

October 8, 1942

[Maritime Distinguished Service Medal - Edwin F. Cheney]

1434

FDR Speech File

President's Remarks on the Occasion of the Awarding
of the First Maritime Distinguished Service Medal
to Edwin F. Cheney - Quartermaster
Executive Offices of the President
October 8, 1942

(Emory Land presented Mr. Cheney, Dr. Henry Field,
et al, to the President)

THE PRESIDENT: This is a really historic occasion, because it is the first.

(looking at the medal) It's all right. It's an awfully good-looking one; and it's different. (then to Mr. Cheney) There's the little thing that you wear all the time. You wouldn't want this flapping around you.

(the President was unsuccessful in unlocking the clasp of the medal) They are all this way -- terrible. (laughter) I still can't get it undone. See if you can, Jerry, you are pretty good.

MR. LAND: My fingers are all thumbs.

THE PRESIDENT: Didn't you used to be a constructor? (laughter) (the clasp was finally unlocked)

THE PRESIDENT: There you are -- fine. All right, sir, if you will lean over, I will put this right up here. (to the photographers) Now wait a minute until I pin it on. Come around so that you will get it full-face.

(the photographers took their pictures,
which included Admiral Land)

THE PRESIDENT: Wait a minute -- wait a minute. There you are.

MR. CHENEY: Thank you, sir.

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.

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THE PRESIDENT: All right. Better put it back in the box. That's fine.

Well, this is really an historic occasion. And there are going to be more of these. It recognizes a form of valor which is just as essential as valor on a fighting ship. We will get a great deal out of it. We are beginning to recognize that fact. It's a fine thing.

I had better read the Citation, in case you haven't all heard it:

(reading): Edwin F. Cheney, Quartermaster. CITATION:

"For heroism above and beyond the call of duty during enemy attack when he released and launched a life-raft from a sinking and burning ship, and maneuvered it through a pool of burning oil to clear water by swimming under water, coming up only to breathe. Although he had incurred severe burns about the face and arms in this action, he then guided four of his shipmates to the raft, and swam to and rescued two others who were injured and unable to help themselves.

"His extraordinary courage and disregard of his own safety in thus rescuing his shipmates will be an enduring inspiration to seamen of the United States Merchant Marine everywhere.

"For the President, and Emory S. Land."

I think that's fine.

Now Cheney, doesn't he get something in writing, besides that Citation.

MR. LAND: That's all, unless the Chairman ---

THE PRESIDENT: (interposing) That's all done.

VOICES: His copy is outside.

THE PRESIDENT: As long as he gets a copy, that's all right.

Well, that's fine. Congratulations. I think it's a very nice thing, and I think that's the best new medal I have seen yet.

MR. CHENEY: Thank you, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Fine. Well, good to have seen you. Congratulations again.

MR. LAND: Thanks, Mr. President.

(Not given to Press)

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(the President was unsuccessful in unlocking
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(laughter) I still can't get it undone. See if you can, Jerry,
you are pretty good.

MR. LAND: My fingers are all thumbs.

THE PRESIDENT: Didn't you used to be a constructor? (laughter)
(the clasp was finally unlocked)

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JACK ROMAGNA:

Mr. Hassett says "no". We never
give out transcripts of this kind.

Mabel

10/9/82

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

10/8/1942 Alice:

Dr. Henry Field
Wants a copy of this.

Please ask Mr. Early
if it's all right.

Romagne

Dr. Field is
Anthropologist

Library of Congress

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