

The original documents are located in Box 25, “3/9/76 - Remarks at a Banquet for Members of Congress Sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN . . .

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
BANQUET FOR MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS

SHERATON PARK HOTEL

TUESDAY, MARCH 9, 1976

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THANK YOU, PETE (Pete Walker , Commander-in-Chief, VFW)

CONGRESSMAN EDDIE HEBERT

DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE AND SENATE

MEMBERS AND GUESTS OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

THANK YOU FOR YOUR VERY KIND WELCOME.

ALL I CAN SAY IS ~~+~~ IT FEELS AS WARM AND AS COMFORTING
AS A RAY OF FLORIDA SUNSHINE.

AS A PROUD MEMBER OF OLD KENT POST V.F.W. 830,

LET ME SAY HOW HAPPY I AM TO BE HERE WITH YOU TONIGHT

AT THIS ANNUAL BANQUET FOR MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS

*I've attended + Enjoyed
1*

AND MY CONGRATULATIONS TO JOAN LARSON AND ALL THE

OTHER WINNERS OF THE V.F.W. "VOICE OF DEMOCRACY" CONTEST.

LET ME START BY SAYING THAT THIS AFTERNOON

AT THE WHITE HOUSE I RECEIVED A VISIT FROM A FELLOW MICHIGANDER

NAMED MARLA MARAQUIN (MARE-A-QUIN) --

THE V.F.W. BUDDY POPPY GIRL FOR 1976. What a sweet

young lady.
As she left she
whispered - goodbye
Jing.

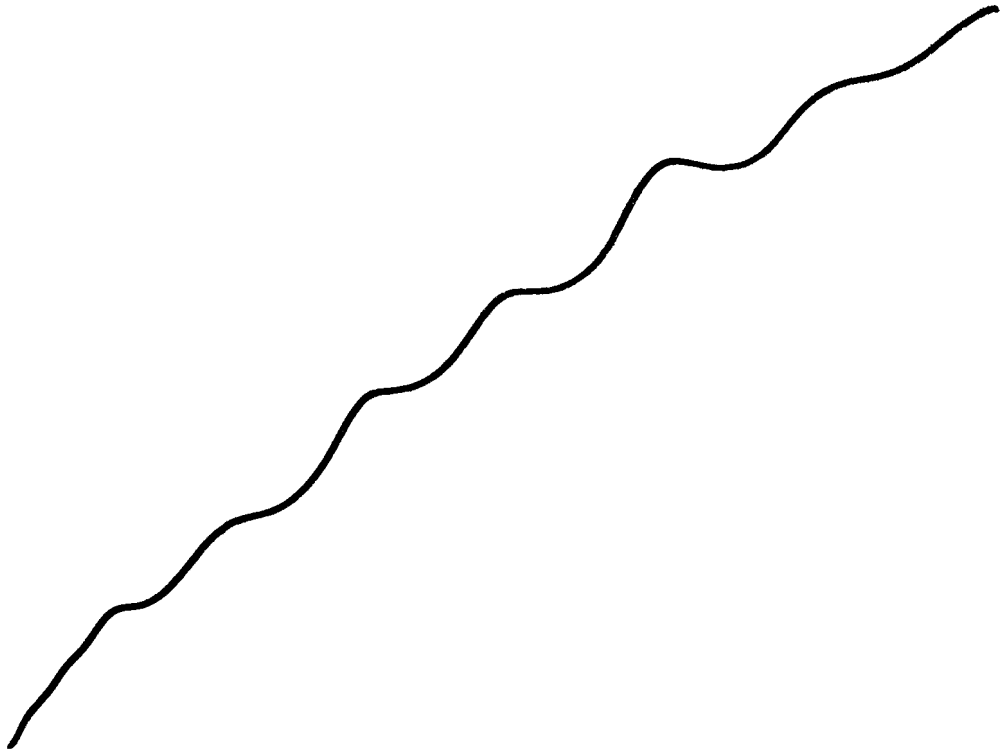
SHE'S A CHARMING TWELVE-YEAR-OLD FROM THE V.F.W.'S

NATIONAL HOME IN EATON RAPIDS, AND I KNOW SHE WILL HELP US

TO HAVE A VERY SUCCESSFUL BUDDY POPPY CAMPAIGN THIS YEAR.

SEEING WHAT THE V.F.W. HAS DONE FOR HER SHOULD MAKE ALL OF US

ESPECIALLY PROUD TO BE MEMBERS OF THIS FINE ORGANIZATION.



I RECALL JUST ABOUT A YEAR AND A HALF AGO,

I HAD THE HONOR OF SPEAKING TO YOUR 75TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

SHORTLY AFTER I BECAME PRESIDENT.

