

February 12, 1942

[Winning Communication Association]

FDR Speech File

1412

PRESENTATION OF A SPECIAL GOLD MEDAL
TO THE PRESIDENT
IN COMMEMORATION OF HIS 60th BIRTHDAY
AND IN TRIBUTE TO HIS USE
OF WIRELESS COMMUNICATION TO THE GREATEST ADVANTAGE
IN PEACE AND IN WAR
February 12, 1942 -- at 4.00 p.m.

The following Honorary Members of the Veterans Wireless Operators Association were introduced to the President by the Hon. James Lawrence Fly (Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission):

Admiral Leigh Noyes
Major General Dawson Olmstead
Commander E. M. Webster
Wm. D. Terrell
George W. Bailey
Neville Miller
E. H. Rietzke
F. P. Guthrie

MR. FLY: Mr. President, all these gentlemen before you -- all of us, I am happy to say, are Honorary Members of the Veterans Wireless Operators Association, claiming this pleasure of presenting to you this Gold Medal of Honor on behalf of the Veterans Wireless Operators Association.

It is tendered in recognition of your outstanding contribution to the advancement of the wireless art, by your use thereof in peace and in wartime. As Assistant Secretary of the Navy in the last War, you came to know the importance of communications at sea and on land. You then worked mightily in the interest of wireless communications. As President, and as Commander-in-Chief of all of our armed forces you have put wireless to the highest possible uses.

We extend to you personally, Mr. President, our sincere good wishes for the coming days, and we extend to you as our Commander-in-Chief our unqualified pledge of complete and loyal cooperation in the victory effort which lies ahead.

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

The following honorary members of the Veterans Affairs Commission were introduced to the President by the Hon. James Lawrence Fly (Chairman of the Veterans Affairs Commission):

Admiral Leigh Smith
Major General William H. Arnold
Commander A. A. Anderson
Mr. G. C. Tamm
Mr. J. E. Sullivan
Mr. J. E. Sullivan
Mr. J. E. Sullivan
Mr. J. E. Sullivan

Mr. Fly: Mr. President, all these gentlemen before you are

and I am happy to say, are honorary members of the Veterans Affairs Commission.

Commission, thinking this group of gentlemen to be the best

of honor to bring to the Veterans Affairs Commission.

It is indeed a privilege of your commission to introduce

to the government of the Veterans Affairs Commission.

Commission. In addition, majority of the body in the past has been to

have the reputation of commission at the end of the day. You then worked

mightily in the interest of Veterans Affairs Commission. As President, and as

Commissioner-in-Chief of all the Veterans Affairs Commission.

Commissioner-in-Chief.

It is indeed a privilege of your commission to introduce

for the commission, and as President, you then worked

mightily in the interest of Veterans Affairs Commission.

Commissioner-in-Chief.

In witness whereof we now claim this great honor of presenting this Special Gold Medal of Honor of the Veterans Wireless Operators Association.

THE PRESIDENT: That is perfectly fine.

MR. FLY: This, sir, is neither tin nor rubber -- (laughter) but it is pure gold. (handing it to the President)

THE PRESIDENT: It can still be acquired at Fort Knox.

A MEMBER: Look on the other side, sir, please.

THE PRESIDENT: That is awfully nice.

A MEMBER: On the reverse -- that is right.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I am awfully glad to have that.

MR. FLY: I think nothing has ever been presented to you with a greater feeling of sincerity.

THE PRESIDENT: It's before you were born, of course. (laughter) But we old people went through certain things in the old days. You remember the day at Bar Harbor, when I started the first receiving station with one (Alessandro) Fabbri?

A MEMBER: Yes. Absolutely.

A MEMBER: We are very mindful of that.

A MEMBER: It was the first one.

THE PRESIDENT: That's right, it was.

Of course, one of the funniest things was all arranged in the Navy Department. Mr. Daniels was away, and President Wilson was coming back home on the George Washington. And it was all arranged that we were to have the first ship-to-shore telephone conversation. And he waited on board the George Washington, about 500 miles out -- went there to have this conversation. And they did not get the connection very quickly, and I heard a voice that

sounded a little like his, but it did not go through clear. And then he was very impatient. He said, "I can't wait. I can't wait," and went away.

