

**REMARKS BY COMMISSIONER JAMES H. QUELLO  
ON THE OCCASION OF BEING HONORED AT  
THE 23RD ANNIVERSARY OF HIS SERVICE AT THE FCC  
APRIL 30, 1997**

Heartfelt thanks to my fellow Commissioners and my good friends of the 23rd Anniversary dinner committee for adding such a momentous event to my pleasant lifetime experiences.

As a fugitive from the actuarial law of averages, I especially appreciate receiving all these eulogies while I'm still here to enjoy them and enjoy your company.

I have outlived my normal life expectancy by 10 years -- a possible source of annoyance to some.

And, I still like to quote the three stages of life -- youth, age and the final stage, you look great! I feel great but I don't take out 3 year subscriptions or store green bananas. Anyway, I'm grateful that my physiology hasn't caught up with my chronology.

I'm truly honored by all the gracious comments and gratified that performing my duties in accordance with my unassailable last reappointment campaign platform of "delusions of adequacy and 75% of my marbles -- a good Washington norm" has found such charitable widespread acceptance.

This almost miraculous reception tonight has renewed my faith in religion -- all religions. Some of you may have heard that with my advanced golden years, I have developed a much stronger ecumenical sense. 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.

So, Chairman Reed, Commissioners Ness and Chong, I appreciate your organizing this fantastic event. This is a wonderful turn-out -- I had no idea that invitations from three Commissioners including the Chairman would be interpreted as a command appearance by so many and I'm grateful.

As for my present position, I'm a happy camper, particularly after this generous showing tonight. It is relaxing to be in the position of really not seeking reappointment during these contentious times. And I like to gloat that I haven't missed an official meeting or an award in 23 years.

Some of you may remember that two years ago when contemplating the end of my term, I warned "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 in Dallas. (Some of you and particularly my perennial tennis partner, Dick Wiley, know that I now use psychology in tennis. When missing a tough shot, I usually shout "Hell, when I was only 79, I would have killed that shot."

I relinquished that wheelchair tennis 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. And, I'm particularly pleased there has been some interest expressed in eventually funding an endowed chair in my name. I'm pleased, too, that the Dean of the MSU Communications Department is with us tonight -- Dean Jim Spaniolo, a communications expert who is also a lawyer.

It will mark quite a change of pace from the hectic, contentious FCC regulatory issues interactions.

So many things have happened to the communications media since April 30, 1974, the date I came to the Commission. Personal computers were just introduced and there was no thought they would become a dazzling new communications device. The Internet was unheard of. The cable industry was in its infancy in 1974. Mobile phones were in their infancy. There were no superstations, no HBO. VCRs had not yet been introduced. Congress had no idea of granting FCC auction authority.

All of these things have become commonplace today and they have transformed the world of communications in just 23 years. The communications multi-faceted, multichannel and interactive capabilities are mind-boggling and deserve a more official forum in some future full text speech.

As most of you realize, government regulatory deliberations can result in a clash of philosophy and ideas, but it is not a blood sport . . . . The "blood" aspect can be easily neutralized by openness, humor and civility -- kinda like we are enjoying tonight.

In fact, I was practically over-prepped for FCC struggles or any type of government conflict by real blood so-called "sports" in WW II.

FCC conflicts in no way compares with the intensity, hazards and shock of wartime combat, the ultimate in blood "sports" -- Assault landings I experienced in Africa, Sicily, Italy, France and Germany would be grossly mischaracterized as "sports."

In fact, the survivorship instinct attained by my early combat experience came in handy when I endured an all time record breaking 8-day confirmation hearing in 1974 and also later for dealing with intensely argued controversial issues.

My Army experience also became a handy factor for my third reappointment hearing.

