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Ronald Wilson Reagan

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Millions of Americans have set aside their daily activities to mourn the passing of President Ronald Reagan. I do not have the words within me to properly honor his memory or express his philosophy that help to rescue America from the malaise of the 1970's. I will leave that task to the historians, philosophers and professional writers. But fortunately, President Reagan was a prolific writer and left many of these ideas in his own words. With your permission, I would like to share a few of my favorites.

*"Today so many things we once thought of as personal or private responsibility are now just accepted as government's job." "..... let me suggest that every government service should be weighed against the cost of that service in loss of personal freedom. We willingly give up our right to drive 90 miles per hour down a city street because we want safety for self and family."
"Government exists to protect rights which are ours from birth; the right to life, to liberty and the pursuit of happiness. A man may choose to sit and fish instead of working. That's his pursuit of happiness. He does not have the right to force his neighbors to support him (welfare) in his pursuit because that interferes with their pursuit of happiness."*

Part of his genius as a communicator was his ability to communicate the above rather "dry" philosophical position through humor and story. The following story so clearly demonstrates his communication skill that President Bush paraphrased it in his eulogy. In 1984 President Reagan received a letter from Andy Smith, a seventh grader, from South Carolina. Andy wrote, 'Today my mother declared my bedroom a disaster area. I would like to request federal funds to hire a crew to clean up my room.'

President Reagan replied "What I am getting at is funds are dangerously low. May I make a suggestion? This administration believing that government has done many things that could better be done by volunteers at the local level, has sponsored a Private Sector Initiative program, calling on people to practice voluntarism in the solving of a number of local problems. Your situation appears to be a natural. I'm sure your mother was fully justified in proclaiming your room a disaster. Therefore you are in an excellent position to launch another volunteer programcongratulations. Give my best regards to your mother."

Thank you,

Harry Gribnitz

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