

REMARKS BY COMMISSIONER JAMES H. QUELLO
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Thanks, Bob, for that generous introduction. You have heard me say that all I am, ever was, or hope to be, I owe to my talented, tolerant, legal assistants and staff.

It is gratifying and even flattering that I have distinguished alumni from my office in important jobs all over Washington that still call me "boss" -- I hope affectionately.

When someone asked how this came about -- right in front of my Congressional Godfather, Communications Chairman John Dingell, I said in my most authoritarian voice -- They better. I was a Lt. Colonel combat battalion commander in the Army!! When the shock wore off then, I really explained how it happens -- I tell the talented people joining my staff not to consider me their boss. Just consider me your friend who is never, never wrong! Next day they call me "boss" and I have lost my infallibility -- which turned out to be really fortunate for me.

As a longtime aficionado of The Media Institute's persistent advocacy of First Amendment rights and its promulgation of journalistic excellence, I am delighted to be here to participate in the award ceremonies of a highly-respect Senator and a distinguished cable leader.

Of course, as a fugitive from the actuarial law of averages, I'm delighted to be anywhere. You may have heard, I'm now greeted like many in the late stage of life -- You know the three stages -- youth, age and you look great!

I feel reasonably great, but I don't take three year subscriptions or store green bananas. But I don't feel age is a problem for me. I like to think that everything I did years ago, I can still do today -- well almost everything.

You may have heard an updated version of my old saying: "Anyone who says he can do at 80 what he could at 40 wasn't leading too exciting a life at 40." In fact, whenever I goof at home, my wife Mary threatens to turn me in for two 40s -- and when really annoyed, she warns, "You will never make our 60th Jimbo." However, we did observe, or I would like to say celebrated, our 59th anniversary last September -- a rousing tribute to her sense of humor.

One of the mixed blessings of advanced senior citizenship is you no longer have to avoid temptation. Temptation avoids you.

I recently regaled FCBA members at a luncheon confessing that with the involuntary celibacy of the golden years, I now read Playboy Magazine for the same reason I read National Geographic -- to see fascinating places I never get to visit.

As my tennis partner, Dick Wiley, will attest I still play tennis every week. I call it my last desperate clutch at youth. Now when I miss a tough shot, I use psychology -- I yell "When I was only 79, I would have killed that shot!"

Actually, I'm kinda lucky my physiology hasn't really caught up with my chronology. I'm lucky too, that I have been re-appointed to the FCC on three different occasions with the unassailable platform of "delusions of adequacy and 75% of my marbles -- a good local norm in Washington."

I also want to mention that I developed a much stronger ecumenical sense as I grew older. I now personally accept all religions because I don't want to blow an opportunity for some kind of merciful eternal salvation on a religious technicality.

Enough for the heavy part of my introductory warm-up speech, now for the lighter more interesting side.

I was informed that the presenter of the Freedom of Speech Award to Senator Leahy will be John Perry Barlow, the famous lyricist for the Grateful Dead. As a current appreciative member of the "grateful live," I'm very impressed and look forward to his introductory remarks.

Senator Leahy is an impressive figure. I never had the privilege of personally working with him, but I first met him, and then repeatedly saw him, at Italian-American Foundation meetings and occasionally at Jack Valenti receptions.

When my totally Irish wife first saw him at an Italian-American function, she asked "What is that good looking combative Irishman doing here with all you nice, peace-loving Wopperoos?" I countered with "What part of Shanty country Ireland did your grandparents come from?"

Anyway, we looked up Senator Leahy's genealogy. I am happy to proclaim that Senator Leahy's mother was Italian -- the same as my Ma and Pa. He is a distinguished popular government official who becomes combative primarily in defending free speech - particularly in cyberspace.

So congratulations, paisan, and best wishes for many more years of distinguished achievement.

My good friend and occasional tennis rival, John Hendricks, originator and producer of the prestigious Discovery Channel, will be presented the American Horizon Award by James H. Billington, the venerable librarian of Congress.

John knows that the Discovery Channel is my favorite cable channel. He is also making an outstanding public service contribution with his innovative Learning Channel.

I particularly enjoy the fascinating animal program on Discovery. And I'm grateful John isn't imbued with the Hollywood violence and sex syndrome. Just imagine the ratings and money he could attract by matching a lion against a tiger or a bear, a leopard against a hyena or a pit bull versus a timber wolf! The possible sex interactions we leave to your imaginations.

So John we are grateful that you and your productions are a real class act. Congratulations on your well deserved American Horizon Award and we are all looking forward to learning more about you and your production from Mr. Billington.

I also offer my congratulations to Patrick Maines and The Media Institute Board for selecting such superbly qualified distinguished awardees. Thanks, too, for allowing me to play a small part in this prestigious annual event.

Now back to Bob -- I sit down in front.

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