

Lecture Vol. 19 # 9 March 28, 1989 cover

Remarks
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Presented to the
Commissioned Officers Association
New Orleans, Louisiana
March 28, 1989

These remarks are included in the archive, because they were a very unusual event when they took place and it only happened once.

A number of the members of the Commissioned Officers Association, which is the non-governmental association of the Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service, had been asking me as Surgeon General to sponsor a prayer breakfast at the time of their annual meeting. I discussed this with Flag Officers and we saw no reason not to. Prayer breakfasts were very much apart of American life. I had a disclaimer of sorts in the opening paragraph of my remarks when I said that the separation of church and state never intended to mean separation of God and state. In view of what happened, I think it is important to note for the record that I said the following..."I would like to assure my friends who consider Judaism their religion that when I speak of God today, I will be talking about the God of Abraham and Sarah, of Isaac and Rebecca, of Jacob and Rachel, and of you and me." The next thing I said, which should set the stage for the remarks was, "One can only speak from where he stands. I'm going to speak from where I stand and center what I have to say this morning around prayer."

I then went on to talk about prayer and in the course of those remarks; I used the Lord's Prayer as an example of how to pray, not as a stereotype to be recited Sunday after Sunday without meaning in some church service. I maintained that the Lord's Prayer was a template of how to pray rather than what to pray.

I made no bones about being a Christian; indeed, I had offered that caveat before I started.

Prayer breakfasts, in government circles, were started by President Eisenhower. I attended a few when he was President, and many more during the time Ronald Reagan was President. I was always impressed that although the speakers were always associated in some way with a Christian movement, many of the attendees, indeed, some sitting at the head table with the President, were those who practiced Judaism.

Therefore, I was somewhat surprised at the intolerance exhibited by one Jewish member of the Commissioned Corps, who caused such a fuss that to my knowledge, no such a Prayer breakfast has ever again been attempted by the Public Health Service. The Public Health Service does

suffer by not having a Chaplaincy, which is present in the Army, Navy, the Air Force, and the Coast Guard. The United States Senate still opens every session, every day, with prayer by the Senate Chaplain. I was very disappointed that this sign of intolerance raised its head in the circles of the Commissioned Corps and even more disappointed that one very vocal Jewish officer eliminated a source of the spiritual benefit to a great number of Corps. I spoke later the same day to the entire Plenary Session to for the Annual Meeting of the Commissioned Corps and had nothing but remarks of approval from the many who spoke to me about the Prayer breakfast.