So I talked to whoever his Aide was, instead of to Wilson himself, but we never told anybody. We gave out the press release next morning that I had talked to the President 500 miles offshore.

A MEMBER: We have that in our Year Book.

A MEMBER: Yes, actually.

THE PRESIDENT: I talked to his Aide, because he wouldn't sit there long enough to get a connection.

I wish somebody would write up all these things. You know a lot about what went on.

There came up after the War was over, the question of what the Navy was going to do with all these radio stations we had taken over. And, incidentally, we had title to them -- some of them French and some German, etcetera. And down comes Owen D. Young and makes a proposal for an American Marconi Company. And we made a little inquiry into what this company was, and we found that about 50% of it was going to be owned by the British Marconi Company.

MR. FLY: Right. Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: And furthermore, that they were going to divide up the world, and they were going to let us have, very generously, a 51% interest in North, Central and South America. But that was about all. (laughter) And we turned that down. We told them they had to have an American company with American capital, and then eventually the R.C.A. was worked out. But it was because we were pretty careful in those days.

MR. FLY: Still have that same purpose, Mr. President. As you know, we are now trying to get direct communications to the British Empire.

THE PRESIDENT: That's right.

MR. FLY: Under the organization now everything goes through London, causing transmission delays in Sydney, Cairo, and so forth. We are making some progress, but we may need help.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. And then of course, one of the other funny episodes over there, during the War, I saw going up that great big -- what was it? -- eight-tower station near Bordeaux -- what was the name of the place?

A MEMBER: The Lafayette station?

THE PRESIDENT: The Lafayette station. At the end of the War, I was back there demobilizing. I spent six weeks in Paris trying to sell it to the French. I said, "It cost us 4 million dollars. I will let you have it for three." No, they didn't want it at all. Just didn't want to have it. I said, "All right. I will let you have it for two." "No, don't want it at all."

So then I cooked up a telegram back to Washington to Daniels, and said, "Send a ship over here to take it home. I will dismantle the whole works." And I sent a copy of it to Tardieu. And he said, "You can't do that." I said, "We are going to do it -- will take about 2 weeks to send it home." And finally he came across and he agreed to buy it for one million dollars. That was something. I said, "Now I will do it on condition that this is a straight deal between your department and the Navy Department, and we will get paid right away. This is not to go into the general reparations stuff." And he agreed, and signed the thing on that basis. We were to get paid.

I had no sooner gotten home in March, 1919, and the same Tardieu turned right around in violation of the agreement and put it into the common

pot. And of course we never got one franc out of the common pot for the purchase of the things. That is one of the things we had to face in those days.

MR. FLY: Still they seem relatively minor, don't they, now?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, that's right.

MR. FLY: Mr. President, thank you so much.

MEMBERS: Thank you ever so much.

(Not given to Press)

ALL CAPS

his 60th Birthday

to the President

Presentation of a Special Gold Medal in Commemoration of the ~~President's~~ Birthday ^{as} tribute to his ~~great~~ use of wireless communication to the greatest advantage in peace and in war.

February 12, 1942 -- at 4.00 p.m. STATEMENTS FILE

The following Honorary Members of the Veterans Wireless Operators Association were introduced to the President by the Hon. James Lawrence Fly (Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission):

- Admiral Leigh Noyes
- Major General Dawson Olmstead
- Commander E. M. Webster
- Wm. D. Terrell
- George W. Bailey
- Neville Miller
- E. H. Rietzke
- F. P. Guthrie

MR. FLY: Mr. President, all these gentlemen before you -- all of us, I am happy to say, are Honorary Members of the Veterans Wireless Operators Association, claiming this pleasure of presenting to you this Gold Medal of Honor on behalf of the Veterans Wireless Operators Association.

It is tendered in recognition of your outstanding contribution to the advancement of the wireless art, by your use thereof in peace and in wartime. As Assistant Secretary of the Navy in the last War, you came to know the importance of communications at sea and on land. You then worked mightily in the interest of wireless communications. As President, and as Commander-in-Chief of all of our armed forces you have put wireless to the highest possible uses.

We extend to you personally, Mr. President, our sincere good wishes for the coming days, and we extend to you as our Commander-in-Chief our unqualified pledge of complete and loyal cooperation in the victory effort which lies ahead.

