

It is a great pleasure for me to be with you today and to have a small part in this occasion honoring our friend and my great supporter over the years, Bill Hodges. It is fitting that we do so when we look back and consider the contributions that he has made to his country, his state, his community and the Democratic Party, which I suspect is really his first love.

My association with Bill Hodges has been a

long and rewarding one. We have worked closely together over the years. We have been on the same side and we have been on opposite sides. But we have always been friends and I cherish that friendship.

I cherish his friendship and I admire and appreciate the service which he has rendered. We honor a man who had a distinguished military career, who rose to the high rank of Major, and did credit to the uniform he wore and the nation whose armed forces he served.

We honor a man who returned to civilian life

after his, quote, "retirement", determined not to retire at all but to involve himself to the maximum in the life of his state and community and he did so.

Governor Moore prevailed upon him to take an important post in Moore's administration, appointing him the Director of the state's Civil Defense Department.

Though formally heading this Department, his impact on state government went beyond his departmental turf. He was a close personal friend of the Governor and his advice was sought and respected by the Governor on many issues.

Henry the VIII once spoke of growing "weary and old with service" as he looked back on his life.

Bill Hodges could never make such an observation for in the time that I have known him, he has grown younger and more vital with every task he has undertaken. And he was not about to retire when he returned to "the original Washington" after his service in the Moore administration.

He came back here and immediately jumped into the middle of things, including accepting the Chairmanship of the Democratic Party. I have travelled throught this state for years meeting with

various Party groups and I can tell you for a fact that no one has been a better Party Chairman than Bill Hodges or has been more dedicated to the Democratic cause.

On many occasions he has invited me down, and a time or two I have called Bill and invited myself. Each time he has rolled out the welcome mat, never hogging the show but always involving others, making every event a true group effort and Party function.

This takes great talent because we Democrats, just like we Baptists, love to fuss and fight among

ourselves. It takes a real politician -- perhaps even a statesman -- to serve as a county Party chairman, preserve harmony and promote unity, and leave office with the best wishes of those he has sought to serve. Bill Hodges has been that sort of statesman and he certainly has my admiration.

You do not give the kind of time and resources to the Democratic Party that Bill Hodges has given without a certain amount of personal sacrifice. I think we should note that fact here tonight as we gather to honor Bill Hodges for I have been the beneficiary of his sacrifice and I know that you have

also. And I am indebted to him.

Harry Truman said on one occasion,

"I studied the lives of great men and famous women, and I found that the men and women who got to the top were those who did the jobs they had in hand, with everything they had of energy and enthusiasm and hard work."

I think that Harry Truman described our guest of honor when he made that observation and summed up the successes of his lifetime.

We salute Bill Hodges tonight for those successes,  
thank him from the bottom of our hearts for his services  
and friendship, and wish him well in every new endeavor.