

ORIGINAL

Hand

REMARKS

RESERVED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

BY

C. EVERETT KOOP, M.D.

SURGEON GENERAL

U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

WASHINGTON, D.C.

JANUARY 23, 1989

GOOD MORNING.

I WANT TO THANK MAJOR GENERAL HULTMAN AND THE RESERVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION FOR THE INVITATION TO JOIN YOU THIS MORNING TO HELP YOU GET THIS MID-WINTER CONFERENCE UNDERWAY.

THIS IS A VERY HEADY TIME FOR THIS CITY AND, INDEED FOR THE COUNTRY. THE NATION HAS JUST OBSERVED THE BICENTENNIAL INAUGURATION OF THE NEW PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT, AND WE ALL TAKE PRIDE IN AMERICA AS WE SHARE IN THIS GREAT CELEBRATION.

WITH ONLY HALF AS MUCH EXPERIENCE THE COMMISSIONED CORPS OF THE UNITED STATES PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE HAS JUST CELEBRATED THE CENTENNIAL OF ITS FORMATION AND WE THANK THE RESERVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION FOR JOINING US IN THIS CELEBRATION.

AS THE PHS COMMISSIONED CORPS MOVES TO REJOIN OUR SISTER UNIFORMED SERVICES AS A FULL PARTICIPATING MEMBER, WE SALUTE THE RESERVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION FOR THE VITAL AND CONTINUING SUPPORT OF OUR ACTIVITIES. IN OUR JOINT EFFORT OF MAINTAINING STRONG NATIONAL SECURITY, WE STAND READY TO DO OUR PART, TO PRESERVE THE HEALTH OF THIS NATION UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES.

THIS MONTH WE MARKED THE DATE, JANUARY 4TH, A 100 YEARS AGO, WHEN PRESIDENT GROVER CLEVELAND SIGNED INTO LAW SOMETHING CALLED "AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE COMMISSIONED CORPS OF THE MARINE HOSPITAL SERVICE."

THAT NEW LAW PLACED THE MARINE HOSPITAL SERVICE ON A FORMAL CAREER FOOTING WITH THE ARMY AND THE NAVY.

FROM THAT POINT FORWARD, THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES HAD THE AUTHORITY TO MAKE APPOINTMENTS TO THE "MARINE HOSPITAL SERVICE". ENTRANCE TO THE SERVICE AND PROMOTION WITHIN THE SERVICE WERE TO BE BY MERIT EXAMINATION, AND THE SURGEON GENERAL COULD SAY HOW THE UNIQUE UNIFORM OF THE SERVICE COULD BE USED.

IN 1889, THE MARINE HOSPITAL SERVICE -- THE PREDECESSOR OF TODAY'S U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE, -- ALREADY 91 YEARS OLD, WAS DEVOTED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY TO PROVIDING HEALTH AND MEDICAL CARE TO THE OCEAN-GOING MERCHANT MARINE AND TO THOSE WHO SAILED THE INLAND RIVERS AND CANALS.

BUT THE SERVICE WAS POISED TO ASSUME A GREATER LEADERSHIP
ROLE IN PUBLIC HEALTH. AND THERE WAS MUCH TO DO.

- o STATE AND LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS WERE STILL A RARITY.
- o THE WORLD WAS ONLY ON THE BRINK OF THE BACTERIOLOGICAL
REVOLUTION. THAT FULL ADVENTURE WAS STILL TO COME.
- o AND THE CONCEPTS OF DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION WERE
JUST EVOLVING, THANKS TO ROBERT KOCH AND LOUIS PASTEUR.

WITH THE HELP OF THIS NEW LEGISLATION, THE SERVICE ENTERED THE 20TH CENTURY AS A LEADING FORCE FOR HEALTH. THE SCIENTISTS OF THE NEWLY STRENGTHENED UNIFORMED HEALTH SERVICE COULD BE QUICKLY ASSIGNED TO WRESTLE WITH PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEMS WHERE EVER THEY EXISTED.

- o THE SERVICE HAS MET MANY CHALLENGES IN IMMIGRATION AND QUARANTINE . . .
- o IN RESEARCH, ESPECIALLY BASIC BIOMEDICAL AND BIOBEHAVIORAL RESEARCH . . .
- o IN DISEASE SURVEILLANCE . . .

- o AND IN THE GROWING AREA OF HEALTH SERVICES TO AMERICAN SAILORS, THE COAST GUARD, FEDERAL PRISONERS, ALASKAN NATIVES AND NATIVE AMERICANS, AND ALL THE NATION'S UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS . . . ITS URBAN AND RURAL POOR, ITS AGED, ITS DISADVANTAGED MINORITIES, ITS HANDICAPPED, AND ITS CHILDREN.

