

December 2, 1941

[Birthday Ball Committee Chairman]

FDR Speech File

1399

INFORMAL REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
to
State Chairmen of Birthday Ball Committees
December 2, 1941 -- 5.00 P.M.

I have been put in an awful hole. I don't know whether to get angry about it, or cry. I am getting a large correspondence congratulating me on being 75 years old. I think it is up to you people to take care of it. You have an awful lot of explaining to do. We find that there is what might be called a conflict of opinion in the matter. I think probably the average person in this country says that a diamond jubilee is 75 years old. On the other hand, all the jewelers in the country say it is 60. So there we are.

I have had a few other shocks. Keith sent in word the other day, offering to me this very beautiful diamond. I read a part of the letter on the front page, about what a wonderful diamond it was -- a first cousin of the Kohinoor, or something like that -- it sounded fine. Then I turned over the page, and I found out that the darn thing was going to be raffled.

Well, I suppose the correct word for it is 'technique', which you are all experienced in. I don't know anything about technique. It's all right -- but whatever it is, I think it is going to be a pretty good year for the fight against infantile paralysis.

I had expected to get enough time down in Warm Springs to see what had happened down there in that particular end of the thing. Of course, that is only one out of a thousand different forms of the fight that we are all engaged in. Things down there are going awfully well. There was a bit of an epidemic this year, but at Warm Springs we were 118 patients, which was exceedingly good. Of course, we multiply that by three to get the total number that are taken care of during the year, and that is only a drop in

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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.

the bucket -- 350 children a year. But it is educational, and we are learning a lot through that particular work of the national foundation. And I think we are not only learning a lot, but I told them down there, at the dinner, I hoped we will never have a 21st anniversary of the founding of the Warm Springs Foundation. I never want it to grow up. If it once grows up, it will stop growing. The whole work that we are engaged in is the kind of thing that unless it continues to grow and be useful, it will begin to die, and will get towards old age. And I never want to do that.

I have always felt for the young people all over the country, and therefore all the foundations, the experimental place at Warm Springs and all the work of every State and every County and every Community has got to be kept young, as we are doing more good work every year that goes by.

I think we are pretty well established. We are on the map now. Of course it is true that during the past year, and other years, we have done an enormous amount of good. I am inclined to think that we ought to do a bit of boasting about what good work we have done; how many lives we have actually affected during the past. And of course it also is true that the bigger the work the lower the overhead. In other words, the more money that we can get raised this year the more people we can help. But the per capita cost on the whole will be lower, and relatively it will be a larger number of children who have been affected by infantile paralysis who will be helped locally; and also the more money we can afford on the research side.

I think it was Doc O'Connor who was telling me the other day about some enthusiastic advertising man who had written out something. He started off with the sentence: "Of course it is true that infantile paralysis is relatively a very small trouble in the total of our health problem." Of course, that man ought not to be in the advertising business, but in something

else.

It is true in one sense that the number of children who have come down with infantile paralysis in the course of a given year is relatively small, compared with the number of people with heart trouble and a few other ailments. Nevertheless, it is such a crippling disease. People don't die -- very few of them -- that the effect of it all through the community and every part of the country is fully out of proportion to their own families and their own lives. There are a great many other troubles, like pneumonia, and so forth and so on.

The public, I think, is coming to realize the importance of what we are doing. We have pretty well got rid of certain scourges that existed in the past. The scourge of T.B. is so much better than it was in our grandparents' day. There is absolutely no comparison. We can go back to any family Bible and read about the death of young people from -- they didn't call it T.B. in those days -- they called it "they went into another clime, and died" (?) We are getting on top of certain things. There are other diseases that we don't know nearly so many things about.

Well, we are headed to do the same thing with infantile paralysis, but we haven't got there. I think that is why we need to keep these Birthday parties going until we have achieved the ultimate objective.

I am awfully grateful to you all for having come these long distances. I really think it is very, very worthwhile, and I can say personally that it gives me an awful lot of pleasure and happiness to have you carrying on this work, not for me, but for the country as a whole.

(applause)

THE PRESIDENT: Are you having a party tonight?

KEITH MORGAN: A little birthday party tonight.

THE PRESIDENT: Good.

KEITH MORGAN: Mr. President, one of the Chairmen said this morning that he hoped the Japanese backed down, because since they brought you back from Warm Springs, they felt unkindly toward them. (laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: You know, I am very peaceful myself, up to a limit.

(applause and laughter)

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

December 3, 1941

MEMORANDUM FOR GRACE TULLY:

Dear Grace:

Attached is a copy of the President's informal remarks made as of yesterday to the State Chairmen of Birthday Ball Committees.

This for your files.

S. T. E.

J.W.

Informal Remarks of the President to State
Chairmen of Birthday Ball Committees ...

December 2, 1941 -- 5.00 p.m.

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forms of the fight that we are all engaged in. Things down there are going awfully well. There was a bit of an epidemic this year, but at Warm Springs we were 118 patients, which was exceedingly good. Of course, we multiply that by three to get the total number that are taken care of during the year, and that is only a drop in the bucket -- 350 children a year. But it is educational, and we are learning a lot through that particular work of the national foundation. And I think we are not only learning a lot, but I told them down there, at the dinner, I hoped we will never have a 21st anniversary of the founding of the Warm Springs Foundation. I never want it to grow up. If it once grows up, it will stop growing. The whole work that we are engaged in is the kind of thing that unless it continues to grow and be useful, it will begin to die, and will get towards old age. And I never want to do that.

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