

March 24, 1937

[Georgia Hall - Warm Springs, GA]

FOR Speech File

# 1045

INFORMAL EXTEMPORANEOUS REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
after having had dinner with the patients  
Georgia Hall, Warm Springs Foundation, Warm Springs, Georgia,  
March 24, 1937, 9.20 P.M.

(The patients and the waiters sang and put on several short

skits. Fred Botts then spoke briefly, expressing the patients' appreciation to the President and spoke also of the old days at Warm Springs, particularly the episode relating to the old stage coach "which was gotten out of moth balls for the first time in about forty-one years and hitched to the Foundation mules." Those who rode in and on the coach were dressed in "ants ballum" clothes for the occasion. "We started down this grade and all of a sudden the coach came up against the mules and they stopped right then and there and, with keen deliberation, just kicked blades out of the front part of the coach.")

Members of the Warm Springs family: That is the first time I ever heard the true story of the famous ride of the old stage coach.

I go back, of course, a great deal further than Fred (Botts) does -- six months further. That is because Fred came in the spring of 1925 and I came in the fall of 1924. I will have to tell one on Fred: One afternoon the afternoon train came in and at that time I was all alone down here at what was then a southern summer resort, very much down at the heels. It had been a famous place nearly a hundred years before. I think Fred, who knows all things, will verify the fact that in the old hotel registers that went back to 1840 you will find the name of Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun and a lot of prominent statesmen of that period. But the old place had fallen on rather thin days and when I came down here in the fall of 1924 they had had a very poor season

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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.

and the man who ran the hotel -- well, he was in the red and most of his knives and forks had disappeared and most of the crockery had been broken. I was having a very lonely time down here. There wasn't any doctor and there wasn't anybody else except a dear old mailman who went around once a day, reading all the postcards and telling everybody about everybody else's family affairs.

And then, during that winter, some of our friends the newspaper men, who always have to write things in order that you may have newspapers to read, they wrote a story and the story was to this effect: that there were two people in the United States who had swum their way back to health; one was a man who had once run for Vice President of the United States away back in 1920 and there were pictures of that man swimming around in a pool at Warm Springs. Then there was a picture of a lady, with what, in those days, was a very skimpy bathing suit, by the name of Annette Kellerman, and she had swum her way back to health. And so it went on and told all about Warm Springs.

Of course Miss Kellerman had never heard about Warm Springs but the fact that her photograph in this lovely bathing suit appeared in the same paper, on the same page with mine, that was the making of Warm Springs.

So, in the spring of 1925, one afternoon when the train came in there were two gentlemen who came off the train, one of them in the arms of the other. And the one in the arms of the other was Fred. And there was also a lady who came off the train and she came off in the arms of the brakeman. She was a lady from St. Louis who weighed about two hundred pounds.

Well, I did not know what to do about it. I had not the

faintest idea. They assumed, of course, that I was a doctor and a lot of people since then have assumed that I am a doctor. So, in the meanwhile, we put Fred to bed and we put the lady to bed and in the morning they came down to the pool. Well, Fred -- I wish you could have seen him. I thought he was in the advanced stages of tuberculosis so I got Dr. Johnson to come over from Manchester to look him over because I thought we would have to do more than send for a doctor. Well, the doctor said that fundamentally, although he could not move a leg or an arm, there was nothing the matter with him. (Laughter) So we put him in the pool and he sank. (Laughter) So we got Fred a life preserver and from that time on he sort of floated gaily around the pool. Mind you, that was the public pool; we did not have any patients' pool in those days. And the two hundred pound lady? We put her in the pool and she floated. In fact, she floated high. (Laughter)

Well, of course we had to give them the exactly diametric opposite way of treatment. We had to feed eggs and cream and all sorts of things to Fred to put flesh on his bones and, as to the lady, we had to feed her just as little as possible. So, as the days and weeks went by, old Dr. Roosevelt, who did not know anything about it at all, finally persuaded Fred to see if he could not get his legs down to the bottom of the pool. That was easy, because they did not have any flesh on them anyway. But, when it came to the lady, that was different. Old Dr. Roosevelt put the lady alongside the edge of the pool -- there was a hand rail there -- and I said, "Just concentrate. Use your mind. Just think about getting that leg down to the bottom of the pool." Well, she would get about half way down and then I would take hold of her right leg and push a little and push a little and finally got the whole leg down to the

bottom of the pool. And finally I said, "Concentrate and hold it there." And she would say, "I have it there." And then, gently, I would move over to get the left leg down and as I moved the left leg down up came the right leg. (Laughter)

So you see these girls who think they are physiotherapists don't know anything about it. I invented it first.

