

1020

Remarks: Former FCC Commissioner - Chairman Jim Quello at
Williard Hotel Dinner recognizing donors to the Quello Communications Centers
Endowed Chair at Michigan State University
May 13, 1998

All I can say is "Wow."

You all honor me with your presence and support tonight and I'm overwhelmed.

I should just shout "thank you Everybody" and sit down –

Quit while I'm way ahead and not spoil the impressive effect with my speech making.

Sometimes in life, the dreams of the future surpass the actual history of my past – but it is not destined to be the case tonight. I revel in the positive actuality of this most memorable event.

This occasion tonight merits special appreciation. I'm grateful for the support of all those attending and I also appreciate the congressional and communications leaders who thoughtfully called to express their support, but who could not attend due to urgent prior commitments. (A few had fund raisers this very night and I fully appreciate that's a prime urgency).

I want to express a special thank you to the chairmen and ranking members of the Senate and House Communications Committee who graciously agreed to serve as honorary chairmen, to the FCC Commissioners for their friendly support and also to MSU President Peter McPherson and Communications Dean Jim Spaniolo for their initiating the dinner and for their dedicated efforts in establishing an endowed chair or a communications center.

Also, I think the presence of world communications leader Rupert Murdoch merits special acknowledgment. I was first impressed with him when he came in with John Kluge to announce purchase of MetroMedia stations.

I liked his style – open, direct, no hidden agenda – all questions promptly and directly answered. You genuinely get what you see in Mr. Murdoch. Of course, you also get what you

hear – strong, straight-forward bottomline opinions with minimal BS. I appreciate his taking time tonight to support a non-voting former commissioner who is weathering the transition from governmental kissee to kissor.

I was tipped off about the upcoming impressive tributes from congressional, FCC and communication leaders. So me, an ordinary working stiff manager or VP, just couldn't help indulging in some grandiose, expansive thinking.

I mentioned to Eddie Fritts, Dick Wiley and Brian Fontes, who are active members of the communications chair project, that there's only one thing that could top world leaders Rupert Murdoch, Tom Murphy and the congressional leaders. It would be for the committee to use its vast influence to see if the pope could possibly invoke or create some kind of laudatory message from the Great Communicator in the Sky, the Lord himself!

I'm not sure, but I think it was my longtime friend, Dick Wiley, who exerted his personal First Amendment rights by telling me "Jim you may have been great as a commissioner and chairman, but we get an indirect message that, in other respects, you might have trouble qualifying for even Catholic purgatory." Well, so much for longtime, intimate friends who are blunt lawyers.

Also an unnamed punster wisecracked -- now, I think it was another longtime friend, and exceedingly blunt lawyer, Bernie Koteen, who confirmed I was a natural pope reject "With some of your raunchy quotes from "FCBA and other speeches, it is only logical to assume your a below-average pope-ularity rating."

Now for a little reminiscence --

Some of you may remember two years ago when contemplating the end of my term (my regular term ended June 30, 1996 – I served over a year later through November 3, 1997 – by

either popular demand (wishful thinking) or more likely, congressional forbearance”). Anyway, I warned at that time “Don’t lame duck me too soon. I have ambitions to be reappointed as the first active wheelchair commissioner!” That was after I actually witnessed competitive two-bounce wheelchair tennis matches at a NATPE-INTV convention. Some of you may know that I now use psychology in tennis. When missing a tough shot, I now shout “Hell, when I was only 79, I would have killed that shot.”

I relinquished that wheelchair ambition for an opportunity to cap my career in the fascinating but less hectic environment of lecturer at Michigan State University, the alma mater for wife, Mary, and me. I announced my intention of leaving the FCC by stating: “I’ll serve until someone is confirmed in my place or until I reach my mental pause.”

Incidentally, Mary and I graduated from a state college of 4000 students; a warm-up school in sports for prestigious, larger universities. We were delighted to return as proud alumni of a thriving university of over 44,000 and a formidable competitor in academics and sports.

We are especially delighted that the destinies of MSU are in the capable hands of a great, progressive President, Peter McPherson.

I suppose a noteworthy fact about Mary and I being here together is that last September we observed, our 60th wedding anniversary -- a rousing testimonial to her sense of humor and tolerance. She always had a very positive individual outlook in life. For example she didn’t believe in women’s equality. She refused to step down. Her hot flashes were merely power surges. But she was always very good at letting me have her way. I hope she will continue to letting me have her way for some time to come.

