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[Georgia Hall - Warm Springs Foundation]

FDR Speech File

INFORMAL EXTEMPORANEOUS REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE THANKSGIVING DINNER  
GEORGIA HALL, WARM SPRINGS FOUNDATION  
November 29, 1934, 9 P.M.

It has been the custom, ever since our first Thanksgiving party of 1926, for me to call attention to the fact that the particular evening is a bigger party than ever before.

We started out with our first Thanksgiving party, as I remember it, with forty people, and it got up to sixty and to a hundred and then to a hundred and fifty and two years ago, the last Thanksgiving dinner we had at good old Meriwether Inn, we had about two hundred and forty people in the dining room. That big dinner was what really compelled us to build Georgia Hall, because, while we don't know whether it was the turkey or the people, the old dining room settled six inches during that party.

Tonight I cannot do as I have done before, say that this is the biggest party we have ever had. I don't know and I don't care because we have reached the limit of our capacity. We thought we had a big dining room and I suppose the day will come when we will have to add to

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was made. Underlining indicates words extemporaneously added to the previously prepared reading copy text. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

THE NATIONAL ENTREPRENEURIAL REVIEW  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE TRAMP  
GEORGIA HALL, WASHINGTON  
November 22, 1934, 9 P.M.

It has been the custom, ever since our first Thanksgiving party of 1926, for me to call attention to the fact that the particular evening is a dinner party then even before.

We started out with our first Thanksgiving party, as I remember it, with forty people, and it got up to sixty and to a hundred and then to a hundred and fifty and two years ago, the last Thanksgiving dinner we had at good old Merivether Inn, we had about two hundred and forty people in the dining room. That dinner was what really occasioned us to build Georgia Hall, because, while we don't know whether it was the turkey or the people, the old dining room sat all inches during that party.

Tonight I cannot do as I have done before, say that this is the biggest party we have ever had. I don't know and I don't care because we have reached the limit of our capacity. We thought we had a big dining room and I suppose the day will come when we will have to add to

this dining room. In all events, this is the biggest party and, I think, the finest party we have ever had.

Don't anybody shoot Paul Rogers for those pictures. They are all libelous, but it was a grand film, Paul, and it brought back a great many old episodes to my mind. You went back, in the beginning of that film, to the first date with respect to this land, 1835, but there is a tradition that goes back beyond that, a tradition that I always like to remember in connection with Warm Springs. It is the tradition of the Indians. It is the earliest settlers who have handed down the story to us that long before the white people came here, Warm Springs was a place that people came to to get well, and in the tribal wars between the Grees and the Cherokees and the Cowetas and the other tribes around here, any wounded Indian seeking to come to Warm Springs had to hold up his hand and give the sign that he was coming here, and from that time on he was not molested. The story has it that when the Indians came here to get cured of their wounds, they lived here, different tribes all together, as in a place of sanctuary where war was forbidden. That tradition, I think, has been rather faithfully carried

out right down to the present day.

Yes, this is a sanctuary for people, for wars of the body and wars of the mind are absolutely taboo. They do not have to be forbidden because of a thing that perhaps came down to us all the way from the Indians -- what we call "the spirit of Warm Springs". It has been here at least as long as I have been here, and I am quite sure it is still here and I am quite sure it will always rest upon these buildings.

Tonight marks the tenth anniversary of my coming to Warm Springs. Some of you have heard the story before but it occurred to me that a good many of you have not heard of the origin of the Foundation so, if you will permit me, I will tell you some things that perhaps many of you know.

In the Spring of 1924 I was taking treatments from Dr. Lovett in Boston who, at that time, was believed, I think, by everybody to have done more in the after treatment of infantile paralysis than almost anybody. In June I went on up to Boston and spent a week getting my braces fixed up and learning some new exercises. I got talking with Dr. Lovett about his experimental work with Polio

and he said, "You know, I found an interesting thing last Summer. Most of my patients come from New England, and a great many of them come from seashores. I told all of them to swim as much as they possibly could and it is an interesting fact that the patients who went down to Buzzards Bay and Long Island Sound, where the waters were warm and where they could spend a great many minutes of the day in the water, swimming around, those patients seemed to improve in their muscles a great deal more than those of my patients who went to the North Shore or to the coast of Maine where the water is cold and you could only stay in for three or four or five minutes. Therefore," he said, "I have started a little shallow tank in the Children's Hospital of Boston to see if we cannot learn something from exercising muscles in the medium of water instead of just exercising them on tables."

I did not give very much time to it; I thought he was at least pursuing an interesting course in developing this theory. And then came a period that was known as the Democratic National Convention in Madison Square Garden, New York City, a party which lasted nearly three weeks, and then a Campaign, of which I had some small

part, and about September first, I think it was, I got a letter from Mr. Peabody and Mr. Peabody said, "Here is an interesting letter that I am enclosing from Mr. Tom Loyless, who is running Warm Springs for me." Mr. Loyless told about a young man by the name of Josephs from Columbus who had come up here after an attack of infantile paralysis. He could not walk at all. It was just a public pool, but he had taught himself to use his legs in the water, to get his feet down to the bottom and to walk around on the bottom. Later on he found he could walk in shallower water all the time and he kept on doing that until he found that he could walk on dry land. Well, I put two and two together and I said to myself, "This confirms Dr. Lovett's theory." Meanwhile, Dr. Lovett had gone on a trip to Europe and unfortunately had died over there, so I was unable to consult him anyway. But I spoke to Peabody and it was arranged for me to go to Hart's Cottage, now Mr. Pierson's cottage, and we came down in the Autumn. The only people who were here when we arrived were Mr. and Mrs. Loyless and old Mr. Watts, the postman, and it is perfectly true that he read everybody's postcards, in fact, he read so many

postcards that it took him almost all day to make the delivery of the mail to the Loyless cottage and mine.