WE RECEIVED THOSE CHALLENGES, ALONG WITH THE NEW LAW, BACK IN 1889. AND WE HAVE RETAINED THE SPIRIT AND THE ADVENTURE OF BOTH.

ANOTHER LANDMARK YEAR FOR THE CORPS WAS THE YEAR 1987.

IT WAS IN APRIL OF 1987 WHEN HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES SECRETARY, DR. OTIS R. BOWEN, REDELEGATED THE PERSONNEL AUTHORITIES FOR THE COMMISSIONED CORPS TO THE SURGEON GENERAL. AT THE SAME TIME, SECRETARY BOWEN ASKED ME TO UNDERTAKE A REVITALIZATION OF THE COMMISSIONED CORPS.

I WAS STILL FAIRLY NEW TO THE CORPS -- 6 YEARS, THAT'S ALL -- BUT I WAS ALREADY QUITE FAMILIAR WITH ITS RECENT TROUBLED HISTORY.

THERE HAD BEEN SEVERAL ATTEMPTS TO CHANGE OR TO ABOLISH THE CORPS.

AT THE SAME TIME, IN THE 1960'S AND THE 1970'S, OTHER ACTIVITY WAS TAKING PLACE WHICH WOULD AFFECT THE CORPS. THERE WAS A GREAT DEAL OF REORGANIZATION IN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH, INCLUDING THE TRANSFER OF MUCH OF OUR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH EXPERTISE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND TO THE NEW ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY.

SHORTLY AFTER I ARRIVED IN WASHINGTON, IN MARCH 1981, I WITNESSED THE DISMANTLING OF THE PHS HOSPITAL SYSTEM AND THE CONCURRENT REDUCTION IN THE STRENGTH OF THE PHS OFFICER CORPS.

IT WAS A PERIOD OF SOME TURMOIL. IT WAS A TIME WHEN THE CORPS CAME UNDER VERY CLOSE SCRUTINY, BOTH BY ITS HARSHTEST CRITICS AND ITS STRONGEST DEFENDERS.

BUT I WOULD ALSO HAVE TO SAY, ON REFLECTION AND ON BALANCE, THAT THAT DIFFICULT PERIOD WAS A NECESSARY AND VERY HELPFUL PERIOD FOR US AS WELL.

WE LEARNED THAT WE HAD TO FACE UP TO A FEW THINGS AND SET SOME OTHER THINGS STRAIGHT.

WE LEARNED, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT WE HAD BETTER FACE THE FACT THAT OUR RECRUITMENT EFFORTS WERE NOT BRINGING INTO THE COMMISSIONED CORPS THE MINORITIES AND THE WOMEN WE NEEDED. AND WE VERY MUCH NEEDED THEM, IF WE WANTED A COMMISSIONED CORPS THAT WOULD BE TRULY SENSITIVE TO THE HEALTH CHALLENGES OF THE REST OF THIS CENTURY -- AND THOSE OF THE NEXT.

THE CORPS WAS PREDOMINANTLY - EVEN OVERWHELMINGLY -- WHITE AND MALE. AND THAT WASN'T GOOD ENOUGH ANYMORE.

NEXT, WE WERE IN REAL DANGER OF LOSING SIGHT OF THE IDEA OF THE CORPS ITSELF. MANY MEMBERS OF THE CORPS WERE STRONG, IMPORTANT MEMBERS OF PHS AGENCIES AND CONSIDERED THEMSELVES TO BE -- FIRST AND FOREMOST -- EMPLOYEES OF THOSE AGENCIES. THAT'S WHERE THEIR LOYALTIES WERE.

THAT WAS UNDERSTANDABLE, CONSIDERING THE GROWTH OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH MISSION IN THE DECADES FOLLOWING THE SECOND WORLD WAR. IT WAS UNDERSTANDABLE . . . BUT IT WAS NOT ACCEPTABLE.

THE UNITED STATES NEEDED A MOBILE, ALERT ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO SAFEGUARDING THE HEALTH OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. THE COMMISSIONED CORPS OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE IS SUPPOSED TO BE THAT KIND OF ORGANIZATION.

THEREFORE, WE EITHER HAD TO RECLAIM THE CORPS WE ALREADY HAD . . . OR WE HAD TO INVENT A NEW ONE. WE WISELY DECIDED TO RECLAIM THE ONE WE HAD. AND I'M GLAD WE DID.

