

November 23, 1939

[Thanksgiving - Warm Springs Foundation (GA)]

FDR Speech File

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EXTEMPORANEOUS REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
At the Thanksgiving Dinner, Georgia Warm Springs Foundation
Warm Springs, Georgia, November 23, 1939

MEMBERS OF THE OLD WARM SPRINGS FOUNDATION, MEMBERS OF THE
WARM SPRINGS FAMILY:

I do not know how you feel but Anne Smither feels better than she did at the beginning of the dinner.

Somebody -- I think it was Tommy Qualters -- told Anne that she was going to have the neck of the turkey and I think she was distinctly worried until the real thing came to the table on the plate.

You know these parties, sometimes I think they have always been going on, all my life, and yet it is only just fifteen years ago that I came down here, all alone, to have a perfectly good holiday and try out a thing called "the pool," "the public pool". Why, it is so long ago -- fifteen years -- that it was even before Fred Botts got here and probably a lot of you think that Fred was born here. And then, as time went on, our Thanksgiving dinners got to be something. I remember in the old Inn, the old fire trap -- it was about two hundred feet from where we are now -- at the first Thanksgiving Day dinner in 1925, only fourteen years ago -- oh, yes, Fred was there but at that time he was a very small boy -- we were perfectly thrilled because we had, including all the people who worked on the place and the one doctor and the one physiotherapist -- we must have had fifty people at that dinner. Then, as time went on,

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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 copy. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

I do not know how you feel but Anne and I feel better than we did at the beginning of the dinner.
Somebody -- I think it was Toby Chaires -- told Anne that she was going to have the best of the turkey and I think she was distinctly worried until the real thing came to the table on the plate.
You know these parties, sometimes I think they have always been going on, all my life, and yet it is only just fifteen years ago that I came down here, all alone, to have a particularly good holiday and try out a claim called "the pool," "the public pool". Well, it is so long ago -- fifteen years -- that it was even before Fred was born and probably a lot of you think that Fred was born here. And then, as time went on, our Thanksgiving dinner got to be something. I remember in the old inn, the old fire trap -- it was about two hundred feet from where we are now -- at the time Thanksgiving day dinner in 1905, only fourteen years ago -- oh, yes, Fred was three days at that time he was a very small boy -- we were certainly spoiled because we had, including all the people who worked on the place and the one doctor and the one physician -- we must have had fifty people at that dinner. When we first went on,

the problem of the old Inn and its dining hall got to be serious because -- I don't know when it was -- around 1928 or 1929 we had two hundred people at our Thanksgiving Dinner and we got awfully worried because there were some ominous creaks in the middle of the dinner after the turkey had been eaten -- not creaks from the people but creaks from the foundation of the building. It was a great question as to whether the timbers of the old Inn would stand the surfeit of food. That was one reason why we built Georgia Hall, because we were not quite sure if we got bigger and better Thanksgiving Day dinners that the old Inn would stand up. It was a matter of pure physical precaution that we had to build Georgia Hall.

And now -- this is not the first dinner we have had here -- it is going to be a question before most of us die as to whether this dining room is going to be big enough or not. However, we have all sorts of tricks up our sleeve: we can extend this dining room either that way or that way, behind me, or even out sideways. So I have an idea there will always be plenty of room for the Thanksgiving Day party.

When I left here at the end of April or the beginning of May -- I have forgotten when it was -- I said to the people down at the train that I would be back this Fall if we did not have a war. Well, we had a war; we have a war today. Of course there were columns written about

just what I meant -- of course I meant just what I said -- and we have a war, but I managed somehow to get down here this Fall and I hope that next Spring there won't be any war (applause) -- but if the war should be still going on, I still hope to be able to get down here, even if it is for a very much shortened holiday, even for a few days, just to see how the Warm Springs family is getting on.

You know, I am in favor of war. I am very much in favor of war, the kind of war that we are conducting here at Warm Springs, the kind of war that, aided and abetted by what we have been doing at Warm Springs now for fourteen or fifteen years, is spreading all over the country -- the war against the crippling of men and women and, especially, of children. It is a comparatively new fight. Even the older people here will be perhaps surprised a little when I tell them that fifty years ago, when some of us who are here tonight were alive, there was practically nothing being done in all of the United States to help crippled people to use their arms and legs again.

