

**Remarks by Commissioner James H. Quello
Upon Receiving
Michigan State University's Alumni Award
Washington, DC - September 11, 1996**

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Heartfelt thanks for this prestigious and the latest of what I humorously call my pre-posthumous awards. As a fugitive from the actuarial law of averages, I appreciate receiving this distinctive honor while I am here to enjoy it and enjoy the company of distinguished fellow Spartans.

Recently, I have credited my awards with the distinction of surviving to an advanced age. When you advance from the "golden years" to the very senior "platinum years," you become venerable -- with venerability, you are credited with virtues you never had -- and I'm grateful.

It is customary at award time to graciously credit everyone who played a role in your life from office boy to chief executives to distant relatives. In my case, I do owe a lot to my talented legal advisors and all my loyal staff -- in fact all I am, ever was or hope to be professionally, I owe to my staff (80% lawyers).

The FCC is primarily a legal ball game with over 300 lawyers on the staff. I believe at least 3 of the 5 Commissioners should be communications lawyers and I would recommend at least one should have a communications business experience to provide a practical, real world, viewpoint of the impact of government regulation. In fact, former legal assistants in my office are spread throughout Washington in influential positions in law firms or key leadership positions in large national associations -- they continue to call me "boss."

A new commissioner asked me several years ago how come everyone in your office and your office alumni outside your office call you "boss." I proclaimed in my most authoritarian tone: "They better. I was a Lt. Colonel in the Army in 1945!" After the initial shock, I explained the real reason -- When lawyers or key staffers are drafted for my office I tell them: Don't consider me your boss. Consider me your teammate friend who is never, never wrong. The next day I'm called boss and I have lost my infallibility -- which turns out to be lucky for me.

Now there is one all-important, not distant relative who merits some kind of special recognition tonight -- my fellow Spartan, best-loved friend and wife, Mary. In a few days, in fact September 14th, we will observe, maybe even celebrate, our 59th wedding anniversary -- We were married way back in the days when you said "I do" rather than I did. The fact that I lasted 59 years is a rousing testimonial to her sense of humor.

Speaking of Mary, I really have been lucky. In all those years, she never filed a petition to deny my license renewal. She admits she entertained murder several times but never divorce because it was against her Irish Catholic upbringing. She has been a major contributor to my maintaining a becoming sense of self unimportance. So, I really believe in marriage. If it weren't for marriage many men would go through life thinking they had no faults at all.

She also is not a very ardent pro-government spokeswoman. Disregarding my suggestions, she tells everyone at Washington government receptions she was much happier being a broadcaster's wife than a government Commissioner's wife. I had to remind her I was much younger then. Actually we don't seriously disagree very often because she is very good at letting me have her way. There is never a dull day with Mary so we just don't have much time to grow old. So, I'm happy, dear, that you are here to share this award with me. (This ought to keep me around for another year or so.)

In a little more serious vein, this award tonight is especially appreciated. In fact, any recognition from my cherished alma mater has special significance for me for many reasons. First, and it better be foremost, Mary accepted my SAE fraternity pin at Michigan State. We have many pleasant memories together of our college days. Second, I received my early communications practical experience editing the Michigan State University news and being a newscaster, probably the first (1934) on WKAR, the 5000 watt college radio station. Third, through the years I always felt a special bond with Michigan State -- I paid my alumni club dues and make donations -- not so much in appreciation for what the college did for me, but kinda in reparation for what I did to it with my scandal-mongering news column in the State News and my occasional nerdistic exploits on campus.

Mary joins me in being proud of the remarkable MSU growth and progress over the years. We are happy to now be graduates of a large prestigious university rather than a small college, of a Big 10 school rather than an underdog independent. We are especially proud of the continued growth and progress under the superb progressive leadership of MSU President Peter McPherson.

So thanks again for adding such a meaningful MSU award to my lifetime pleasant experiences -- I am especially honored and pleased and I like to think that our great former MSU President, Dr. John Hannah, and my MSU journalism professor, Dr. Albert Nelson, up there somewhere, are pleased too.

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