

BARBARA BUSH

That is too much. You know, I have a brother and sister in this room and I was afraid they were going stand up and yell, "False, false." (Laughter) But, thank you for not doing that.

I want to thank my good friend, and George's good friend, Rabbi Schneier, for that overly generous introduction.

I have to say, Ambassador Duke, I'm glad you didn't introduce me. If you'd said a well-rounded woman, I'd have killed you. (Laughter) He said that about you, I heard him. (Laughter and Applause) I heard him.

I want to certainly congratulate the Chairman of this dinner. What a wonderful evening this is! And, what a very great honor. And, I will certainly treasure it the rest of my life. It has been a special evening. I think to hear that beautiful Anna Moffo, with that glorious voice, sing both our national anthems was extraordinarily moving--and I certainly thank you for that. (Applause)

You know, there's a wonderful story about one of George's favorite predecessors, Teddy Roosevelt, and his good friend the Naturalist, William Beeby. And, during their frequent visits together, Roosevelt and Beeby would go outside after dinner and they would search the night sky for a tiny patch of light near a certain constellation. And, when they found it they would chant, "That is the spiral galaxy Andromeda. It is as large as our Milky Way. It is one of a hundred million galaxies. It consists of one hundred billion suns, each larger than our sun." And,

when they'd finished, the two friends would say, "Now I think we're small enough. Let's go in."

Well, tonight, I feel a very grateful humility to share this honor and this evening with two men of such diverse and great achievements, Roger Smith and Chingiz Aitmatov. You know, that name's been pronounced fourteen different ways tonight.

(Laughter) And, if I did it wrong again--Aitmatov. Aitmatov.

(Laughter) Do we like that? Well, we three are all following in the footsteps of a galaxy of extraordinary people, including Margaret Thatcher, Betty Ford, Brook Astor, Coretta Scott King, and many, many others. Now I am small enough, and I can't thank you enough.

I must tell you that I know I don't deserve this--that I'm being honored for what others have given me. My parents, and their parents before them, and George's parents (especially his mother), teachers and ministers, dear friends, thinkers who lived centuries before I was born--I owe this award to them.

All the values that mean the most to me are gifts from other people and other generations. George Bush wishes he was here tonight. And, I know if he was here, that he would join all of us in thanking the General Secretary, Gorbachev, for that wonderful offer of help. And, Mr. Ambassador, I don't usually speak for George, but I know I can tonight--that you will thank your General Secretary for that great sympathy, and for the wonderful message. And, I know all of us are feeling and really suffering for our family and friends and fellow Americans in San Francisco.

Now, George Bush taught me the most important lesson of all--caring for and sharing with others is life's greatest treasures. George taught me to believe in something outside of myself, because the time will come, he says, when you will need more than yourself to believe in--to cherish your families, surround yourself with good and true friends--they have a value beyond description. This is what it's really all about--caring and sharing. Family, friends, and faith. And, what a magnificent jumble of faiths and religions and beliefs we Americans are.

When the French statesman, Tallyrand, came here in exile during the French Revolution he said, "Imagine, I found, in America, a country with thirty-two religions, and only one sauce." (Laughter)

Thomas Jefferson, one of America's first great gourmets, may have despaired at Tallyrand's culinary assessment of our young nation--but the sage of Monticello would have savored this observation of America's unique religious diversity. Jefferson said a lot about our commitment to religious tolerance, but I like this best. He said, "I never told my own religion, nor scrutinized that of another. I never attempted to make a convert, nor wish to change another's creed. I have always judged others' religions by their lives. For it is from our lives, and not from our words, that our religion must be read. I never will, by any word or act, bow to the shrine of intolerance." To this day, Jefferson's shrine of intolerance echoes with emptiness as Americans stream freely into our

churches, synagogues, temples, revival tents, and mosques. We're not perfect, but we know what we're striving for.

A recent visit to Smith College, my alma mater, provided every reason to believe that our future is bright indeed. The student body president gave an incredibly moving speech, all about diversity and tolerance. And, she told a story by Robert Fuldon, about a children's game called "Giants, Wizards, and Dwarves." And here's how the minister/author remembered his experience:

"Being left in charge of about eighty children while their parents were off doing parenty things, I mustered my troupes in the church social hall, and expained the game. It's a large-scale version of "Rock, Paper, and Scissors," but the real purpose of the game is to make a lot of noise, and run around chasing people until nobody knows which side you're on or who won. Organizing a roomful of wired-up gradeschoolers into two teams, explaining the rudiments of the game, all of this is no mean accomplishment. But, we did it with a right good will and we were ready to go. I yelled out, 'You have to decide now, which you are: A giant, a wizard, or a dwarf.'

While groups huddled in frenzied, whispered concentration, a tug came at my pants leg. A small child stands there looking up and asks in a small, concerned voice, 'Where do the mermaids stand?' A

long pause. A very long pause.

'Where do the mermaids stand, says I?'

'Yes, you see. I am a mermaid.'

'There are no such things as mermaids.'

'Oh yes, I am one.'

She did not relate to being a giant, a wizard, or a dwarf. She knew her category--mermaid. And, was not about to leave the game. She intended to participate, wherever mermaids fit into the scheme of things--without giving up dignity or identity.

Well, where to the mermaids stand? All those who are different--who do not fit the norm--who do not accept the available boxes and pigeonholes? Answer that question, and you can build a school, a nation, or a whole world on it. All of us here tonight know that the world is full of giants, and wizards, and dwarves, mermaids, and every creature in between. As that very wise young woman at Smith said, "Diversity, like everything worth having, requires effort. Effort by everyone to learn about and respect differences. To be compassionate to one another. To cherish our own personal dignity and identity--and to unconditionally accept the same in all others."

That appeals to my conscience very, very much. And, I know it does to all of you. Thank you very much. God bless you. And, God bless the people of the world. (Applause)