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REMARKS PREPARED FOR SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE
PIONEER WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD
PONCA CITY, OKLAHOMA
APRIL 24, 1987

What a joy it is to be with you and Shirley tonight.

Henry Bellmon, a number of years back, went to Washington urging fiscal responsibility and a Constitutional Amendment to balance the budget. His strong actions and his leadership reshaped the budget process. He has made a lasting impact on our system and on his colleagues our U.S. Senators, who hold him in highest esteem as a man of honesty and integrity -- who chose not to make a career of the Senate, but to make his contributions, return to the private sector and then to contribute once again as the governor of this great state. It's an honor to be with you, and with Congressman Mickey Edwards and his talented wife Lisa.

I'm so pleased to participate in an evening to help with restoration and refurbishing of the Nerland Mansion --to preserve for posterity so much of importance from a glorious past.

And what an honor to be associated with the names of Frank Porter and Bill Martin. I shall cherish this evening and this award. You know back in Washington, where talk is cheap -- even if nothing else is -- the real pioneer is the public speaker who rises to the occasion -- and promptly sits down! Let me assure you, this is one pioneer who intends to do precisely that!

Actually, the second part of that formula is harder to fulfill than the first. For this is a very special occasion -- made so not only by the presence of Governor Bellmon, Congressman Edwards, Jack Railey, Rick Miller and all of you who assembled for this presentation. What makes it even more special are the people of Ponca City, and the pioneer spirit which is their

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hallmark. I can only imagine their pride back in 1930, when Bryant Baker's classic statue was unveiled in tribute to countless women and whose courage and tenacity helped make a home out of a homestead.

Like all of you, I, too draw inspiration from the examples of past pioneers. I feel more than a passing kinship with any woman who challenges a new frontier. You might say I've spent the better part of a lifetime doing the same. For example, I remember well September 1962 ... one of 25 women pioneers in a class of 550 at Harvard Law School. 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.

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

In four years as Secretary of Transportation, I've tried to focus my efforts on those issues where I can make a positive difference in people's lives. We're pioneering in the use of random drug testing for all people involved in safety and security-related positions in transportation. And what could be more important than the fight against drunk drivers and the heartache they inflict. From 1980 to 1985 the number of drunk drivers cited on American roads declined by 25 percent. We're going to get the number down to zero -- and I won't rest until we succeed. I appreciate so much the efforts of MADD, SADD, and so many others.

In accepting this award, I am reminded of a woman who captured the pioneer spirit in her novels of the American frontier. Willa Cather was born in Virginia. She was raised in Nebraska. And she had her artistic flowering in a crowded corner of New York City. But she never abandoned her adherence to a way of life that was individually strong because it was socially compassionate. Emotionally and intellectually she never left the frontier.

Cather's heroes were ordinary Americans: cowboys and Bohemian immigrants, southwestern missionaries and rural clerks. Most were poor: many suffered from being strangers in a strange land. Yet all obtained a kind of nobility by working hard and caring deeply. And when Miss Cather died, she was buried, at her request, on a New Hampshire hillside, behind a white-steepled meetinghouse that was itself raised by a congregation of Yankee carpenters and laborers. On her tombstone, she had inscribed the words from her classic novel, My Antonia.

"This is happiness," it says, "To be dissolved into something complete and great."

Ladies and gentlemen, to have even a small part in the drama of one's times is to be dissolved into "something complete and great." It is to be challenged as the pioneering women of Ponca City were challenged. They lived the lives that Willa Cather wrote about. May we do nothing less, for then and only then, can we live up to their legacy, and create a legacy of our own, worthy of generations yet unborn.

Thank you very much and may God bless you all.

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