In this regard, I have been blessed by having empathetic Senate Subcommittee or Committee Chairmen for my confirmation hearings as well as the support of many members. In the past, Senators John Pastore, Phil Hart, Bob Griffin and President Jerry Ford supported me; and, over the years, I have enjoyed the support of Senators Fritz Hollings, Dan Inouye, Conrad Burns, Ted Stevens, John Breaux, Jay Rockefeller, Byron Dorgan, Wendell Ford, and recently, Senator Spencer Abraham.

*Chuck Robb  
Don Riegle  
Larry Pressly*

Looking back, I reported for my fourth confirmation to Senate Communications Subcommittee Chairman, Dan Inouye, a wounded WW II hero who served in the distinguished Japanese-American 442nd combat team in Italy. I was in Italy the same time he was and I considered Japanese-American soldiers to be the best troops in the Army -- like having a regiment of paratroop rangers in line.

I stood at attention when reporting to Senator Inouye and did everything but salute. I said "Sir, reporting for duty."

The good Senator opened with "Jim, how long do you want this one to last? I understand you broke all records for length of regulatory hearings in 1974 -- 8 hearings!"

I replied "Longer than that, Senator, eight days! -- And I really appreciate your attitude."

He said, "How would you like to try for one of the shortest? How about fifteen minutes or less? We know all about your FCC record and we have your written replies to our list of questions."

Senator Inouye opened with some gracious comments about my 17 years of service and I believe the hearing lasted 12-1/2 minutes, possibly the shortest on record -- the type of record I prefer.

Incidentally, when I became an FCC candidate, my Congressional Godfather, Chairman John Dingell, warned: "Jim, why do you want the damn job -- you'll get beat up by Congress and overruled by the Courts."

Some truth in that, but it is still the most intriguing and important job I ever had and we do, or are expected to, exercise independent judgment. Also, it is not all bad being a regulatory "kissie" rather than a higher paid "kissor" for 23 years.

As many of you know, Big John had the capability of making "beat up by Congress" a self-fulfilling prophecy.

When asked by a reporter last month about my most memorable experience, I admitted "Probably and painfully, the 8-day initial controversial confirmation hearing 23 years ago." The entire hearing story should be an intriguing chapter in my book -- if I ever get it written. Anyway, that's the long and short of my hearings.

With all the gracious comments tonight, I can resist the temptation to indulge in self-glorification. I won't tell you about all my pre-posthumous awards and citations from varied industry and academic entities that I always ascribe to the venerability of senior citizenship. When you become venerable you get credit for virtues you never had and I'm grateful.

Also, at award functions at cable, broadcasting and wireless functions, I would add "This honor is particularly gratifying because I have been around long enough to have voted against all of you at least once." Invariably, they yelled back an irreverent "twice!"

I'll also resist repeating spicy (over quotable) remarks on the foibles of the involuntary celibacy of senior citizenship. My home censor, wife Mary, said, "For God's sake, don't repeat that raunchy 12-year old joke of yours -- You know where you state, "At my age, I like to play X-rated movies backwards because now I like to see people get dressed and go home" -- Yep, that's what she told me not to say. I have other remarks that might be more appropriate for a Howard Stern interview -- again you can read them in my book if I ever get it written. (Sterling "Red" Quinlan -- Italian idiom letter) About the book -- I'm overloaded with amusing anecdotes about the foibles, trials and tribulations of FCC survivorship with a few zings but no character assassinations.

I recently stated, "All I am, ever was or hope to be, I owe to my loyal staff."

So, it is time to acknowledge that whatever success or acceptance I have enjoyed as an FCC Commissioner, I owe to the professionalism and competence of the FCC bureau chiefs and their staff and, particularly, to being blessed by an incredibly bright dedicated personal staff over the past 23 years.

As many of you know, they still call me "boss" -- I think affectionately even years after they have gone on to economically bigger and better things. Perhaps I should take a minute to tell you how the "boss" moniker came about -- etc.

Only a few of you may know that I was coached by hand signals and facial expressions from my ever concerned, loyal staff.