What did they do? Well, they were just sort of pushed off on the side; they were just unfortunate people. It was just what they used to call "an act of God" and there were a lot of very good religious people, people who belonged to churches, people who lived Christian lives, all over the United States who, when somebody in the family got infantile paralysis or something else in those days,

would say that it was an act of God and they would do nothing more about it. The child or the grownup would be just sort of regarded as an unfortunate victim of something that no human being could do anything about. They were segregated; they were put up in the attic. It was one of the things you didn't talk about in the family or among the neighbors. And what is that? Half a century ago! And what a change there has been in those fifty years.

In other words,, I think our attitude towards religion, towards helping one's neighbors has changed an awful lot and we believe that there are certain forms of human endeavor that may be called, very properly, war -- war against things that we understand about, things that can be improved, ameliorated, bettered in every way because of human endeavor.

I do not have to tell all of you the tremendous strides that have been made in medicine and, incidentally, in the attitude of people in almost every community in this country towards certain types of human affliction. But it seems to me also that here at Warm Springs we have discovered something that has not yet been recognized as a fact all over the United States, and that is the fact of human relationships -- and the relationship of that human relationship to science and medicine.

Way back there, fifteen years -- fourteen years ago, when some of the first people came down here because

of a Sunday newspaper story and nothing else, there came into being a thing called "the Spirit of Warm Springs." Well, of course everybody likes to think in local terms but gradually, over those years, that thing that we here call "the Spirit of Warm Springs" has, I think, developed into a major factor in medical science itself, something that is recognized by a great many doctors but not by all. You and I can imagine and some of us have seen very wonderful modern hospitals where, in such a hospital, there is everything that modern science can devise -- the best of medical care, the best of nursing care -- but somehow, when one has gone through a great modern institution of the kind I am talking about -- and there are not many -- comes away feeling that it is all mechanized, it is all mechanical, it is all something that does not take into account human relationships.

Down here at Warm Springs in the last few years, principally of course because of the tremendous national support that we have had, we have built up here a mechanically perfect place. This new Infirmary, with all that modern science can possibly give -- that is all to the good -- and yet I do hope to see Warm Springs go on in the position to give the spirit of Warm Springs, the human associations, the general feeling that we are all part of a family, that we are having a pretty good time out of it all, getting well not only in our legs and arms but also helping our minds in

relationship to the minds of everybody around us, the other patients, the staff, the friends and the families, all of whom make up Warm Springs.

And so, now that our mechanical equipment is so good, now that we are up-to-date, I hope that it is going to be our endeavor always in the years to come to keep up the old spirit of human relationships that has meant so much in the past.

It has been a good dinner. I have a flock of telegrams in my hand from members of the Cabinet, from members of the Senate, from members of the House of Representatives, from Governors of many states -- the Governor of the State of Georgia in particular. Here is one from a girl who, I think, used to be here in the old days:

"Here's to our national birds, the eagle and the turkey. May the one give us peace in all our states and the other a piece for all our plates."

Now I understand that we are going to have one of those old fashioned Warm Springs plays and then some songs from our Tuskegee friends.

It has been a grand party for me and I hope you all love this as much as Anne Smither and I do.

STATEMENTS FILE

EXTEMPORANEOUS REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THANKSGIVING DINNER, WARM SPRINGS FOUNDATION,
WARM SPRINGS, GA., NOVEMBER 23, 1939.

Members of the old Warm Springs Foundation, members of the Warm Springs family:

I do not know how you feel but Anne Smither, feels better than she did at the beginning of the dinner.

Somebody -- I think it was Tommy Quailters -- told Anne that she was going to have the neck of the turkey and I think she was distinctly worried until the real thing came to the table on the plate.

