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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
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TO THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN
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I have looked forward for a long time to this meeting. For one thing, I have found it a great pleasure working with your membership in the past. As Assistant to the President for Public Liaison, I valued your input and took seriously your recommendations. I expect to do the same as Secretary of Transportation. What's more, I'm delighted to find myself in the company of some natural allies in what I like to call America's "quiet revolution," the tidal wave of qualified and talented women who have entered America's workforce in record numbers over the past twenty years.

The large turnout you have had for this Convention does not surprise me. After all, the AAUW has long been noted for its activism and its commitment to issues which so deeply touch us all. Even so, those of you who are here today are but a fraction of your total membership, 190,000 strong. You uphold a proud tradition, over a century in the making. And you have the distinction of being the largest and oldest organization promoting women's rights. In my opinion, you are also one of the best.

Over the years, you have pioneered in advancing legal, social, educational, and economic equity for women. Words like unachievable, unattainable, impossible and unimaginable have never been part of your vocabulary.

I trust you'll forgive me if I begin by looking over my shoulder -- to a day in September 1962 when I entered Harvard Law School, one of 25 women in a class of 550 prospective movers, shakers and Wall Street lions. There were precious few lionesses back then. I'll never forget being accosted by a male classmate on my very first day at Harvard, who demanded to know what I was doing there.

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"Don't you realize," he said in tones of moral outrage, "that there are men who'd give their right arm for your place in law school? Men who would use their legal education?" Obviously, the inference was that I was taking a man's job. And come to think of it, some may have felt that way when I became Secretary of Transportation.

That experience at Harvard was my first — but by no means my final — exposure to chauvinism in the shadow of Frankfurter and Pound. Once each semester, there was Professor Leach's Ladies Day — when our otherwise ignored female scholars would sit before the class and answer questions — after beginning the ritual with a required poem of our own composition. It was at times like that when I gained a uniquely personal insight into how the early Christians must have felt while performing for the good people of Rome — in the Coliseum.

My colleagues at Harvard seemed to have forgotten that the figure of Justice is a woman. They seemed oblivious to the psychological barriers they had erected, ignorant of the fears they inspired or the doubts they nurtured.

Women in 1962 did a lot of wondering. We wondered if there would be jobs when we got out of school. We wondered if we would be accepted by the masculine domain of the legal world, where law books and leather chairs alike tended to be reserved for "old boys," whatever their age.

We wondered at times whether life on the frontier would ever evolve into real civilization -- and whether we were doomed to go through our professional lives as the sole females in audiences of tolerant -- at best -- males. Of my own classmates at Harvard, Susan Shapiro today is a partner at Ropes and Gray in Boston. Elizabeth Holzman, a former Congresswoman, is District Attorney in Brooklyn. Stephanie Seemore sits on the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals in Tulsa. Jane Roth is a partner in a Delaware firm. For them as for others, the wondering is over. Success has taken its place, the product of a generation of long hours and lofty ambitions.

Today's graduating women have less to wonder about. They have much more to work toward. In fact, the Harvard Law Class is now almost 40 percent female.

There is a sense of history in the air these days. Precedents are being shattered. Just this past weekend, the whole nation celebrated Sally Ride -- whose contributions extend far beyond the space program.

Now young women will think more readily of science and math and physics. They will perceive new options, which can lift women from the low-paying jobs in which many are trapped. Among the precedent shatterers are Jeane Kirkpatrick, the first woman to serve as Ambassador to the U.N., Sandra O'Connor, who was offered a legal typist's job in 1952 — and went on to break the type and interpret the law of the land on this nation's highest court. And Helene von Damm, the first woman to head all of Presidential personnel for the entire government and now Ambassador to Austria. And I'm pleased to be on the frontier in transportation.

Yes, we've made progress, since 1962, but even now, too many Americans practice a subtle form of discrimination. Less obvious than the law, more insidious than verbal prejudice, it's called patronization, and it undercuts women just as surely as the old barriers of statute and custom.

Social critic Marya Mannes put it best, I think, when she wrote the following: "Nobody objects to a woman being a good writer or sculptor or geneticist if, at the same time, she manages to be a good wife, a good mother, good-looking, good-tempered, well-dressed, well-groomed and unaggressive."