I was lucky the cameras never focused on my staff during some of my pontifications from the bench at official FCC meetings. It could have been embarrassing.

For example:

Sr. Advisor "Pete" Belvin -- "No, no -- don't go there."

Mo O'Connell -- Warning smile, hunched shoulders -- "Hell, you'll probably get away with it."

Kathy Abernathy -- Smiling, pointing finger -- "I warned you."

Dave Donovan and Robert Corn-Revere -- Holding their heads in their hands -- "Holy hell, there he goes again!"

Sr. Advisor/former FCC Chief of Staff Brian Fontes -- Encouraging come-on signal -- "You are right on target -- more, more."

Current Sr. Advisor Rudy Baca -- Registering approval on one item with thumbs up -- "Right on!"

Ken Howard and Shel Guttman -- Hunched shoulders, reconciled: "What the hell, he's doing his best."

So, I'm again blessed with super-bright dedicated staff associates in Rudy Baca, Marsha MacBride and Jim Coltharp. So far, Marsha and Jim have camouflaged their feelings at the FCC meetings probably because I've become pretty good at obeying instructions.

Many tonight also know I have been blessed with a positive, seasoned personality and psycho-therapist in my C.A., Ginger Clark, backed up by quiet, efficient, computer-wise Sandy Faulk.

So blessed again with a great staff; and, the Lord, Michigan State University and my wife willing, I plan to serve until someone is confirmed in my place or until I reach my mental-pause.

Speaking of my wife, she really merits special recognition too. She deserves a distinguished lifetime achievement award. We have been married for 59-1/2 years -- a rousing testimonial to her sense of humor.

At MSU, she was the good looking, very likeable daughter of a popular, or I should say, generally beloved rival coach, M. H. "Dad" Butler.

My friends in college, or rather I should say acquaintances, would tell me. "I don't understand what she sees in you." I said "Neither do I, but I'm not knocking it." At my wedding ceremony, some of these same acquaintances said "Q, you married way above yourself." Another wise guy cracked, "That's probably the major upward mobility he will ever experience in his entire career." I'm glad Mary and I met before the current trend that many women want a man in their life, but not in their house.

But now after 59 years, I'm still lucky -- in all those years she never filed a petition to deny license renewal.

She admits she entertained justifiable murder several times but never divorce because it was against her Irish Catholic upbringing.

She has been a major factor in my maintaining a becoming sense of self unimportance. So, I believe in marriage -- If it weren't for marriage, many men would go through life thinking they had no faults at all.

Once in awhile, Mary threatens me with an unbecoming ethnic slur, "Hey, whopperoo -- One more goof like that and you will never make our 60th -- In fact, I'm going to swap you in for two forties!" She is taking advantage of a statement in my speech last year when I admitted that "Anyone who says he can do at 80 what he could at 40, wasn't leading too active a life at 40."

And, finally she is very good at letting me have her way -- and I hope she will continue to let me have her way for many more years.

More than incidentally, I want to acknowledge the presence of a very special lady in the audience tonight. The widow of Bob Lee, a legendary FCC Commissioner and my very good friend. I'm honored that Mrs. Lee cancelled another engagement to be with us tonight. So, Rose, please stand and be recognized.

So, personally and officially, I have been truly blessed.

As a former ordinary working stiff manager, I am extremely lucky and grateful to be recognized tonight by the respected leaders in industry, government and communications law.

In conclusion, there is one homespun philosophical message that impressed me that I want to share with you tonight.

"Resolve to be tender with the young, compassionate with the aged; sympathetic to the striving and tolerant of the weak and wrong -- sometime in life you will have been all of those." -- I have -- and thanks for your compassion and friendship."

All of you honor me, my family, my staff and the FCC too, with your presence tonight.

So heartfelt thanks, once more, for making this the most memorable event of my entire lifetime career.

And may the Lord be with all of you, but not too soon.

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