When we came down there wasn't any doctor around here; there was nobody in charge or anything of a medical nature and I went down to what is now the public pool. It was rather simple in those days.

I stayed here for a month and I improved so much that I came back the following Spring. But people had heard about it and one day Mr. Loyless and some of the neighbors -- the Harts, Miss Wilkins and Josephs and some of us were sitting around when a messenger came up the hill to Mr. Loyless and said, "Two people have been carried off the train down at the station. What will we do with them? Neither of them can walk."

Well, we held a consultation and it was quite late -- quite early in the Spring, long before anything was done here in the way of a hotel or cottages, and we decided that we could take care of them in the Village overnight and then, in a couple of days we could fix up what is now "The Wreck", and put them in it. Well, before we could put that cottage in order, eight others had arrived. They came like Topsy and got here before



we knew it. We did not know what to do with them so I sent for Dr. Johnson and he came and looked them over and guaranteed that they did not have heart trouble or something from which they would suddenly die, and he recommended cream and fattening diets for some and he recommended very little food for some of the others. And then I undertook to be doctor and physio-therapist, all rolled into one. I taught Fred Botts to swim. I taught them all at least to play around in the water and I remember there were two quite large ladies and when I was trying to teach them an exercise which I had really invented, which was the elevating exercise in the medium of water, one of these ladies found great difficulty in getting both feet down to the bottom of the pool. Well, I would take one large knee and I would force this large knee and leg down until the foot rested firmly on the bottom. And then I would say, "Have you got it?", and she would say, "Yes", and I would say, "Hold it, hold it." Then I would reach up and get hold of the other knee very quickly and start to put it down and then number one knee would pop up. And this used to go on for half an hour at a time, but before I left

in the Spring, I could get both those knees down at the same time.

I called that my medical practice -- the first and last time that I have ever practiced medicine and physio-therapy. After I get through with the White House, I hope the medical fraternity will allow me to come back and practice here; I feel I would be rather good at giving exercises in the water. At least, I had more exercise in the water, over a longer period of time, than anybody else in captivity in this country.

And then, of course, we came down the following year, 1926, what, in a way, was the most interesting period we have ever had here because, for the first time, we had adequate medical supervision. We were a very small group of patients, I think there were twenty-five. Dr. Hubbard and Miss Mahoney were in charge and every step we took was an experiment. In order to make both ends meet, we tried to run the Inn as a hotel at the same time that we were taking care of these twenty-five patients.

Mr. Pope and I were (?) the Foundation that year. Mr. Pope and I had long conferences. We started with a band of five pieces -- you saw that picture tonight --

but I think we spent an hour talking over the question of whether we could afford a band of five pieces or whether we should reduce it to three pieces. However, we managed to get by, and the following Spring of 1927 the Foundation itself was truly launched.

Just see how that child has grown from 1927 to 1934 -- seven years. They are seven years that have shown a continuous growth, a growth not only in the number of patients we are treating, but also a growth in the physical facilities that we have.

I hinted to you, and I am not going to do more than hint again, that as a result of our action today, I hope that the Warm Springs family next year is going to be even larger than it has been this year. That has been made possible by the very splendid fund that was collected all over this country under the leadership of Colonel Doherty on the thirtieth of January last. This year we are not asking for any more funds for the Foundation. The Birthday Party will go seventy per cent of all funds raised to the care of infantile paralysis in the various localities throughout the country where they have Birthday Balls and, finally, the other thirty per cent is going to be

spent to do something we have always had in mind. It is going to further the cause of research and, as I said this afternoon, in the dedication of the two buildings, you must always remember that you who are here, those of us who are here under medical care, only represent a tiny fraction of the people throughout the land, grown-ups and children, who have infantile paralysis; therefore, even if we were to double in size or quadruple in size, we could treat only a small fraction of the people of this country who need treatment.

We need to do everything we can to spread the knowledge we are gaining at Warm Springs, the treatments which we are so successfully carrying out so that, throughout the country, the facilities for taking care of grown-ups and children who have Polio can be vastly improved. That is why Warm Springs may be called a pioneer, but it is also an example for a great many other people to follow all over the United States.

This has been a grand Thanksgiving, certainly for me. Mrs. Roosevelt and I count on these Thanksgiving parties more than we can tell you. I wish we could get down in the Spring and if Congress, what shall I say, off the record, should behave itself, perhaps we will come down.

(Applause) But, in any event, we will be here next time without fail and so I am not going to bid you good night now, but I am going to carry out, with Mrs. Roosevelt, an old custom. We are going over to stand by the door and shake hands with all of you and bid you "good night".