In other words, in today's society we are faced with the tyranny of perfection. You, too, can be treated the same as a man -- so long as you out-perform him. For all our gains, roadblocks still remain on the path to prosperity and job satisfaction. Large segments of our economy continue to regard millions of women as consumers instead of producers. Too many employers regard too many working women as pursuers of pin money -- and pay them accordingly, about 3/5th, on average, of a man's salary, despite educational backgrounds that may be identical. With the quiet revolution, 63 percent of women with children between the ages of 6 and 17 are in the workforce; single heads of households have increased tremendously. And there are serious problems which must be addressed.

In the 1981 tax law, the marriage tax penalty was eased and estate taxes all but eliminated, permitting for the first time a spouse to keep a farm or small business instead of having to sell it to pay the taxes. The child care tax credit was increased in that law and in next year's tax cycle, the short form, 1040A form, will contain a line for the increased child care tax credit so that low income families who do not usually itemize, will be able to take advantage of it.

— And additional retirement protection in individual retirement accounts were provided for wives who do not work and for women who earn less than \$10,000.

Economic equity, including pension reform, remains an area of vital concern to women, as well as child care and child support enforcement. Additional measures are being formulated in Congress and within the Administration and your input is most important.

As a member of the Cabinet, I intend to remain active on issues of concern to all women.

The reduction in inflation is a positive development for women, whose median income is only \$11,000. The drop in inflation from 12½ percent to under 4 percent means for those earning \$25,000 a year -- women, for example, who are single heads of households -- an extra \$1,500 in purchasing power.

At the same time, the public sector can and should do all in its power to make ours an economy color-blind to blue and pink, as well as black and white. And ever since my days on the Federal Trade Commission, I've been keeping one hand on the pulse of the private sector, particularly American business, and measuring the slow but steady growth in female recruitment and utilization.

It seems clear to me that we must now focus on how to maximize the female half of the human resource ledger. We hear much about programs for women to teach them the rules of the game.

We hear much less about efforts to remove those factors causing managers to misuse or overlook female talent.

This can't continue for long, if only because market forces have doomed the old ways of doing business. In the years just ahead, America must wake up to the fact that

the very interpersonal skills of consensus building, mediating, moderating, and dealing effectively with people — skills that studies and surveys have historically identified as predominant in women — are the building blocks of a post industrial society. It's the management of people and not the management of machinery or material that will be crucial. It's interesting to flip through the American Management Association's catalog of continuing education and note the number of courses in interpersonal skills being offered to today's managers, most of whom are male.

And with the revolution taking place in this country, the tidal wave of women entering the work force, managers are, I believe, starting to grasp what we have always known: that women share with men the need for personal success, even the taste for power. And no longer are we willing to satisfy those needs through the achievements of surrogates, whether husbands, children or merely role models.

Indeed, the very concept of the role model may be endangered — and rightfully so. For the line separating role models and tokens is a thin one. The role model is a logical by-product of a society unwilling to utilize fully the talents of all its women, and thereby eager to enshrine and celebrate those few it entrusts with meaningful tasks.

Every person in this room recognizes both the problems and the untapped potential of the 52 percent of America's workforce that's female. So do others who are working outside the limelight to advance justice wherever it is blocked, who understand how far we have come, and who know firsthand how far we have yet to travel. What all of us — and all of them — have in common is commitment. And with that commitment goes a vision of society as it might, and ought to, be.

That commitment — that vision — must begin where we are. And in that regard, I must confess that I was somewhat surprised -- and very concerned -- when I arrived at the Department of Transportation to find that the percentage of women employed there now is about the same as when the Department was established in 1967.

I can assure you that we are now developing specific recommendations to improve the status of women in the Department. Some of the actions we are pursuing include:

- Increasing the opportunities for women to enter non-traditional fields in the government through cooperative programs with colleges and graduate schools to take women part-time during schooling and then move them directly into full-time professional and technical jobs after graduation;
- Preparing women in mid-level grades for more responsible management positions; and through training programs and career counseling programs;
- Providing opportunities for women who are already in management positions to take on new assignments in new areas of expertise in order to broaden their skills and move into the Senior Executive Service;
- Offering special training courses to increase the employment of women in air traffic controller positions, the largest category of employment at the Department.

A few weeks ago, I briefed a Cabinet meeting on this 11-point program I've developed at D.O.T. for women, and suggested that it be adopted for other Federal Departments.

In understand that we've already had an inquiry, from Transport Canada in Ottawa requesting a copy of our program so that they can develop a similar model there.

