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.
This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was prepared. Underlining indicates words that were omitted from the prepared copy. Where parenthetical phrases were added to the prepared copy text, they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.
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 manoeuvred 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.

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MR. LAND: Thanks, Mr. President.
JACK ROMAGNA:

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

Mabel

10/9/42
10/8/1942 Alice:

Dr. Henry Field wants a copy of this. Please ask Mr. Early if it's all right.

[Signature]

Dr. Field is an Anthropologist

Library of Congress
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