,000 -- to farmers who were delinquent in their payments to creditors. With those letters went information as to where and how they could seek further help to renegotiate their debt. Foreclosure will be contemplated only in those cases where a farmer has not made a payment in three or more years. Even in these extreme cases, we will find a way to help most of these farmers continue farming.

Thank you for writing and expressing your concern and for giving me an opportunity to explain.

Sincerely,

**RONALD REAGAN**

Mr. Robert M. Robinson  
Post Office Box 1156  
Elma, Washington 98541  
RR:AVH:SEV:pps

RR Dictation (Sample)

Insert to end of third paragraph of Robert Robinson Letter:

The Department of Agriculture did send 65,000 letters to farmers who were delinquent in their payments to creditors. With those letters went information as to where and how they could seek further help to renegotiate their debt. Foreclosure will be contemplated only in those cases where a farmer has not made a payment in three years. Even in these extreme cases, we will find a way to help most of these farmers continue farming.

OR MORE

Handy Book 102  
Chapter 10

(K) - Put  
this paragraph  
in first letter.  
per RR  
m

P.O. Box 1156  
Elma, Washington 98541  
January 3, 1986

The Honorable Ronald W. Reagan  
President of The United States  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

There were two items on this morning's television news that caught my attention. The first concerned your trip to Mexico today and your announced intentions to discuss a four billion dollar credit to Mexico in order that that country may meet its overdue interest payment to U.S. banks on its huge foreign debt.

The second was a matter concerning the Farmers Home Administration and its announced intentions to send some 80,000 American farmers foreclosure notices who are delinquent on their government loans.

I fail to understand or see the equity in these two announcements.

Will you please explain to me just why the taxpayers of this country should come to the aid of those few big banks, who through their own greed and mismanagement, have gotten themselves into such a dilemma. While at the same time, our government is ready to foreclose on 80,000 farmers.

Mr. President, I really see no difference in these two situations. If you have 4 billion to send to Mexico then you must have 6 billion to take care of our farmers!

If these farmers fall by the wayside via the foreclosure route then you will have been party to a grave injustice.

I firmly believe in the old adage that charity begins at home. Let's begin by taking care of our poor, our homeless and OUR farmers before another cent of taxpayer money is committed to corporate or international welfare.

Sincerely,

  
Robert M. Robinson

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

TO: *David Chese*

FROM: KATHY OSBORNE  
Personal Secretary  
to the President

DATE: *3-11-86*

*RK's dictation -  
just wanted you to  
see it before it  
was mailed*

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

March 12, 1986

PATSY SKIDMORE:

Would you please insert the attached sentences at the end of the third paragraph of the letter dictated by the President (attached). Once the insert is made, it can be signed. Thanks.

Katherine Ladd

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 10, 1986

Dear Mr. Robinson:

I'm sorry to be so late in responding to your letter of January 3rd, but I have only just received it. It does take a while before letters can make it through the bureaucratic process and to my desk.

With regard to your concern over a possible four billion dollar handout to Mexico at the same time 80,000 of our farmers were being notified of foreclosure, I'm afraid the press was a little less than accurate. The matter of credits to help some of the debtor nations has to do with our participation, along with our trading partners, in international programs such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. It is not a handout by our country.

As for the 80,000 foreclosure notices -- so called -- that, too, is a little more complicated than the oversimplification in the media. During my terms here in Washington, financial aid to farmers is and has been at a higher level than anytime in our history. ~~The 80,000 notices to farmers were to those who have exhausted every possible means (including Federal aid) and are still in default to their creditors. With these notices went information as to where and how they could seek further help.~~ *are 3 years*

Thank you for writing and expressing your concern and for giving me an opportunity to explain.

Sincerely,

*to renegotiate their debt. The farm would be successful in renegotiating their debt with income farming.*

Mr. Robert M. Robinson  
Post Office Box 1156  
Elma, Washington 98541

*Have not made a payment to this institution in 3 years at least*

Case  
File

Central  
7/1/86  
✓ sent 5/17/86  
382751  
PR005-01

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 11, 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