In witness whereof we now claim this great honor of presenting this Special Gold Medal of Honor of the Veterans Wireless Operators Association.

THE PRESIDENT: That is perfectly fine.

MR. FLY: This, sir, is neither tin nor rubber -- (laughter) -- but it is pure gold. *(Handing it to the President)*

THE PRESIDENT: It can still be acquired at Fort Knox.

A MEMBER: Look on the other side, sir, please.

THE PRESIDENT: That is awfully nice.

A MEMBER: On the reverse -- that is right.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. I am awfully glad to have that.

MR. FLY: I think nothing has ever been presented to you with a greater feeling of sincerity.

THE PRESIDENT: It's before you were born, of course. (laughter) But we old people went through certain things in the old days. You remember the day at *San Harbor*, when I started the first receiving station with one ~~radio~~ *(Alessandro) Jabbri?*

A MEMBER: Yes. Absolutely.

A MEMBER: We are very mindful of that.

A MEMBER: It was the first one.

THE PRESIDENT: That's right, it was.

Of course, one of the funniest things was all arranged in the Navy Department. Mr. Daniels was away, and President Wilson was coming back home on the George Washington. And it was all arranged that we were to have the first ship-to-shore telephone conversation. And he waited on board the George Washington, about 500 miles out -- ~~we~~ went there to have this conversation. And they did not get the connection very quickly, and I heard a voice that sounded a little like his, but it did not go through clear.

And then he was very impatient. He said, "I can't wait. I can't wait," and went away. So I talked to whoever his Aide was, instead of to Wilson himself, but we never told anybody. We gave out the press release next morning that I had talked to the President 500 miles offshore.

A MEMBER: We have that in our Year Book.

A MEMBER: Yes, actually.

THE PRESIDENT: I talked to his Aide, because he wouldn't sit there long enough to get a connection.

I wish somebody would write up all these things. You know a lot about what went on.

There came up after the War was over, the question of what the Navy was going to do with all these radio stations we had taken over. And, incidentally, we had title to them -- some of them French and some German, etcetera. And down comes Owen D. Young and makes a proposal for an American Marconi Company. And we made a little inquiry into what this company was, and we found that about 50% of it was going to be owned by the British Marconi Company.

MR. FLY: Right. Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: And furthermore, that they were going to divide up the world, and they were going to let us have, very generously, a 51% interest in North, Central and South America. But that was about all. (laughter) And we turned that down. We told them they had to have an American company with American capital, and then eventually the R.C.A. was worked out. But it was because we were pretty careful in those days.

MR. FLY: Still have that same purpose, Mr. President. As you know, we are now trying to get direct communications to the British Empire.

THE PRESIDENT: That's right.

MR. FLY: Under the organization now everything goes through London, causing transmission delays in Sydney, Cairo, *and so forth.* etcetera. We are making some progress, but we may need help.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. And then of course, one of the other funny episodes over there, during the War, I saw going up that great big -- what was it? -- eight-tower station near Bordeaux -- what was the name of the place?

A MEMBER: The Lafayette station?

THE PRESIDENT: The Lafayette station. At the end of the War, I was back there demobilizing. I spent six weeks in Paris trying to sell it to the French. I said, "It cost us 4 million dollars. I will let you have it for three." No, they didn't want it at all. Just didn't want to have it. I said, "All right. I will let you have it for two." "No, don't want it at all."

So then I cooked up a telegram back to Washington to Daniels, and said, "Send a ship over here to take it home. I will dismantle the whole works." And I sent a copy of it to Tardieu. And he said, "You can't do that." I said, "We are going to do it -- will take about 2 weeks to send it home." And finally he came across and he agreed to buy it for one million dollars. That was something. I said, "Now I will do it on condition that this is a straight deal between your department and the Navy Department, and we will get paid right away. This is not to go into the general reparations stuff." And he agreed, and signed the thing on that basis. We were to get paid.

I had no sooner gotten home in March, 1919, and the same Tardieu turned right around in violation of the agreement and put it into the common pot. And of course we never got one franc out of the common pot for the purchase of the things. That is one of the things we had to face in those days.

MR. FLY: Still they seem relatively minor, don't they, now?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, that's right.

MR. FLY: Mr. President, thank you so much.

MEMBERS: Thank you ever so much.