BUT THE RECLAMATION PROCESS WAS NOT EASY TO BRING ABOUT. WE HAD TO DEAL WITH A VARIETY OF MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS . . . WE NEEDED TO CONFRONT THE ISSUE OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR OFFICERS . . . AND WE NEEDED TO REESTABLISH AND REDEFINE THE CONCEPT OF THE EMERGENCY MOBILIZATION AND DEPLOYMENT OF CORPS PERSONNEL.

THESE THINGS HAVE NOW BEEN DONE.

FOR EXAMPLE, THE MANAGEMENT OF THE CORPS HAS BEEN IMPROVED . . . THE CAREER SYSTEM HAS BEEN STRENGTHENED, WITH NEW CAREER TRACKS FOR OFFICERS . . . WE HAVE BETTER RELATIONS BETWEEN THE CORPS AND THE INDIVIDUAL AGENCIES OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE, AND THE AGENCIES WERE VERY HELPFUL DURING OUR REVIEW AND REVISION OF THE BILLET SYSTEM . . . AND WE HAVE A NUMBER OF ENLARGED AND ENHANCED INITIATIVES FOR YOUNG OFFICERS FIRST JOINING US AS STUDENTS.

THE STATISTICS OF THE PAST YEAR ARE ALSO GENERALLY ENCOURAGING BUT ALSO EXTRAORDINARY.

ALTHOUGH I HATE TO BURDEN YOU WITH STATISTICS, THERE ARE A COUPLE THAT ARE NEVERTHELESS WORTH MENTIONING AT THIS PARTICULAR OCCASION.

FOR EXAMPLE, WE HAVE INCREASED THE STRENGTH OF THE COMMISSIONED CORPS BY 1.5 PERCENT.

WE HAVE INCREASED MINORITY AND FEMALE COMMISSIONS BY 15 AND 8 PERCENT RESPECTIVELY.

WE HAVE INCREASED THE MOBILITY OF OFFICERS WITHIN POSITIONS BY 21 PERCENT AND GEOGRAPHIC MOBILITY IS UP BY 13 PERCENT.

AND WE'VE INCREASED THE PUBLIC VISIBILITY OF THE CORPS AND ITS ESPRIT.

THROUGH THESE AND FOR MANY OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS, WE HAVE SURPRISED AND PLEASED OUR CRITICS.

FOR EXAMPLE, I NEVER IMAGINED THAT I WOULD EVER READ A PARAGRAPH, SUCH AS THE ONE I AM ABOUT TO READ NOW, I'M SURE THAT MANY PHS OFFICERS FEEL THE SAME WAY . . . THAT THESE SENTIMENTS ARE NOTHING SHORT OF EXTRAORDINARY.

THE WORDS ARE FROM NOTES TAKEN BY DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATIVES DURING A RECENT MEETING WITH PERSONNEL FROM THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET. THE OCCASION WAS AN OMB PASS-BACK IN THE COURSE OF THE 1991 BUDGET DEVELOPMENT PROCESS. THE NOTES SAY . . .

QUOTE -- OMB CONGRATULATED THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE COMMISSIONED CORPS AND THE OFFICE OF THE SURGEON GENERAL FOR THE PROGRESS MADE THUS FAR IN IMPLEMENTING THE SURGEON GENERAL'S REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE.

OMB EXPRESSED ITS CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR THE INITIATIVE AND URGED US TO CONTINUE TOWARDS FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF REVITALIZATION. CLOSE QUOTE.

SO WE PLEASED OMB -- NO SMALL FEAT IN ITSELF. BUT WE ALSO PLEASED SEVERAL OF OUR GREATEST CRITICS OVER THE YEARS, THAT IS, OUR SISTER UNIFORMED SERVICES.

OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO YOU TODAY IS OUR ACTIVITY TO ENHANCE OUR ABILITY TO ACTIVELY SUPPORT MOBILIZATION OF OUR ARMED FORCES. THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE HAS A CORPS OFFICER ASSIGNED TO WORK WITH THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF TO FACILITATE THE JOINT MEDICAL MOBILIZATION EFFORT.

RECENTLY, THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR HEALTH OF DHHS JOINED ME, THE SURGEONS GENERAL OF THE ARMY, NAVY AND AIR FORCE, AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AFFAIRS, DOD, IN SIGNING A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FORMALIZING THE PROCEDURE FOR THE COMMISSIONED CORPS OF THE USPHS TO PROVIDE VITAL MEDICAL SUPPORT TO THE ARMED FORCES IN TIME OF EMERGENCY MOBILIZATION. OUR 5,500 OFFICERS STAND READY TO MEET THIS NEED, IF THE SITUATION ARISES.