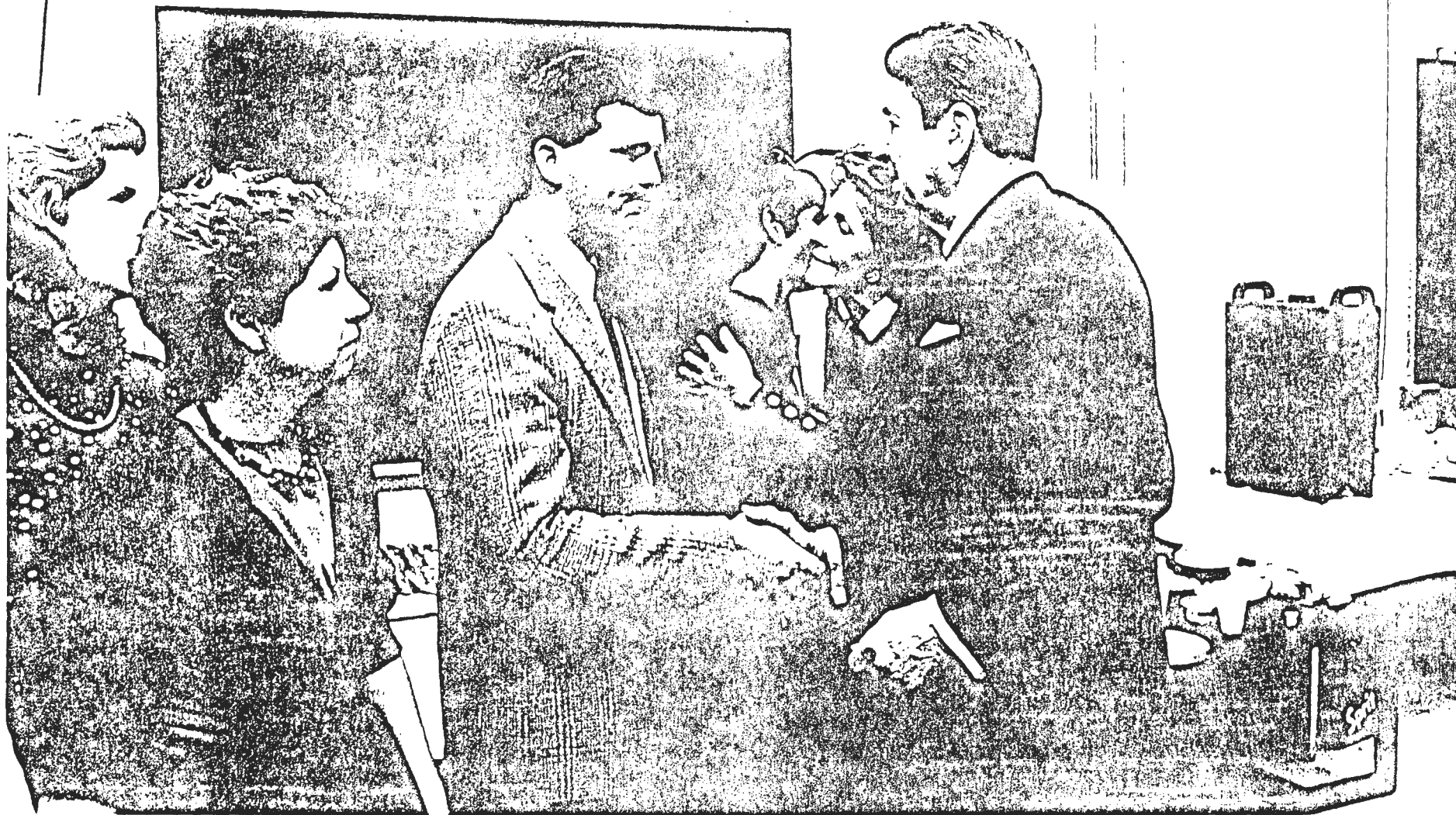
FROM: ALFRED H. KINGON *AK*  
SUBJECT: Photo for Mrs. Gregory Jarvis

After your trip to Houston for the Memorial service for the Challenger crew, photographs were sent to the crews' family with the invitation that if they would like any signed to contact my office.

I have received from Marcia Jarvis, wife of Gregory Jarvis, a photo for your signature.

Attachment

*Let Nancy too.*



To Marcia Jarvis - With every good wish & Warm Regard.  
Vadcy & Ronald Regan

End  
Case  
File

36633951  
PROK-01

The President has seen 3/26



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
WASHINGTON

March 11, 1986

*Mr. Rosen*  
*RR*

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Cabinet Secretary Al Kingon advised me of your interest in the March 2 CBS "60 Minutes" broadcast depicting the difficulties the Hardly Able Coal Company in eastern Kentucky is having in complying with the Federal surface mining reclamation law.

The Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA) requires coal mine operators to control environmental damage during mining and to reclaim the land afterward. SMCRA is complex and inflexible. It establishes national requirements for coal mine reclamation. Coal operators in all parts of the country have to meet uniform standards whether or not wisdom would suggest local variations. Also, companies that follow the law and restore the land after mining are undercut in the market by operators who do not reclaim the land.

Hardly Able's owners, the Garrison family, have a record of violating State and Federal surface mine reclamation standards that suggests a complete lack of intent to obey the laws. Contrary to the "60 Minutes" report, they were not singled out for heavy-handed enforcement. The company has left many acres unreclaimed and many thousands of dollars in fines unpaid by ignoring citations and penalties. Their violation record has made them ineligible for new permits until their State and Federal records are cleared. The company has filed for bankruptcy but is not in the process of liquidation.

