

ORIGINAL

20 "May Day"

REMARKS

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PRESENTED AT THE KICK-OFF FOR OLDER AMERICANS MONTH

WASHINGTON, D.C.

MAY 1, 1986

(GREETINGS TO HOSTS, GUESTS, FRIENDS, ETC.)

I WANT TO THANK SECRETARY BOWEN AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY HARDY FOR THE HONORS PRESENTED TO ME THIS MORNING. I ALSO WANT TO EXPRESS MY PLEASURE AT THE "LINKAGE" -- A GOOD WASHINGTON WORD THESE DAYS -- AT THE "LINKAGE" WE'VE ESTABLISHED BETWEEN THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE AND THE ADMINISTRATION ON AGING.

AND I'M DELIGHTED THAT COMMISSIONER FISK FEELS THE SAME WAY ABOUT US.

CONCERN FOR THE ELDERLY IS, OF COURSE, THE BASIS OF THE A.O.A. CHARTER. BUT IT HAS TO BE PART OF OUR CHARTER AS WELL. THE DEMOGRAPHIC FUTURE OF OUR COUNTRY REQUIRES THAT THE PROFESSIONS OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND MEDICINE AND NURSING BEGIN TO PAY MORE ATTENTION TO THE HEALTH NEEDS OF THE ELDERLY.

THAT'S AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FOR THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE TO PREACH...AND, THEREFORE, IT'S A GOOD MESSAGE FOR US TO PRACTICE.

OUR JOINT P.H.S.-A.O.A. CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE THE HEALTH OF OLDER AMERICANS IS GOOD FOR AMERICA. BUT IT'S ESPECIALLY GOOD FOR US, WHO OUGHT TO BE -- AND WHO WANT TO BE -- SOCIETY'S "HEALTH CONSCIENCE."

THE ACTIVITIES WE'VE SPONSORED TOGETHER HAVE MADE HEALTH PROFESSIONALS EVERYWHERE MORE SENSITIVE TO WHAT OLDER PEOPLE NEED FROM THE HEALTH SYSTEM...MORE SENSITIVE TO WHAT THEIR FAMILIES NEED...AND MORE SENSITIVE TO WHAT SOCIETY IN GENERAL NEEDS IN ORDER TO MAKE SURE THAT, FOR EVERY INDIVIDUAL, LIFE IN AMERICA AT AGE 70 IS EVERY BIT AS HEALTHFUL -- AND AS HOPEFUL -- AS LIFE AT AGE 30.

BUT WISHING ALONE WON'T MAKE IT HAPPEN. THAT'S WHY THIS PROGRAM IS SO IMPORTANT. IT FOCUSES ATTENTION ON THOSE SPECIFIC THINGS THAT PROMOTE THE HEALTH OF OLDER PERSONS:

* PREVENTION OF ACCIDENTAL INJURIES, FOR ONE, WHICH IS THE SCOURGE OF THE ELDERLY. THE HIGHEST RATE OF ACCIDENTAL INJURY AND DEATH OCCURS AMONG PEOPLE OVER THE AGE OF 65.

* ANOTHER IS BETTER NUTRITION. AS THE BODY GROWS OLDER, IT REQUIRES A DIFFERENT BALANCE OF FOODS AND SOME CHANGES IN THE DAILY DIET. OUR PROGRAM SENDS THAT KIND OF INFORMATION OUT TO OLDER PEOPLE EVERYWHERE.

* A THIRD ACTIVITY IS THE TEACHING OF THE WISE USE OF MEDICINES. IT'S TRUE THAT WE'VE ACHIEVED MIRACLES WITH ALL SORTS OF NEW DRUGS. TAKEN ONE AT A TIME, ILLNESS-BY-ILLNESS, THESE DRUGS CAN CONTRIBUTE TO A PERSON'S LONGER, HEALTHIER LIFE. BUT OLDER PEOPLE TEND TO HAVE MORE THAN ONE ILLNESS AT A TIME AND SO THEY TAKE A VARIETY OF MEDICATIONS IN THE COURSE OF A SINGLE DAY.

KEEPING TRACK OF SUCH A REGIMEN IS A SPECIFIC SKILL THAT WE'RE TRYING TO TEACH. WE KNOW THAT THE WISE MANAGEMENT OF A PERSON'S TOTAL MEDICINE CHEST IS JUST AS CRUCIAL TO LONG LIFE AS EACH OF THE MEDICINES STORED INSIDE.

OBVIOUSLY, I'M DELIGHTED TO BE PART OF A PROGRAM THAT HAS SUCH LOFTY GOALS BUT ALSO HAS SUCH PRAGMATIC WAYS OF ACHIEVING THEM.

AND ANOTHER THING. MR. SECRETARY, I HAVE TO CONFESS THAT WHAT I ALSO LIKE ABOUT THIS JOINT EFFORT IS THAT IT'S GOT A LOT OF FUN IN IT:

IT ENCOURAGES OLDER PEOPLE TO PUT ON BAGGY CLOTHES AND JUMP UP AND DOWN TO THE MUSIC OF WHITNEY HOUSTON AND KENNY ROGERS. IT'S GOOD EXERCISE, BUT IT'S ALSO A LOT OF FUN...

AND THERE ARE HEALTH FAIRS WHERE YOU GET ALL CHECKED UP IN THE COMPANY OF GOOD FRIENDS YOUR OWN AGE WHO HAVE ALL THE LATEST JOKES ABOUT BLOOD PRESSURE...

AND THERE ARE RECIPE CONTESTS AND WALKS-FOR-HEALTH AND CLASSES IN SAFETY BACK AT THE OLD HIGH SCHOOL, WHERE YOU CAN FINALLY CALL THE PRINCIPAL BY HIS FIRST NAME WITHOUT BEING PUT "ON REPORT."

SO I LIKE THIS PROGRAM AND I'M PROUD TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH IT.

AND ONE FINAL WORD. I'M PLEASED TO BE HONORED IN THIS WAY, BUT NONE OF THIS WOULD COME ABOUT, IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE PERSONNEL OF OUR TWO AGENCIES BREATHING LIFE INTO THE BASIC IDEA. I KNOW COMMISSIONER FISK SHARES MY FEELINGS.

WHEN PEOPLE USE THE WORD "BUREAUCRACY," THEY TEND TO MEAN SOMETHING NEGATIVE. BUT WHEN I HEAR THAT WORD, FRANKLY I THINK OF THE DEDICATED PEOPLE IN BOTH OUR BUREAUCRACIES WHO LABOR EVERY DAY ON BEHALF OF OLDER MEN AND WOMEN EVERYWHERE IN THIS COUNTRY.

SO...FROM ONE OLD BUREAUCRAT TO ANOTHER...I WANT TO THANK EVERYONE WHO'S PLAYED A PART IN THIS JOINT EFFORT. I GRATEFULLY ACCEPT ANY AND ALL HONORS IN THEIR NAMES.

THANK YOU.

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