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REMARKS

TRUMAN AWARD

INDEPENDENCE, MI

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Intern

GREETINGS, ETC.

**IT IS TRULY AN HONOR FOR ME TO BE WITH YOU TODAY, TO
HAVE BEEN DESIGNATED AS THIS YEAR'S RECIPIENT OF THE
TRUMAN AWARD. THIS IS AN HONOR AND OCCASION THAT I
SHALL CHERISH.**

**I AM PARTICULARLY PLEASED THAT YOU HAVE CHOSEN TO GIVE
THE AWARD TO A MEDICAL DOCTOR, TO SOMEONE WHO HAS
DEVOTED HIS PROFESSIONAL LIFE TO THE HEALTH OF THE
AMERICAN PEOPLE.**

**IT IS ALSO APPROPRIATE THAT YOUR AWARD RECOGNIZE THE
CONTRIBUTIONS OF A HEALTH PROFESSIONAL, BECAUSE IT IS IN
THE FIELD OF HEALTH THAT OUR SOCIETY FACES ITS MOST
CRITICAL CHOICES IN THE YEARS AHEAD.**

I APPRECIATE THIS AWARD IN A SPECIAL WAY, BECAUSE I OFTEN
THOUGHT OF HARRY TRUMAN WHEN I FIRST WENT TO
WASHINGTON. AFTER ALL, PEOPLE USED THE SAME WORDS TO
DESCRIBE TRUMAN AND ME WHEN WE FIRST ASSUMED OFFICE.
ONE OF THE PHRASES THAT COMES TO MIND IS "UNIQUELY UN-
QUALIFIED."

BUT I THINK WE BOTH PROVED OUR CRITICS WRONG. THE
PEOPLE WHO YELLED, "GIVE HIM HELL, HARRY!" SAID TO ME,
"SOCK IT TO 'EM, DOC!"

FAR FROM BEING AN UNQUALIFIED HABERDASHER, HARRY TRUMAN WAS MORE WELL-READ IN AMERICAN HISTORY THAN ANY PRESIDENT IN MEMORY.

AND HE USED THAT KNOWLEDGE TO LEAD THIS NATION THROUGH SOME OF ITS MOST TRYING YEARS.

THE EVENTS OF THE LAST YEAR IN EUROPE DO MUCH TO CONFIRM THE THRUST OF HIS LEADERSHIP.

I WISH I HAD KNOWN HIM PERSONALLY.

**IN A SIMILAR WAY, I TRUST, THIS PHILADELPHIA CHILDRENS'
SURGEON PICKED UP ENOUGH SAVVY TO BE FAMILY DOCTOR TO
THE NATION AT A TIME IT NEEDED A PHYSICIAN.**

**HARRY TRUMAN PRESERVED AND EVEN ENHANCED THE OFFICE
HE INHERITED AND THEN WON ON HIS OWN. I TRIED TO DO THE
OF THE OFFICE
SAME, TO GUARD ZEALOUSLY THE INTEGRITY, AND THE
OPPORTUNITY TO EXERT MORAL SUASION FROM THE OFFICE OF
SURGEON GENERAL.**

**TRUMAN ALSO KNEW THE VALUE OF NO-NONSENSE PLAIN TALK.
AND DIRECT ACTION. I GUESS I'VE BEEN ACCUSED OF THE SAME.**

**I MAY HAVE HAD THE REPUTATION FOR STRAIGHT AND FRANK
TALK, BUT BELIEVE ME I NEVER SHOT FROM THE HIP.**

I AM NOW IN THE FIRST FEW MONTHS OF MY LIFE IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR,... WHERE I PLAN TO CONTINUE MY CONCERNS AS A PUBLIC SERVANT. PUBLIC SERVICE, FOR SOME OF US, IS A REWARD IN ITSELF.

BUT FOR ME, PUBLIC SERVICE, WITH THE APPRECIATION AND GRATITUDE I HAVE RECEIVED FROM THE PUBLIC, IS ALSO SOURCE OF HUMILITY AND DEEP PERSONAL SATISFACTION.

