

MAB COMMENTS

"OUTSTANDING CITIZEN AWARD"

April 25, 1989

Heartfelt thanks etc. I especially appreciate your presenting this prestigious award and eulogy pre-posthumous.

This award tonight has a very special significance to me for many reasons.

First, it is being presented by the Michigan Association of Broadcasters at their annual Congressional dinner -- a dinner originated 32 years ago at my suggestion when I was president of the MAB.

Secondly, the MAB was the organization that was initially responsible for my seeking an FCC commissionership. Carl Lee, president of Fetzer broadcasting, sponsored the initial MAB resolution that was mailed to the Michigan delegation and Les Biederman, a great pioneer and then owner of the Paul Bunyan network, assumed an active role as a campaign manager.

Third, and most significant, the award is being presented before the Michigan congressional delegation whose bipartisan support made my commissionership possible.

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Senate whip Bob Griffin and then Congressman Jerry Ford got me nominated in early 1974 and Senator Phil Hart and Chairman John Pastore got me confirmed with vital support from such stellar confirmation witnesses as longtime friend and communications Godfather John Dingell; Martha Griffiths, then a respected member of the influential Ways and Means Committee, and my own congressman Lu Nedzi. Good friend Bill Ford and Judge Damon Keith also volunteered as my witnesses. So a special thanks to them who were responsible for my eventually attaining a unanimous vote for my confirmation. For those that can remember back in 1974 -- my first confirmation became unexpectedly contentious. The next two confirmations each took 20 minutes. At my last confirmation, Senator Don Riegle was a surprise witness with a stellar supporting statement I should have recorded, transcribed and framed for my grandchildren. Thank you Don. Also as I was nominated by Republican presidents, I also owe special thanks to Guy Vander Jagt for endorsing my nominations and to Bill Broomfield and Carl Purcell for their support over the years. And a special thanks, too, to that great bipartisan Chairman, Dick Wiley, for his special friendship and advice.

Senator Barry Goldwater who chaired my last confirmation asked "Commissioner, are you willing to serve your full term? I said "Senator, if God is willing, I'm willing."

And that brings up why this award has a special significance for a personal reason -- ^{occasion} ~~four days ago~~ ^{last year} I reached a significant or unmentionable chronological milestone in my life! I scowled in a mirror and whispered "You old bat -- you are 75 years old and probably in the dawn of your senility but as long as you have 70% of your marbles (a good local norm), I'll let you hang in there." Actually, I feel too young to be that old! Someone recently asked me "What kind of a year did you have, Jim?" I said "Great! I was here when it started and I was still here when it ended." But there could be some advantage to age when going through the kind of confirmation hearings they have these days -- with the involuntary celibacy of the golden years, I could say with conviction: "No, I'm not a womanizer -- at my age, I'm now a fantasizer." I could even repeat my old claim that I now play R and X rated movies backwards because at my age, I now like to see people get dressed and go home.

However, I am comforted by my delusions of adequacy. I'm guided somewhat by Malcolm Forbes' saying (although I never paid much attention to that old bat until he started dating Liz Taylor, a much younger and prettier old bat). Anyway, Forbes says "You are never too old until you admit it or are no longer around to deny it."

On another personal note, I've been lucky in getting 51 annual marriage license renewals without any petitions to deny. Mary claims she never considered divorce -- murder several times, but divorce never. Our longevity is a testimonial to the value of a woman's sense of humor. Besides, she was always willing to let me have her way. Let the record show, I'm for marriage. If it weren't for marriage, many men might go through life thinking they had no faults at all.

On a more temperate note, I want to share with this audience my favorite classic quote on the positive aspect of aging. It is by that great German philosopher Goethe who said "It is only necessary to grow old to become more charitable and even indulgent. I see no fault committed by others that I have not committed myself."

I try to remember Goethe when passing personal judgments on others. At my age, an active tennis-playing, call 'em as you see 'em, 75 with over two more years to serve, I'm not looking for anything but decent, effective government in a strong, socially-progressive America. The Michigan delegation represents that kind of social and vocational commitment. So thanks to all of you for adding such a memorable honor to my lifetime pleasant experiences and again, special thanks for presenting this award pre-posthumous -- while I'm around to enjoy it and enjoy your friendship!