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## Remarks at the Presentation Ceremony for the Small Business Person of the Year Award and an Exchange With Reporters

May 7, 1991

The President. Thank you all very much. Please be seated. Thank you from the bottom of my former fibrillating heart. [Laughter] To June Nichols, the Acting Deputy Administrator of the SBA; to the SBA regional administrators with us; especially to the Members of Congress with us today: We're delighted to have you here. I just had the honor of signing the proclamation declaring this Small Business Week, and I'm delighted to be with all of you representing small business. Welcome to the White House, America's ultimate mom-and-pop operation. [Laughter]

I've got to admit, I'm glad to be out of the hospital. It's a little unsettling to turn on the news and see Peter Jennings [ABC News] pointing to a diagram of a heart with your name on it. [Laughter] It's not even Valentine's Day. [Laughter]

But there's an extraordinary force at work inside America, a force that does the good work of this country, a force that embodies America's can-do spirit. And that force, as we all know here today, is small business, made up of over 20 million men and women across the land who have taken control of their own lives, made their own choices and decisions; 20 million who stake out their goals and pursue them with determination and grit and vision; 20 million who believe in themselves, their neighbors, their country. And we're here today to celebrate these 20 million pieces of the American dream.

And we're going to meet five of them. You know, the Small Business Person of the Year is one of the most important awards that is. Because it's an award of the American spirit, a spirit that doesn't understand the word "no."

Joann Schulz wouldn't take no for an answer. When an accident totally disabled her for more than 3 years, she refused to put her life on hold. She earned two degrees in that time. And when she couldn't afford to continue with her education, she found a job in the ophthalmic business. She came up with an idea for making products for ophthalmic surgeons. And when she did that she wouldn't listen to "no" -- she started her own business.

Joann wouldn't give up on life when her husband died suddenly. Instead, she poured her energy into her work. The results: Sales have climbed from virtually nothing to million in just 5 years. Her staff has grown from 3 employees to 75. What once was virtually a neighborhood operation now sells products in 22 nations around the world.

Joann has conquered adversity, and she's built a future. And for that, we proudly name her the 1991 Small Business Person of the Year. Congratulations.

Leo LeBlanc wouldn't say no to life, either. Just when his wife developed a life-threatening illness, this corporate vice president was fired. Leo didn't give up. He said yes -- yes to starting over, yes to finding and pursuing his own dream. He took over Enterprise Brass Works, making equipment for the petroleum industry. He instituted innovative reforms and showed faith in his workers and himself by purchasing the company, putting every asset he owned on the line.

And now Leo says yes to success. In the last decade his company has increased sales 525 percent and added more than 100 jobs. Leo LeBlanc is the Small Business Person of the Year first runner-up. Leo, congratulations to you, sir.

A mother's hastily improvised toy for a bored 5-year-old became Caren Eilrich's ticket to the American dream. In 1984 she and her husband, Mark, and friends produced the first "Space Tubes" in their laundry room. The toys were so successful that the couple risked everything to go into business. Then tragedy struck. Caren died in an accident just 2 years after starting the company. Mark picked up the pieces and, through hard work and loving care and labor, created a lasting memorial to his wife and a model for his country.

Last year Wildewood Creative Products won a Parent's Choice Award. Its sales approached million. Its staff exceeded 80, and with all supervisors and managers promoted from the production line. We honor Caren's memory and salute Mark, our second runner-up. Congratulations to you.

While Mark embodies determination, Paul Hsu embodies courage. He left Taiwan in search of freedom and opportunity. He found them in America. The company he started, Manufacturing Technology Inc., designs and manufactures sophisticated electronics products. Paul is our National Small Business Prime Contractor of the Year.

The National Small Business Subcontractor Award goes to Bruce Walker's full-service engineering firm that has over 250 professionals -- a firm that has performed engineering design work for such clients as the Los Alamos National Lab and the Department of Agriculture -- Merrick & Company.

Our five honorees today illustrate the kind of grit and enterprise that have made our land great. You'll notice that many of them conduct business around the world. Our administration is committed to encouraging free trade

so that all our entrepreneurs may compete globally.

If I might make a pitch: As you know, we've asked the Congress to extend the Fast Track procedures that have been in effect since 1974. Fast Track really means good faith. It assures our trading partners that we will not alter trade agreements that we've settled with them. Congress has the say. Congress will vote yes or no on these agreements as they were written by our negotiators and their counterparts. It also encourages close cooperation between administration negotiators and Congress. After all, we don't want to submit agreements to Congress that will not pass. Fast Track does not take away Congress' power to accept or reject trade agreements, nor does it railroad the American public into unwise deals. It simply smooths the way for the kind of agreements that American business men and women -- people like today's honorees -- need to spread their goods and ideas throughout the world.

We salute our five winners, as well as the State winners here today. And we also want to honor the agency founded to help them make their dreams become reality -- the SBA, the Small Business Administration. And we want to pay tribute to its dynamic new Administrator, Pat Saiki -- a good friend, feisty, outspoken leader -- but unfortunately she couldn't be with us today; her husband, Dr. Stanley Saiki, passed away unexpectedly last week. And our thoughts and prayers are with Pat and her family.

The SBA will play an increasingly vigorous role in this nation's life as we enter the 21st century. Small business has become the chief supplier of new American jobs and opportunities. Many of the great innovations that will change our lives will spring from small business. It really is the place where the future takes shape. Small businesses reward innovation, create jobs, and give people the means by which to claim their piece of the American dream.

Small businesses of America, we salute you, and we offer you our admiration, our respect, and our gratitude. Thank you for your example. And may God bless you all.

President's Health

Q. How you feeling today?

Q. How are you today?

Q. Can you show it to us?

Q. Show it to us.

The President: Do you think I'm Lyndon Johnson?

Q. Have you given up coffee altogether, sir?

The President: Not altogether, I don't think. I'm on Sanka and a decaf now.

Q. Are you going to have caffeine withdrawal? [Laughter]

Note: The President spoke at 10:07 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to June Nichols, Acting Deputy Administrator of the Small Business Administration; award winners Joann Schulz, Leo LeBlanc, Mark Eilrich, Paul Hsu, and Bruce Walker; Patricia F. Saiki, Administrator of the Small Business Administration; and Stanley M. Saiki, the Administrator's late husband. The proclamation is listed in Appendix E at the end of this volume.