**THIS AFTERNOON, THEN, I'D LIKE TO TALK A LITTLE ABOUT
CITIZEN C. EVERETT KOOP, AS HE PARTICIPATED IN ONE CORNER
OF THE AMERICAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT OVER THE PAST 8
YEARS.**

**BUT LET ME WARN YOU THAT THIS WILL NOT BE AN EXERCISE IN
"KISS-AND-TELL." I DON'T FIND THAT BEHAVIOR TO MY TASTE AT
ALL.**

**ALSO, AS A PRACTICING SURGEON FOR NEARLY 40 YEARS, I STILL
CARRY THE INGRAINED HABIT OF NOT VIOLATING THE
CONFIDENCES OF A PATIENT. NOT THAT EVERYONE IN
WASHINGTON REQUIRES SPECIAL CARE ... WELL, CERTAINLY NOT
EVERYONE.**

BUT LET ME BEGIN.

**FIRST, I MUST TELL YOU THAT THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING
SURGEON GENERAL HAS BEEN THE MOST DEMANDING AND MOST
EXCITING POSITION I HAVE EVER HELD. I AM STILL GRATEFUL
TO PRESIDENT REAGAN FOR HAVING NOMINATED ME IN 1981 AND
FOR HIS RE-NOMINATION OF ME IN 1985.**

YOU MAY REMEMBER, I'M SURE, THAT MY NOMINATION WAS NOT WITHOUT SOME CONTROVERSY, WHICH IS PUTTING IT AS DELICATELY AS I CAN. IN PRIVATE LIFE I HAD BEEN AN OUTSPOKEN PERSON WITH VERY STRONG OPINIONS ON IMPORTANT ISSUES. AND THESE OPINIONS -- AND MY AGE, 65 -- WERE USED AS ARGUMENTS AGAINST MY BEING THE COUNTRY'S SURGEON GENERAL.

**THE CONGRESS AND MANY PEOPLE ACROSS THE COUNTRY
DEBATED THESE MATTERS FOR ABOUT 8 MONTHS. BUT I DID,
TOO.**

**I ASKED MYSELF IF I SHOULD -- OR COULD -- VOW TO BE A
CHANGED PERSON IN ORDER TO GAIN THE SENATE'S APPROVAL.**

**SHOULD I, FOR EXAMPLE, DEPOSIT MY RELIGIOUS BELIEFS
IN A BLIND TRUST?**

**SHOULD I DONATE MY MORAL VALUES TO SOME WORTHY
CHARITY?**

**BEFORE MOVING TO WASHINGTON, SHOULD I PACK AWAY
MY ETHICS IN AN ATTIC TRUNK?**

AND I SAID, "NO ... NONE OF THE ABOVE."

**I TRULY BELIEVED THEN -- AND I BELIEVE NOW -- THAT THE
BEST APPROACH YOU CAN MAKE TO PUBLIC SERVICE IS TO
PROMISE TO GIVE IT EVERYTHING YOU HAVE ... OF WHATEVER IT
IS YOU DO HAVE ... TO DRAW TO THE FULLEST EXTENT FROM
YOUR OWN STOREHOUSE OF KNOWLEDGE AND PERSONAL LIFE
EXPERIENCE ... AND TO SQUEEZE OUT EVERY OUNCE OF GOOD
JUDGMENT, OF DEEP FELLOW FEELING, AND OF LOVE OF
COUNTRY.**

AS I SAY, THAT WAS MY APPROACH AND I THINK IT WAS AND IS THE RIGHT ONE. BUT IT DOESN'T MAKE THE ASSIGNMENT ANY EASIER. ON THE CONTRARY, THIS APPROACH MERELY MADE ME MORE RECEPTIVE TO THE NEW INFORMATION THAT I WOULD BE ABSORBING IN THIS POSITION.

LIKE MANY OTHERS WHO ARE CALLED TO WASHINGTON, I TOO FELT GREAT PRIDE IN BEING ABLE TO SERVE MY COUNTRY ... AND I TOO HAVE BEEN FORCED TO DISCOVER THINGS ABOUT MYSELF AND MY COUNTRY THAT I DID NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND UNTIL THIS EXPERIENCE.