ADDITIONALLY, PHS OFFICERS WORK ON A DAILY BASIS IN MANY OF THE DOD HEALTH CARE FACILITIES TO INSURE CONTINUING MUTUAL COOPERATION IN THE PROVISION OF QUALITY HEALTH CARE. WE CURRENTLY ARE UPGRADING OUR CAPABILITY TO RESPOND TO MAJOR NATURAL CATASTROPHIES, WHERE LARGE NUMBERS OF VICTIMS, WHETHER MILITARY OR CIVILIAN, MAY BE INVOLVED.

AS WE LOOK TO THE FUTURE AND MOVE FORWARD AS A UNIFORMED SERVICE, WE ARE SEEKING TO TAKE THE NEXT LOGICAL STEP IN ASSURING GREATER DEPTH OF OUR MANPOWER CAPACITY. THIS STEP INVOLVES OUR REQUEST, WITH THE BLESSINGS OF THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET, AND THE SUPPORT OF THE RESERVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION, TO FORM A FULLY FUNCTIONING ACTIVE RESERVE COMPONENT. THE RESERVE COMPONENT WILL PROVIDE SHORT TOURS OF DUTY AND PERIODIC DRILLS COMPARABLE TO THE OTHER UNIFORMED SERVICES.

ALTHOUGH WE ARE SIMILAR TO YOU IN MANY WAYS, THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE IS ALSO UNIQUE IN THAT WE ARE CHARGED WITH MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING THE PUBLIC HEALTH. I WOULD BE REMISS TODAY IF I DID NOT AT LEAST TOUCH ON SOME OF THE CRITICAL ISSUES FACING US ALL TODAY.

ALL THAT WE WILL DO IN PUBLIC HEALTH WILL BE DONE AGAINST A BACKGROUND WHERE OUR ASPIRATIONS FOR HEALTH CARE EXCEED OUR RESOURCES.

FOR STARTERS, OUR HEALTH CARE DELIVERY SYSTEM IS IN CHAOS; IT WILL NOT FIX ITSELF.

AIDS, IS OF COURSE CONSTANTLY IN THE PUBLIC'S ATTENTION TODAY. THE PHS CONTINUES ITS EFFORT TO PROVIDE LEADERSHIP IN THE PREVENTION OF THIS DREADED DISEASE THROUGH EDUCATION. ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO CURE ON THE HORIZON, THE PHS IS DIRECTING APPROPRIATE RESOURCES INTO RESEARCH ON TREATMENT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A VACCINE.

AS BAD AS THE MORTALITY FIGURES ARE FOR AIDS, AS MANY PEOPLE DIE EVERY 40 DAYS IN THE UNITED STATES FROM SMOKING AS HAVE DIED FROM AIDS SINCE ITS BEGINNING IN 1981.

THIS ONE ADDICTION IS THE SINGLE MOST PREVENTABLE CAUSE OF PREMATURE DEATH WE FACE TODAY. AND THE PHS CONTINUES ITS EFFORTS TO PROVIDE A "SMOKE FREE SOCIETY BY THE YEAR 2000."

ALCOHOL AND OTHER SUBSTANCE ABUSE CONTINUE TO GET GREAT ATTENTION FROM THE PUBLIC AND THE PHS CONTINUES ITS WORK IN THE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF THESE PROBLEMS.

GREAT NUMBERS OF THE POPULATION REMAIN WITHOUT ADEQUATE INSURANCE COVERAGE AND ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE.

OTHER FIELDS OF ENDEAVOR COVER THE WHOLE GAMUT OF PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERNS -- FROM CHILD ABUSE TO THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF THE ELDERLY. FROM THE CARE OF THE HANDICAPPED TO THE REDUCTION OF INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE.

WE IN THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE ARE PROUD OF OUR 191 YEARS OF SERVICE RELATED TO THE HEALTH OF THIS COUNTRY. WE ARE ALSO PROUD TO BE ONE OF THE UNIFORMED SERVICES PROVIDING SECURITY FOR THIS GREAT COUNTRY. WE LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU TO INSURE THAT OUR SHARED VALUES REMAIN A STRONG COMPONENT OF OUR FUTURE AND THAT OUR SHARED CONCERNS FIND HONORABLE SOLUTIONS.

BEST WISHES FOR THE REMAINDER OF THIS MEETING.