AT THAT TIME I HAD THE PLEASURE OF APPOINTING

DICK ROUDEBUSH -- MY FORMER COLLEAGUE IN THE CONGRESS

AND A PAST NATIONAL COMMANDER OF THE V.F.W., TO BE HEAD

OF THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION. I SAID THEN / I WAS CONFIDENT

THAT ROUDY WOULD DO A FIRST-CLASS JOB, AND 18 MONTHS LATER

I'M GLAD TO SAY / ~~I THINK~~ WE CAN ALL AGREE HE HAS DONE

A FIRST-CLASS JOB.

ROUDY'S FINE WORK AS AN ADMINISTRATOR ASSURES US

THAT VETERANS ARE GOING TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THEIR NEW

V.A. BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 1977.

DESPITE OUR TIGHT FISCAL CONSTRAINTS,

MY BUDGET INCLUDES A RECORD AMOUNT OF OVER FOUR BILLION DOLLARS

FOR V.A. MEDICAL CARE. I HAVE REQUESTED FUNDS

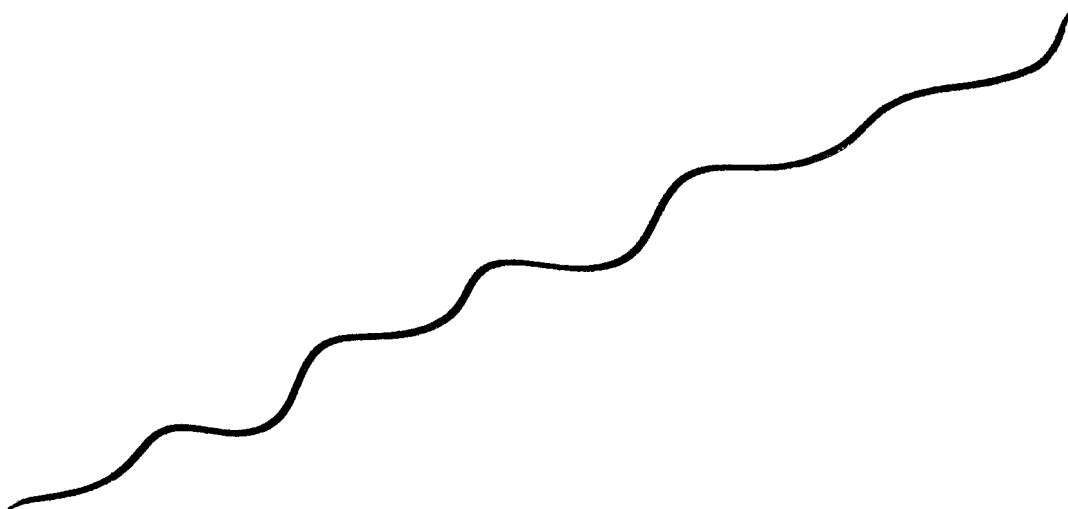
FOR MORE THAN NINE THOUSAND NEW V.A. MEDICAL PERSONNEL

IN THE BUDGETS FOR FISCAL YEARS 1976 AND 1977.

WE ARE GOING TO PROVIDE MORE FUNDING, MORE PEOPLE,

AND EVEN BETTER FACILITIES TO GIVE ELIGIBLE VETERANS

THE HIGHEST QUALITY AND FASTEST POSSIBLE CARE WE CAN PROVIDE.●



ONE VERY DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE CONGRESS

WHO SHARES MY CONCERN FOR VETERANS IS MY GOOD FRIEND

EDDIE HEBERT, WHOM YOU ARE RIGHTLY HONORING TONIGHT.

I HAVE RESPECTED EDDIE'S ENORMOUS TALENTS AND
CAPABILITIES EVER SINCE I ENTERED THE CONGRESS IN 1949.

AT THAT TIME HE HAD ALREADY SPENT ALMOST A DECADE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, AND HE HAD BEEN SERVING

THE AMERICAN PUBLIC EVEN LONGER THAN THAT,

AS A GIFTED AND COURAGEOUS JOURNALIST IN HIS HOME STATE

OF LOUISIANA.

¹⁰⁶
WE SERVED IN THE GOVERNMENT TOGETHER

FOR MORE THAN A QUARTER OF A CENTURY. OVER THAT PERIOD

WE'VE ALWAYS ENJOYED - AND I MEAN ENJOYED --

A CLOSE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP.

I HAVE ALWAYS HAD SPECIAL RESPECT FOR TWO THINGS

THAT EDDIE HEBERT HAS STOOD FOR THROUGHOUT HIS CAREER.

HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A STRONG SUPPORTER OF FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

AND SENSIBLE RESTRAINTS ON GOVERNMENT SPENDING.

AND HE HAS ALWAYS STOOD FOR SOMETHING ELSE

I KNOW ALL OF US IN THIS ROOM BELIEVE IN --

A STRONG AND SECURE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

AND I SALUTE HIM FOR THAT. *We have fought shoulder*

LET ME SAY A FEW WORDS ON THAT SUBJECT TONIGHT.