Of course, most of you have heard that I really believe in marriage. If it weren’t for marriage some men might go through life thinking they had no faults at all.

Naturally, I am particularly pleased that there has been considerable progress in funding an endowed chair or possibly a communications center in our name. It will mark quite a change of pace from the hectic, contentious FCC regulatory battles. I like to gloat that I haven't missed an official FCC meeting or an award in 23-1/2 years.

The FCC career has been anything but dull – debates, controversy, highlights and low-lights, occasional aspersions cast on the legitimacy of my birth by disappointed FCC petitioners. But, overall, it was the most satisfying and productive period of my career.

Now, I want to share with you just a few of my more memorable recent highlights of my FCC career.

One of the more memorable, pleasant events of my life was last May when Tom Murphy, former Capital Cities-ABC Board Chairman and one of the truly great communications executives, presented me with an IRTS Lifetime Achievement award at the annual luncheon in New York.

He stated that if Commissioner Jim Quello had kept his Capital Cities stock, he would now have 23½ million dollars, so every year he served on the FCC cost him a million dollars.”

I thanked Murph for making a big man out of me and said “The Lord did not ordain me to be a wealthy man, he wanted me to be a besieged, beleaguered SOB and that's what I am in this job.”

Another memorable event was the first Capital Cities Alumni dinner in New York in early December where I visited with all my former working stiff VPs and managers who are now multi-millionaires due to the brilliant and beneficent management skills of the Tom Murphy-Dan Burke Capital Cities-ABC team.

Tom and Dan also got Warren Buffet to speak at the Capitol Cities alumni meeting. I expected a quiet, genius recluse type, but found a delightful outgoing person. I had the pleasure of visiting with him for over 20 minutes.

I received three fascinating photos of Mr. Buffett and I exchanging viewpoints. I proudly showed them to my staff with my own original caption "Multi-billionaire Warren Buffett receiving financial advice from hundrednaire Jim Quello." I mentioned this in my speech before the annual convention of the National Association of Program Executives. I was pleasantly surprised to receive a warm letter from Mr. Buffett which displayed a well-honed sense of humor which read:

Dear Jim -

"I loved your talk. In fact, I'm going to steal the material to use for myself.

I was glad to get your financial advice. Now that I have talked to you, people seem to pay more attention to my opinion on markets and fiscal matters.

Murph has told me a lot of great things about you over the years, and now I've confirmed them for myself.

Best regards. Sincerely, Warren E. Buffett

I'm going to will that letter to one of my favorite grandchildren along with tonight's photos with Rupert Murdoch.

I had previously informed Mr. Buffett who is worth an estimated 31 billion that I always had been very successful at eluding wealth whenever it got too close to me.

But wealth or no wealth, I have been truly blessed.

Personally, I'm cheerfully confronting the dismal prospect that I have lived 5/6 of my life. I have no regrets. I'm a happy camper. First, I graduated from a great university that provided the education and broad based liberal arts and communications background for whatever I was able to accomplish in life. Then I really had a great run in life with three exciting careers -- Army, broadcasting and FCC. My late in life (age 59 through 83), FCC career was the most important, exciting and gratifying. I'm honored that my name is destined to be associated with my university in perpetuity through an endowed chair and possibly a Mary and Jim Quello Communications Center and I'm grateful for your support and attendance tonight.

In conclusion, there are two homespun philosophical messages that I want to share with you.

First: Cherish all the happy memories throughout your life. They will be a comforting cushion in old age.

Second, and if you've heard it before it is worth repeating: "Resolve to be tender with the young, compassionate with the old, sympathetic to the striving and tolerant of the weak and wrong -- sometime in life you will have been all of those." I have, and I am grateful for the compassionate and generous recognition.

And a final message I gave to the MSU grads at commencement last week that I believe has universal application. The message: "As you face the tribulations, disappointments and triumphs of life -- remember that in the final advanced stages in life what really counts along with some sense of accomplishment are good health, reasonable economic sufficiency and the affection and respect of family ^{and} friends. With all these, I really feel truly blessed -- I wish you the same." That was my closing message to graduating students and now, to all of you.

So again, heartfelt thanks for this most memorable lifetime experience and may the Lord
be with you but not too soon.