So it went on for a period of years and I have forgotten when it was -- Fred, about 1927 you and Dr. Hubbard and I were perfectly thrilled. We had a Thanksgiving Dinner down here and as I remember it, at that first dinner in the old firetrap of a hotel we had seventy people present and we just cheered. We patted ourselves on the back and Dr. Hubbard made speeches and Fred made speeches and I made two or three dozen speeches and we had a perfectly grand evening.

Well, after a very few years, before the old firetrap of a hotel was torn down, we got to the point where we had over two hundred people in the old hotel dining room and then we were told, after it was all over, the fact that while we were there the whole hotel had sunk six inches into the ground. When we heard that, we decided that that kind of a place for people to take treatments in and live in was just too dangerous to life and limb. That was the origin of the newer Warm Springs.

I don't want anybody to think that this is a completed Warm Springs. We have only just started, just in the same way that the treatment of polio has advanced, as it has during the past twelve or fifteen years, to a perfectly amazing extent so that you people who are in wheel chairs and walking around with canes and braces, you can all

be very happy in the fact that today medical science will give you a much better break than if you had started fifteen or twenty years ago. The medical end of this thing that is putting us back on our feet is growing just like Warm Springs is growing, and Warm Springs is going to grow in the days to come in proportion to the things we learn each year about better methods for the treatment of infantile paralysis.

Every year that I come down here I go over blueprints. I went out to a picnic yesterday afternoon and I spent a good part of the time looking at blueprints. Well, those blueprints show us the Warm Springs of the future only so far as we today can analyze. We know that we have a long way to go. I am very happy of course to see what has been accomplished in the past twelve or fourteen years but, at the same time, I am quite confident that in the next twelve or fourteen years we are going to make even greater progress than we have in the past. That relates not only to the actual physical end of it, the treatment down here that young people and old people are going to go through -- in increasing numbers by the way, because I am not the least bit satisfied with treating a hundred or a hundred and ten people at one time; I would like to see a lot more treated -- it is not only that, it is the fact that in the future, with this development in medical science, in this development of the physical end of Warm Springs, we are going to keep alive for everybody down here what has been known in the past as "the Warm Springs spirit." (Applause)

I wish that I could be here more, as all of you know. I have been away now for nearly eighteen months and I am counting, although I missed a visit in 1936, I am counting on making two in 1937. (Applause) I am counting on coming back here and realizing that the spirit of Warm

Springs is just as much a fact as it was in the old days when we had to do a lot of things for ourselves. I am quite sure also that the country is beginning to understand that it owes a duty to all of us who, for one reason or another, are handicapped to a certain extent in one way or another. There is no reason in the world why every one of you youngsters, some of you flat on your backs, some in plaster casts, some with arm splints -- there is no reason in the world why some of you should not be able to, as I used to call it in college, "pull your own weight in the boat." The communities you live in, I think, are going to give you a chance to pull your own weight in the boat when you grow up, whether you be boys or girls, and that is something that is encouraging, so encouraging that every one of you can work toward the idea and ideal of pulling your own weight in the boat.

I am sorry I have to go away on Friday. I am told that I am perfectly unnecessary in Washington, that things are going so quietly there that I might as well be here. I am inclined to think that is perfectly true; there is a good deal more of truth in that than one would imagine. The country is going along all right and that is true, too, of Warm Springs. In the past year I have been devoting much of my time to the country and I am inclined to think that in the future I shall be able to devote a little more of my time to Warm Springs.  
(Applause)

One difficulty about being away for yearly a year and a half is that there are a whole lot of you that I have not met yet. So tonight, before I go out, I am going to stand at the door and get acquainted with a lot of you and I hope to see many of you back here next Thanksgiving time, when we will have a real old-fashioned turkey dinner. (Applause)