You know these parties, sometimes I think they have always been going on, all my life, and yet it is only just fifteen years ago that I came down here, all alone, to have a perfectly good holiday and try out a thing called "the pool," "the public pool." Why, it is so long ago -- 15 years -- that it was even before Fred Botts got here and probably a lot of you think that Fred was born here. And then, as time went on, our Thanksgiving dinners got to be something. I remember in the old Inn, the old fire trap -- it was about two hundred feet from where we are now -- at the first Thanksgiving Day dinner in 1925, only fourteen years ago -- oh, yes, Fred was there but at that time he was a very small boy -- we were perfectly thrilled because we had, including all the people who worked on the place and

the one doctor and the one physio-therapist -- we must have had fifty people at that dinner. Then, as time went on, the problem of the old Inn and its dining hall got to be serious because -- I don't know when it was -- around 1928 or 1929 we had two hundred people at our Thanksgiving Dinner and we got awfully worried because there were some ominous creaks in the middle of the dinner after the turkey had been eaten -- not creaks from the people but creaks from the foundation of the building. It was a great question as to whether the timbers of the old Inn would stand the surfeit of food. That was one reason why we built Georgia Hall, because we were not quite sure if we got bigger and better Thanksgiving Day dinners that the old Inn would stand up. It was a matter of pure physical precaution that we had to build Georgia Hall.

And now -- this is not the first dinner we have had here -- it is going to be a question before most of us die as to whether this dining room is going to be big enough or not. However, we have all sorts of tricks up our sleeve: we can extend this dining room either that way or that way, behind me, or even out sideways. So I have an idea there will always be plenty of room for the Thanksgiving Day party.

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STATEMENTS FILE
Shorthand By Kannee

(Add President Warm Springs 1)

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You know, I am in favor of war. I am very much in favor of war, the kind of war that we are conducting here at Warm Springs, the kind of war that, aided and abetted by what we have been doing at Warm Springs now for fourteen or fifteen years, is spreading all over the country -- the war against the crippling of men and women and, especially, of children. It is a comparatively new fight. Even the older people here will be perhaps surprised a little when I tell them that fifty years ago, when some of us who are here tonight were alive, there was practically nothing being done in all of the United States to help crippled people to use their arms and legs again.

(Add President Warm Springs 2)

What did they do? Well, they were just sort of pushed off on the side; they were just unfortunate people. It was just what they used to call "an act of God" and there were a lot of very good religious people, people who belonged to churches, people who lived Christian lives, all over the United States who, when somebody in the family got infantile paralysis or something else in those days, ~~they~~ would say that it was an act of God and they would do nothing more about it. The child or the grownup would be just sort of regarded as an unfortunate victim of something ~~XXXXXX~~ ~~XXXXXX~~ that no human being could do anything about. They were segregated; they were put up in the attic. It was one of the things you didn't talk about in the family or among the neighbors. And what is that? Half a century ago! And what a change there has been in those fifty years.

In other words, I think our attitude towards religion, towards helping one's neighbors has changed an awful lot and we believe that there are certain forms of human endeavor that may be called, very properly, war -- war against things that we understand about, things that can be improved, ameliorated, bettered in every way because of human endeavor.

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(Add President Warm Springs 3)

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Way back there, 15 years -- 14 years ago, when some of the first people came down here because of a Sunday newspaper story and nothing else, there came into being a thing called "the Spirit of Warm Springs." Well, of course everybody likes to think in local terms but gradually, over those years, that thing that we here call "the Spirit of Warm Springs" has, I think, developed into a major factor in medical science itself, something that is recognized by a great many doctors but not by all. You and I can imagine and some of us have seen very wonderful modern hospitals where, in such a hospital, there is everything that modern science can devise -- the best of medical care, the best of nursing care -- but, somehow, when one has gone through a great modern institution of the kind I am talking about -- and there are not many --(~~xxx,xxx~~ comes away feeling that it is all mechanized, it is all mechanical, it is all something that does not take into account human relationships..

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(Add President Warm Springs 4)

and yet I do hope to see Warm Springs go on in the position to give the spirit of Warm Springs, the human associations, the general feeling that we are all part of a family, that we are having a pretty good time out of it all, getting well not only in our legs and arms but also helping our minds in relationship to the minds of everybody around us, the other patients, the staff, the friends and the families, all of whom make up Warm Springs.

And so, now that our mechanical equipment is so good, now that we are up-to-date, I hope that it is going to be our endeavor always in the years to come to keep up the old spirit of human relationships that has meant so much in the past. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

It has been a good dinner. I have a flock of telegrams in my hand from members of the Cabinet, from members of the Senate, from members of the House of Representatives, from Governors of many states -- the Governor of the State of Georgia in particular. Here is one from a girl who, I think, used to be here in the old days:

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