

Response to 87th Birthday
Dinner Party - The Willard Hotel
April 4, 2001

87! Wow, I can't be that ancient! The number must have been mistakenly transposed. I hope to pass as a vital 78 and even that is hard for me to accept.

You know everyone wants to live a long time but no one wants to grow old. So I'm doing my best to bridge that awkward gap. I have enthusiastic friends who keep greeting me at conventions and meetings with "you look great!" In fact, one attractive lady, a prominent communications attorney, said "you not only look great, but you have the vital spirit of a 25 year old." I replied, "Thanks, I only wish I had the other attributes of a 25 year old."

After intensive contemplation, I have reached the conclusion that one can't get out of life alive so why not enjoy it to the fullest? You can die as a spectator in the bleachers or you can die actively on the field. So you might as well get out on the field of life and have a good time. Enjoy the great adventure. Make it the most positively charged experience possible. I want to flash out, not rust out. But not for dramatic effect, here in front of you.

I heard an entertaining story on aging that I want to share with you. A senior citizen was taking a walk in the park and was amazed when he came upon a talking frog. The frog looked up and said "Sir, I am under an evil spell. If you will only kiss me, I will turn into a beautiful young woman. I would be so grateful I would do anything for you – please my gratitude would know no bounds – we would have a great time."

The senior citizen put the frog in his pocket and kept walking. The talking frog again pleaded with him --"What are you waiting for? Remember, I would be grateful and I would do anything for you – as a pretty young woman we could have a lot of fun."

The old-timer said “I appreciate that, but at my age, I could have a lot more fun just having a talking frog.”

Now for a word about my hectic career with its trials, tribulations, disappointments and accomplishments.

Naturally, I salute Michigan State for a most memorable career climax. I consider it the ultimate honor that my late wife’s name and my name will be associated with our beloved alma mater in perpetuity through the James H. and Mary B. Quello Center for Telecommunications Management and Law. For me it is the paramount capstone of a long, varied career that originated with the Michigan State Newspaper and at WKAR, the 5000 watt college radio station.

So, I’m taking this opportunity to express thanks to Michigan State University and to Communications Dean Jim Spaniolo and especially to your generous contributions to the Communications Center, for this memorable gratifying and most enduring of lifetime monuments. The Quello Center is becoming a major force in telecommunications research and policy analysis. Articles by Director Steve Wildman and Associate Director Barbara Cherry are appearing in major newspapers with credits to the Quello Center.

As for me, personally, I’m confronting the prospect that I have already lived most of my life. However, I have no regrets and I’m grateful for whatever generic vigor that remains.

In a rather unique way, I have been very successful – very successful at eluding wealth whenever it came close to me. (Quote Tom Murphy’s 23-1/2 million – now \$70 to 80 million and son Dick’s quote)

But monetary wealth or no wealth, I have been truly blessed. I really had a pretty good run in life with three exciting careers – army, broadcasting and the FCC. The FCC career was

the most important, exciting and gratifying. Also, I am now lucky to have a lovely lady who is helping me bridge that gap between living long and not growing too old. I've been alone for almost four years and we believe Mary would approve our companionship. Stephanie is very fond of two Yorkie dogs which she takes on necessary walks outside our condo. Mary used to tell me "She is pretty, independent and adds a touch of class to the condominium." When we saw Stephanie walking the two dogs we would say "there go the three thoroughbreds."

And now my final message as you face the tribulations, disappointments and triumphs of life – I like to remind everyone that in the final stages of life what really counts are some sense of accomplishment, good health, reasonable economic sufficiency and the affection and respect of family and friends. I am blessed and fulfilled by your presence today and your friendship. That's all the wealth I ever aspired to.

Thanks to all of you for adding such a pleasant event to my most cherished lifetime memories.