
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”

The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension

File No. 381

1930 June 24

Albany, NY - Honoring Admiral Byrd

At Reception to Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd, Albany,
June 24, 1930

*Governor Presents Distinguished Service Medal of New York State to Rear
Admiral Byrd at Public Ceremony on Capitol Steps.*

Admiral Byrd:

The State of New York today honors itself in honoring and welcoming you and your companions on your safe return from the Odyssey of the Twentieth Century. For more than two years every household has followed step by step the preparations for your great expedition, your departure from our harbor, the voyage through the South Seas into the Antarctic ice, your snow-bound camp on the barrier of Little America, the long vigil through the polar night, the dog-sleds flinging out the posts of support, and at the last those breathless hours when the great plane surmounted the glaciers and the rocks and bore you to the Pole itself.

Through all these days and months and years millions of your fellow Americans have been sending to you messages of thought, unspoken words of hope and of good cheer. Perhaps these prayers may have given comfort and strength to your gallant company in those long days and nights of utter darkness in which you were living only one short year ago.

We take pride in the daring and the perseverance, and in the accomplishment of your goal. In these you have lived up to the highest traditions of our Nation. But I want to emphasize one feature of the whole expedition which marks it as unique in the annals of exploration. I speak of the thoroughness of the preparations for the meeting of every contingency, the long preliminary studies of the physical conditions you would meet, and the best methods of surmounting them, the scientific and mechanical problems; yes, and the human equations involved in the long residence of a large company under the most trying surroundings. That you brought back with you every single member of that company without exception is the greatest possible tribute to your leadership.

And now a personal word to you, one of my oldest and best of friends. It is a far cry from the day, seventeen years ago, when a very young Assistant Secretary of the Navy and an even younger Junior Lieutenant on the bridge of the old "Dolphin" used to weigh the pros and cons of staying in the Navy with a bad football ankle. It is many a day since you and I discussed philosophy, night after night sitting by a stove in a hunting camp in New Brunswick. It is even many years since you tried to persuade me, not that you could fly to the North Pole, but that you could fly there and come back again.

Well, my old friend, you have gone away again and come back to us again, and as usual you have achieved the goal—this one, I think, the greatest of them all.

We are happy in your happiness, and especially in the presence of your Mother and your Wife. New York greets its sister Commonwealth of Virginia and congratulates her in adding another star to her distinguished galaxy.

In paying tribute to you, Admiral Byrd, New York also honors the brave and loyal men who were your comrades.

By authority vested in me as Commander-in-Chief of the Military and Naval Forces of the State of New York, I do now confer on Rear Admiral Richard Evelyn Byrd, United States Navy, in token of his conspicuous gallantry and notable achievements, the Distinguished Service Medal of the State of New York.

F.D.R. Longhand

1930 June 24

Speech of the Governor to Rear Adm.
Richard E. Byrd, while presenting
Distinguished Service Medal of N.Y.
at ceremony on Capital steps. Albany

Admiral Byrd:

The State of New York honors itself today in honoring and welcoming you and your companions on your safe return from the Odyssey of the 20th century. For more than two years every household has followed step by step the preparations for your great expedition, your departure from our harbor, ~~your~~ ^{the} voyage through the South Seas into the Antarctic ice your snow banded camp on the ~~barrier~~ ^{barrier} of Little America, ~~your~~ ^{the} long vigil through the polar night, the dog-sleds flinging out the packs of support, and at the last those breathless hours when the great plane summited the glaciers and the rocks and bore you to the Pole itself.

Through all these days and months and years millions of your fellow Americans have been sending to you messages of thought, ~~and of hope~~ ^{and of hope} and of good cheer. Perhaps these prayers may have given comfort and strength to your gallant company

in those long days and nights of utter darkness in which you lived one short year ago.

We take pride in the daring^{and} the perseverance, and in the accomplishment of your goal. In these you have lived up to the highest traditions of our nation. But I want to emphasize one feature of the whole expedition which marks it as unique in the annals of exploration. I speak of the thoroughness of the preparations for the meeting of every contingency, the long preliminary studies of the ~~weather~~ physical conditions you would meet, and the best methods of surmounting them; the scientific and mechanical problems; yes, and the human equations involved in the long residence of a large company ~~of~~ ~~survivors~~ under the most trying of ~~circumstances~~ surroundings. That you brought back with you every single member of that company without exception is the greatest possible tribute to your leadership.

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