*To shoulder for the high Defense
dollar & the strongest military
capability for all our forces.*

MY ADMINISTRATION'S FOREIGN POLICY,

AND OUR DEFENSE POLICY, ARE ACTUALLY PART OF A SINGLE

NATIONAL POLICY WHICH CAN BE SUMMED UP IN THREE WORDS:

PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH. LET'S TAKE A MOMENT TO LOOK

AT WHAT THOSE WORDS MEAN.

WE ARE ALL IN FAVOR OF PEACE. AND FOR A VETERAN

THE WORD PEACE HAS SPECIAL MEANING.

THOSE OF US WHO HAVE SEEN WAR CHERISH

THE COMRADESHIP WE ENJOYED, AS INDIVIDUALS BROUGHT TOGETHER

UNDER UNIQUELY DEMANDING CIRCUMSTANCES.

BUT WE REMEMBER THE FRIENDS WE LOST / AS WELL AS

THE FRIENDS WE MADE.

WE WILL NEVER FORGET THE TERRIBLE COST

OF WAR IN TERMS OF HUMAN SUFFERING, / IN BLOOD AND PAIN

AND LIVES CUT TRAGICALLY SHORT.

ANOTHER WORLD WAR, AS WE ARE ALL AWARE,

WOULD MEAN DEATH AND DESTRUCTION ON A SCALE SO VAST

THAT THE HUMAN MIND CAN BARELY COMPREHEND IT.

AND SO PEACE TODAY IS MORE IMPERATIVE THAN EVER.

WHATEVER OUR FIELD OF ENDEAVOR --

IN PRIVATE LIFE, IN BUSINESS, IN GOVERNMENT --

WE KNOW THAT IN A NUCLEAR AGE THERE CAN BE NO

LASTING ACCOMPLISHMENTS WITHOUT A LASTING PEACE•

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IS A PEACEFUL NATION•

AND WE ARE A STRONG NATION• HISTORY HAS TAUGHT US

THAT WE CAN REMAIN AT PEACE ONLY IF WE REMAIN STRONG•

WE CAN REMAIN FREE ONLY IF WE REMAIN FIRM•

WE CAN REMAIN PROUD AMERICANS, ONLY IF WE STAND READY

TO DEFEND AMERICA•

ONE MEASURE OF OUR STRENGTH AS A NATION IS

OUR DEEP-ROOTED BELIEF IN FREEDOM. FOR 200 YEARS OUR FAITH

IN GOVERNMENT BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE HAS ENDURED.

WE HAVE HAD THE STRENGTH TO RESIST THE STRAINS

THAT MIGHT HAVE BROKEN THE WILL OF OTHERS.

OUR STRENGTH HAS MEANT THAT WE AS A PEOPLE

ARE NOT EASILY INTIMIDATED.

WE CAN RECOGNIZE

AND RESPOND TO A REAL DANGER, WITHOUT CRYING WOLF

AT A FALSE ONE.

OUR NATIONAL STRENGTH IS SURPASSED BY NO

OTHER NATION. OUR FIGHTING FORCES ARE SECOND TO NONE.

WE ARE A STRONG NATION, AND TO SUGGEST OTHERWISE

IS IRRESPONSIBLE AND RECKLESS. BUT WE MUST CONTINUE

TO MAKE SURE THAT WE WILL STAY A STRONG NATION.

THE FIRST DEFENSE BUDGET I SUBMITTED AS PRESIDENT

WAS FOR MORE THAN 104 BILLION DOLLARS / WHICH THE CONGRESS

CHOSE TO CUT BY OVER SEVEN BILLION DOLLARS•

THIS YEAR AGAIN / I HAVE GONE TO THE CONGRESS

WITH A RECORD PEACETIME DEFENSE BUDGET OF MORE THAN

112 BILLION DOLLARS•

With the

~~UNDER MY~~ ADMINISTRATION, AND WITH ENOUGH

MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS VOTING ON DEFENSE MATTERS

AS EDDIE HEBERT AND I HAVE OVER THE YEARS, / THERE WILL BE

NO POLICY OF SECOND BEST IN OUR NATIONAL DEFENSE.

I AM SURE THAT EDDIE FEELS, AS I DO,
THAT THE TRADITIONAL BIPARTISAN SPIRIT IN FAVOR OF
NATIONAL SECURITY HAS NOT BEEN LOST -- THAT EVEN IN AN
ELECTION YEAR, THE NEED TO MAINTAIN A STRONG NATIONAL DEFENSE
IS MORE PRESSING THAN POLITICS.

I AM CONFIDENT THAT ALL OF US FEEL THE SAME WAY.

WE WILL PURSUE A POLICY OF PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH --

WE WILL MAKE SURE THAT AMERICA REMAINS AS STRONG

AS SHE IS FREE, *now & forever.*

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

END OF TEXT