

Mississippi Wildlife Federation  
40<sup>th</sup> Conservation Awards  
Friday, March 10, 2000  
Primos Northgate Restaurant, Convention Hall  
Banquet 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.  
Approximate Speaking Time – 7:00 p.m.

\* Speech Length 10 – 12 minutes. Stand up straight. Speak slowly and speak in low tones. Be positive and excited about the beauty of our state. John Harvey, President of the Mississippi Wildlife Federation is supposed to introduce you.

Good evening. I would like to thank John Harvey for the kind introduction, and I would also like to thank him for inviting me to speak with you tonight. It is a pleasure to be here.

Whenever I am traveling to other states across this nation, it makes me proud to be able to tell people that I am from Mississippi because the typical responses that I get from the people I talk to is: “*I have been to Mississippi and it is a beautiful state.*”

Well, they are right. Mississippi is beautiful. We have so much to be thankful for here and so much to be proud of in our state.

No state has been blessed with more natural abundance than we have, and it is no secret that the people of Mississippi enjoy the outdoors.

Mississippi is unique in the natural areas that we have available for both our citizens and for visitors to our state to enjoy. We have waterfalls, hiking trails, lush woods, state parks, plentiful lakes, quiet brooks, rocks to climb and beeches to enjoy. Not many other states can boast that kind of variety when it comes to

natural areas of enjoyment.

When we define quality of life for ourselves, one of the most important factors that we consider are the aesthetics that make up the world that surrounds us. I believe that we are greatly affected by the environment that we live in. If that environment is beautiful, lush, green, and clean then it affects our mind set and attitude. It can uplift us and influence our attitude about life.

In Mississippi we are lucky to have the best of both worlds. Many of us live and work in urban areas, but have the luxury to be able to enjoy the wonders of the

great outdoors within minutes of our homes and offices.

Some of my favorite memories of time that I have spent with my children, Jordan and Carmen Rae, and my wife Melanie, are times that we have spent together enjoying a nice Spring day at a state park or walking through the woods finding pieces of nature that spark the interest of one of the children. I am always amazed at how calming it can be to spend time enjoying nature and the natural creations that exist in our state.

Our opportunities to enjoy nature in Mississippi are

really endless, and it is our responsibility to maintain the natural state of those areas. We have to take the responsibility to protect our nature preserves, water quality, endangered habitats and wetlands.

We are fortunate to have the Mississippi Wildlife Federation, the largest conservation organization in the state, who is committed to advancing the cause of conservation and environmental protection. They help us to ensure that our fish, wildlife, soil, water, air and forest resources in the state are conserved and enhanced.

They cannot do it alone though. *Mississippi is known*

*as the great outdoors*, and we want to make sure that we maintain that distinction. We must work together using all of our resources, whether those resources are individual volunteers, public entities or private businesses. We must pull everyone together to work in harmony to maintain and enhance our natural spaces both for our enjoyment, and for the health and well being, of our people.

We must plan for development throughout the state for today, and for the future, keeping the environment in mind. We must consider what affects our growth and development have on our environment, keeping

future generations of Mississippians in mind as we plan, knowing that we want to preserve a Mississippi that they can enjoy, and be proud of, for centuries to come.

I congratulate the award winners here tonight for going above and beyond the call of duty for conservation. I personally thank you for your efforts.

Thank you to each of you here tonight. You are to all be commended for making Mississippi a better place for our people to enjoy.