**AND THAT'S PROBABLY THE PREMISE OF MY REMARKS
TODAY: THAT GOVERNMENT SERVICE FORCES YOU TO KNOW
MORE THAN YOU DO KNOW -- EVEN MORE THAN MAY CARE TO
KNOW -- ABOUT THE WAY OUR DEMOCRACY WORKS ... ABOUT THE
MOTIVES, GOOD AND BAD, OF YOUR FELLOW CITIZENS --
INCLUDING COLLEAGUES AND CLOSE FRIENDS ... AND ABOUT
YOURSELF.**

**I DO NOT BELIEVE YOU CAN TRULY PREPARE YOURSELF FOR
THE EXPERIENCE, BECAUSE I DO NOT BELIEVE YOU CAN REALLY
PREDICT HOW YOU WILL ACT IN A SITUATION AFFECTING THE
LIVES OF A FEW -- OR A FEW MILLION -- TOTAL STRANGERS.**

**AND IN THE HEADY EXCITEMENT OF BEING CALLED BY THE
PRESIDENT ... OF BEING FOLLOWED AROUND BY THE PRESS ... OF
LATE-NIGHT CONVERSATIONS WITH POWERFUL SENATORS AND
CONGRESSMEN ... WHEN ALL THIS IS HAPPENING, YOU CANNOT --
AT THE SAME TIME -- TRULY UNDERSTAND WHAT YOUR JOB IS
GOING TO BE LIKE.**

YOU SIMPLY DON'T KNOW.

AND YOU DON'T DARE ASK.

**WHEN I WAS YOUR SURGEON GENERAL, I FREQUENTLY SAID
THAT I HAD NEITHER POWER NOR BUDGET. THAT WAS
CERTAINLY TRUE, FOR I HAD ONLY A TINY STAFF AND --IN
WASHINGTON TERMS-- A TINY BUDGET, ENOUGH TO KEEP ME IN
PAPER CLIPS AND PHOTOCOPIES.**

**BUT I THINK I WAS ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH A LARGE AGENDA
SOLELY THROUGH THE POWER OF MORAL SUASION.**

**IN THE RIGHT HANDS, MORAL SUASION CAN DO MORE THAN A
BIGGER BUREAUCRACY OR A LARGER APPROPRIATION.**

**I SUPPOSE HISTORY WILL LINK MY NAME , AND THAT OF EVERY
OTHER SURGEON GENERAL WITH SMOKING...AND THAT'S FINE
WITH ME.**

**AFTER ALL, DURING MY TENURE , SMOKING FELL FROM 33% to
21% OF THE POPULATION.**

**BUT I THINK MY NAME WILL BE INEXTRICABLY BOUND WITH
ANOTHER DEADLY AFFLICTION OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.
I'M SPEAKING, OF COURSE, ABOUT AIDS.**

**AIDS COULD BECOME THE DISEASE THAT BREAKS THE SOCIAL
COMPACT IN AMERICAN SOCIETY.**

**THUS FAR, THE AMERICAN PEOPLE HAVE BEEN VERY TOLERANT
OF PEOPLE WHO GET SICK BECAUSE THEY DO SOMETHING THEY
VERY LIKELY KNOW IS NOT A SMART THING TO DO. HENCE,
WE'VE RELIED UPON GENERAL TAX REVENUES TO SUPPORT V.D.
CLINICS, ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG TREATMENT CENTERS, DIET
AND NUTRITION COUNSELING, FAMILY PLANNING, EMERGENCY
MEDICAL SERVICES FOR HIGHWAY TRAUMA, AND SO ON.**

**SOME OF YOU HERE TODAY NO DOUBT WILL EXPECT MEDICAL
TREATMENT FOR CONDITIONS ATTRIBUTABLE AT LEAST IN PART
TO YOUR OWN LIFE-STYLE DECISIONS.**

**IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN THIS PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR
REHABILITATIVE MEDICINE IN A FEW WORDS, BUT I SUPPOSE IT
BOILS DOWN TO THIS:**

**THE AMERICAN PEOPLE KNOW THAT THE FLESH IS WEAK,
BUT THEY ALSO BELIEVE IN REDEMPTION AND THEY'RE
WILLING TO HELP PAY FOR IT: SYPHILITICS CAN BE CURED
... ALCOHOLICS CAN BE RESCUED ... HIGHWAY DAREDEVILS
CAN BE REFORMEDPEOPLE
CAN ADOPT A MORE SENSIBLE DIET.**