Remaking the complexion of the Department, to include more women in key positions, is just one of the changes we are working to achieve in transportation. I have put a personal priority on safety across all modes of transportation.

For example, the crackdown on drunk drivers. That crackdown, as I'm sure you know, began with a mother and career woman, here in California, who lost a daughter at the hands of a drunk driver and decided to do something to prevent such a loss for other families. Candy Lightner's courage, and the efforts of women united in the Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD) crusade launched a groundswell of citizen action that cascaded into the courts and legislatures all across the country. Last year alone, drunk driving laws were tightened in 20 states. Forty states this year either have already enacted tougher drunk driving laws or have such laws up for consideration. The Presidential Commission on Drunk Driving, appointed early last year to focus public awareness on the extent of the problem, has made a number of very solid recommendations and the President has just extended the Commission's term. Interim recommendations include stiff penalties such as mandatory jail sentences or community service for repeat offenders and raising the drinking age to 21. Women concerned about transportation-related deaths and injuries have made -- and are making -- tremendous contributions in the areas of safety and driving responsibility -- and I was happy to see this subject among your resolutions.

Our safety efforts, as I said, run throughout transportation. We are working with management and labor, for example, to prohibit the use of alcohol or drugs by railroad operating crews. We are seeking to further safeguard rail tank cars from ruptures that might produce fires or dangerous spills. We have an ongoing program with states and localities to increase safety in the transport of hazardous materials. We are taking action after a great deal of crucial research, to increase the resistance of aircraft interiors to fire and smoke. And, we are in the beginning phases of modernizing our air traffic control system to ensure Americans the safest possible system. This means new technology, new hardware, new and better information for air crews, and greater reliability. In the course of this program, we will effectively double the airspace capacity. And we will reduce operational costs. So while the program will take years and cost \$9 billion -- and will, in fact, be a bigger undertaking than the Apollo Man-on-the-moon program, it will actually save \$25 billion by the end of this century.

We are also engaged in an extensive highway and bridge rebuilding program to assure that the high quality surface transportation system we enjoy today endures for future generations. The resources for this program come primarily from the recent nickel a gallon increase in the Federal gasoline tax, revenues that are already being put to work. Although the additional tax only went into effect April 1st, we already have awarded \$5.7 billion to the states so far this year. And we will fund more than \$12 billion for bridges and highways over the full year -- the highest levels in the history of the Highway Trust Fund. And it is my job to make sure that these funds, as well as the increased funding for public transit capital projects, are properly placed and efficiently spent.

Along with these and other issues, I have another major responsibility before me -- and that is the sale of Conrail, an Eastern railroad that once threatened to be an eternal drain on the Treasury. It is now much improved and ready to be returned to the private sector. So if any one here hankers to own a railroad, I'm open to bids.

To conclude my time with you today, let me say again that in the world of transportation, as in all aspects of our society, there are ever widening opportunities for women.

I frequently think of a woman who lived quietly and never fit a conventional mold. One of the country's greatest poets, she never left her home in Amherst, Massachusetts. She never worked in an office, never raised a family, never won a headline. The only power she wielded lay in her poetry. But her artistry and her vision have inspired millions.

"We dwell in possibility," Emily Dickinson wrote nearly 150 years ago.

For most women, success today still is achieved by dwelling in the improbable, by challenging the odds and overcoming the conventional wisdom.

Surely it was a combination of possibility -- and reaching for the improbable -- that led Rosa Parks to claim a seat at the front of a Montgomery bus, and thus launch a peaceful revolution a hundred years overdue. Surely it was a brush with the improbable that raised Golda Meir to the premiership of Israel -- or suggested that Mother Teresa's responsibility to a hungry world involved far more than mere obedience to the rules of her order.

So today let us continue to strive for the day when the improbable becomes the probable. Back in June 1965, I was welcomed somewhat uneasily into a circle still known as "the fellowship of educated men." I've seen enormous progress since then. I've seen the circle expand, and opportunities open up.

And I am convinced that today's women stand in the reflected light of a rising, not a setting sun. Our day has barely dawned. Our dreams are just beginning to be realized. We dwell in possibility -- but we challenge the improbable. As members of AAUW, you make that challenge from a long and strong tradition of success. With your determination and your collective abilities, your grip on the future is just as certain to be marked by fresh achievements and unparalleled success. I look forward to working at your side -- to realize that possibility that dwells within each one of us, and to ensure that every woman has the chance to fulfill her God-given potential.

Thank you very much.

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