Fundamentally, SMCRA was a result of compromises between widely divergent forces resulting in Federal standards being imposed on the States. We have tried, since 1981, to create and maintain "State primacy." We have been sued many times for lax enforcement by persons hostile to coal mining and we have lost most of those cases. The court orders resulting from those suits and Congressional pressures have tightened enforcement leading to stories such as the one on "60 Minutes."

It has been and continues to be our view that we do not have sufficient legislative support to improve SMCRA.

Respectively,

*Don*

DONALD PAUL HODEL



The President has seen \_\_\_\_\_

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Received 8:30  
1005 MAR 12 PM 3:36

March 12, 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM:

PAT BUCHANAN *PB*

Supporting fire of a high caliber -- attached.

*Pat - I wish our whole Repub-  
lican delegation could read this.  
RR*

## REVIEW & OUTLOOK

### Exercise in Accountability

The Reagan administration has thrown down the gauntlet to House Democrats: Either aid the contras in Nicaragua or take the heat for what happens in Central America. Faced with accepting responsibility, the House Democrats and the liberal community generally are whining about "McCarthyism."

The Democrats have nothing to fear, of course, if they're right that there is no harm in allowing the consolidation of a communist government in Nicaragua. They can go ahead and defeat contra aid in the March 19 vote, and nothing bad will happen. Indeed, if the Sandinistas turned to literacy campaigns, left their neighbors alone and negotiated a settlement with the Contadora group, the Democrats could claim much credit. They could go to the voters saying they blocked a reckless adventure; why are they so affronted at being given this opportunity?

They are affronted, of course, because they know their policy is wrong. Despite the words he feels he needs to mouth, Rep. Richard Gephardt is not such a fool as to believe the Sandinistas are respecters of a free press and private property. When Sen. Jim Sasser complains that the contras "are not an effective military force," he understands full well that this is because Congress cut off military aid when the contras were making rapid progress in 1984, and because the Soviets have been stuffing the Sandinistas with tanks and attack helicopters. Speaker Tip O'Neill does not for a minute believe that "smart diplomacy" could make Nicaragua turn out like the Philippines.

The Democrats understand that if the Sandinistas remain in power, they will grow increasingly totalitarian and increasingly a threat to their neighbors. The Democrats understand that there will be no negotiated settlement, that Central America will remain in turmoil. They understand that with the contras fading from lack of supplies, this vote will give the Sandinistas a free ride. They smart when White House aide Pat Buchanan writes that in the contra vote they are either with the president or with the communists. Their complaint is that Mr. Buchanan's division is wrong; their real fear is that it is right.

How many more elections do the Democrats want to lose, after all, by running on a platform of American weakness? A glance at the op-ed page of the Washington Post shows that Mr. Buchanan's rhetorical onslaught succeeded in no less than resurrecting George McGovern himself as the spokesman for the Democratic posi-

tion. Jimmy Carter, Walter Mondale and the San Francisco convention cannot be far behind. If Nicaragua does keep Central America in turmoil, a generation of Republicans will be able to point to March 19 as the day the Democrats gave it away.

This predicament has the Democrats writhing. They recognize that whatever the polls say about the contras, on national-security issues their party is fundamentally out of step with the electorate. (Indeed, they probably would have no chance of defeating contra aid if their House majority were not swelled by gerrymandering.) They can no longer support the Sandinistas; the last time they did, Danny Ortega slapped them in the face with his Moscow junket. They can no longer rail against American imperialism; they have just applauded a great imperial venture in the Philippines. So they are reduced to arguments about good manners. They assert that they are being ill-treated. They protest that to point out the likely outcome of their policies is to question their patriotism.

And, of course, they importune the administration to compromise—which is to say, let the Democrats have the policy and the administration have the blame. Vote some aid, but on the condition the contras be starved another six months. Giving the contras just enough aid to stumble on with no prospect of success is cynical, but it is also a brilliant solution to the Democrats' political predicament. They can say that it was the administration's policy that failed. This ploy has in fact worked repeatedly in the past, but so far talk of the administration compromising seems to be mostly the Democrats grasping at straws.

What is different this time is precisely that Mr. Reagan has decided not to fuzz the issue but to sharpen it, not to compromise but to insist on an up-or-down division. The vote-counters say he faces an uphill battle, and it is no surprise that he should lose in the House's packed committees. From outside the Beltway the impressive thing is that he won even one. House Armed Services Chairman Les Aspin pushed the aid through in a 30-second voice vote, not even letting Rep. Pat Schroeder speechify. It is a sign that some Democrats learn from painful experience.

The president has warned House Democrats that if they grab the reins "history will hold them accountable." It will be fascinating to watch the House Democrats come March 19; sometimes making the opposition responsible produces a responsible opposition.

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