**BUT AIDS HAS ARRIVED ON THE SCENE AND HAS BECOME THE
FIRST SERIOUS WEDGE TO BE DRIVEN INTO OUR REMARKABLE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMPACT.**

**THE REASON, I'M SORRY TO SAY, IS SIMPLE ENOUGH TO
UNDERSTAND.**

**A PERSON BECOMES INFECTED WITH H.I.V. BY DOING THINGS
THAT MOST PEOPLE DON'T DO.**

**IF THE INFECTION DEVELOPS INTO AIDS AND A LIFE-
THREATENING CANCER OR INFECTIOUS DISEASE, A NUMBER OF
PUBLIC PROGRAMS ARE AVAILABLE TO PROVIDE MEDICAL CARE
AND CERTAIN SOCIAL SERVICES, ALSO.**

**RIGHT NOW, SUCH CARE IS RUNNING ABOUT \$20,000 TO \$30,000
PER YEAR PER AIDS PATIENT.**

**THE AVERAGE LENGTH OF TIME A PERSON WITH AIDS RECEIVES
SUCH CARE IS 12 TO 18 MONTHS.**

AND THEN THE PERSON DIES.

**AFTER A PRODIGIOUS INVESTMENT OF PUBLIC FUNDS, THERE IS
NO RESCUE ... NO REFORMATION OF CHARACTER ... NO ONE IS
SAVED OR REDEEMED AND RETURNED TO SOCIETY, AS IS THE
CASE WITH THE OTHER AFFLICTIONS I MENTIONED, SUCH AS
ALCOHOLISM, OBESITY, AND DRUG-ABUSE.**

**THIS DISEASE, THEREFORE, PRESENTS THE TOUGHEST
CHALLENGE YET TO THE AMERICAN CONCEPT OF PUBLIC
HEALTH.**

**THE ETHICAL BURDEN OF AIDS IS COMPOUNDED BECAUSE
YOUNG BLACK AND HISPANIC AMERICANS APPEAR AMONG THE
AIDS CASE REPORTS TWICE AS OFTEN AS THEY APPEAR IN THE
POPULATION GENERALLY. THE MINORITIES WITH AIDS TEND TO
BE POOR, UNINSURED OR UNDERINSURED, AND URBAN, LIVING IN
THOSE SAME MAJOR METROPOLITAN AREAS WHERE THE HEALTH
DELIVERY SYSTEMS ARE ALREADY STRAINED TO THE LIMIT.**

**ALREADY IN NEW YORK CITY WELL OVER 20% OF THE BEDS IN
HOSPITALS ARE FILLED WITH AIDS PATIENTS. IT IS SAFE TO SAY
HOSPITALS IN YOUR COMMUNITIES WILL FACE THIS PROBLEM
BY THE END OF THE DECADE, IF THEY ARE NOT ALREADY
STRUGGLING WITH IT.**

**POVERTY IS ONE OF THE REASONS FOR A HIGHER INCIDENCE OF
AIDS IN THESE MINORITY COMMUNITIES AND IS OFTEN LINKED
TO LIVING CONDITIONS REFLECTING EXISTING RACE AND
ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION.**

**WE CANNOT LET A NEW DISCRIMINATION BASED ON DISEASE BE
ADDED TO OTHERS.**

**I FEAR A GROWING RESENTMENT AGAINST ALL AIDS PATIENTS,
BUT AGAINST BLACKS AND HISPANICS IN PARTICULAR.**

**WE NEED TO MAKE SURE THAT WE KEEP OUR ETHICS STRAIGHT
AS WE DEAL WITH THIS CHALLENGE. WE NEED TO MAKE SURE
THAT THE GROWING AIDS CRISIS BRINGS OUT THE BEST IN US:
FRANK TALK, COMMON SENSE, CARING AND COMPASSIONATE
ACTION. THE BEST OF AMERICAN QUALITIES, REFLECTED SO
WELL IN THE MAN FROM INDEPENDENCE.**

THANK YOU.

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