

The original documents are located in Box 24, “3/3/76 - Remarks at the Dedication of the National Service Headquarters of the Disabled American Veterans” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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REMARKS AT THE DEDICATION OF THE DISABLED

AMERICAN VETERANS NATIONAL SERVICE

HEADQUARTERS, MARCH 3, 1976

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN.....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS NATIONAL
HEADQUARTERS BUILDING

- THANK YOU, LYLE. (Lyle Pearson, National Commander,
introduces you.)

- DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE AND SENATE

FYI -- INVITED

SENATOR HARTKE
SENATOR HANSEN
SENATOR THURMOND
CONGRESSMAN ROBERTS
CONGRESSMAN HAMMERSCHMIDT
CONGRESSMAN TEAGUE

- ADMINISTRATOR ROUDEBUSH

- MRS. SCHULTZE (PHONETICS: SCHULTZ) (Commander, DAV
Auxiliary)

- REVEREND ELSON

- DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

- LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

-|-

I AM VERY PROUD TO BE HERE WITH YOU TODAY,
TAKING PART IN THE DEDICATION OF THE DISABLED AMERICAN
VETERANS NATIONAL SERVICE HEADQUARTERS.

IN AUGUST OF 1974, I HAD THE PRIVILEGE AS
VICE-PRESIDENT OF ADDRESSING YOUR FIFTY-THIRD ANNUAL
CONVENTION IN NEW ORLEANS. AT THAT TIME YOUR NATIONAL
COMMANDER GRACIOUSLY OFFERED ME AN INVITATION.

HE SAID I WOULD BE WELCOME AT ANY GATHERING OF THE

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS, AT ANY PLACE. I CAN THINK

OF NO TIME OR PLACE OR OCCASION MORE APPROPRIATE

FOR ME TO ACCEPT THAT INVITATION THAN TODAY.

THE COMPLETION OF THIS IMPRESSIVE NEW
NATIONAL SERVICE HEADQUARTERS IS THE PROUD CLIMAX
TO YOUR FINE HISTORY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS - A HISTORY
THAT STRETCHES BACK FOR FIFTY-SIX YEARS•

AS A VETERAN OF WORLD WAR II, I HAVE LONG
ADMIRE AND RESPECTED THE OUTSTANDING ROLE THE D-A-V
HAS PLAYED IN OUR NATIONAL LIFE. THE D-A-V, WITH
OVER HALF A MILLION DEDICATED MEMBERS, HAS COMPILED
AN ENVIABLE RECORD OF CONSCIENTIOUS AND COMPASSIONATE
RESPONSE TO THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF DISABLED VETERANS
AND THEIR FAMILIES.

YOUR EFFORTS HAVE GREATLY INCREASED THE
EDUCATIONAL, MEDICAL AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES
AVAILABLE TO DISABLED VETERANS. YOU HAVE PERSONALLY
ASSISTED HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF INDIVIDUAL VETERANS
AND THEIR FAMILIES IN RECEIVING THE BENEFITS WHICH THEY
HAVE EARNED.

WORKING WITH THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION,

YOU AND THE MEMBERS OF YOUR AUXILIARY HAVE PROMOTED

THE REHABILITATION AND WELFARE OF HOSPITALIZED VETERANS.

AND YOUR UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP WITH THE BOY SCOUTS

OF AMERICA MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR THOUSANDS OF HANDICAPPED

BOYS TO ENJOY THE BENEFITS OF SCOUTING.

THROUGHOUT ALL THESE PROGRAMS,

YOU DISPLAY A STRONG, HEALTHY AND VIBRANT PATRIOTISM.

YOU ARE RIGHTFULLY PROUD, AS I AM, OF THE GREAT COUNTRY

WE WERE CALLED UPON TO DEFEND AND DID.

YOURS WAS THE ULTIMATE INVOLVEMENT. YOU GAVE YOUR

MUSCLE, YOUR BLOOD, YOUR COURAGE AND YOUR YEARS.

IT IS A PRICELESS GIFT AMERICA MUST NEVER FORGET.

AS PRESIDENT, AS COMMANDER IN CHIEF, AND AS CITIZEN --

I SALUTE YOU FOR IT.

ONE OF YOUR NOTABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

HAS BEEN TO SERVE, AND TO INVOLVE IN YOUR WORK,

DISABLED VETERANS OF THE VIETNAM CONFLICT•

I UNDERSTAND MORE THAN 80 PERCENT OF YOUR 280 NATIONAL

SERVICE OFFICERS STATIONED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY TODAY

ARE VIETNAM VETERANS•

THAT CLEARLY SHOWS YOUR SUCCESS IN MEETING
THE NEW CHALLENGES CONFRONTING OUR VETERANS.

WE HAVE THE SAME OBLIGATION TO THE SERVICEMEN OF THAT
LONG AND DIVISIVE CONFLICT AS TO ANY OTHERS.

THEY SERVED THEIR COUNTRY WELL IN WAR, AND IT IS ONLY
RIGHT THAT WE SERVE THEM WELL IN PEACE.

BY MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING OUR
VETERANS ADMINISTRATION, WE CAN ENSURE THAT VETERANS
WILL GET THE HELP THEY DESERVE•

THAT IS WHY, EVEN WITHIN THE TIGHT CONSTRAINTS
OF MY FEDERAL BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 1977, I HAVE PROPOSED
A RECORD AMOUNT OF OVER 4 BILLION DOLLARS FOR V-A
MEDICAL CARE•

I HAVE REQUESTED FUNDS FOR MORE THAN 9,000
NEW V-A MEDICAL PERSONNEL IN MY BUDGETS FOR FISCAL YEARS
1976 AND 1977, TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE QUALITY OF CARE SURVEY. AND THOSE BUDGETS PROVIDE
SOME 600 MILLION DOLLARS FOR V-A MEDICAL CONSTRUCTION
PROJECTS.

WE ARE PROVIDING MORE FUNDING, MORE PEOPLE

AND BETTER FACILITIES TO GIVE ELIGIBLE VETERANS THE

HIGHEST-QUALITY, FASTEST SERVICE POSSIBLE.

IN ADDITION, MY NEW V-A BUDGET WILL PROVIDE 8 BILLION
DOLLARS IN COMPENSATION AND PENSION BENEFITS TO ALMOST
5 MILLION VETERAN FAMILIES IN FISCAL YEAR 1977.

YOU DESERVE NOTHING LESS. I WILL DO ALL THAT I CAN
TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT YOU RECEIVE NOTHING LESS.

I BELIEVE THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HAS
DONE A FINE JOB OVERALL UNDER VERY DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES.●
WITH THE LEADERSHIP OF MY GOOD FRIEND DICK ROUDEBUSH,
THE V-A HAS MADE TREMENDOUS STRIDES IN SERVING VETERANS.●

WE ARE GOING TO MAKE SURE THIS PROGRESS
CONTINUES, WITH THE HELP OF ORGANIZATIONS LIKE YOURS.●
FROM YOUR NEW HEADQUARTERS YOU WILL BE IN A VERY GOOD
POSITION TO CONTINUE SERVING THE LEGITIMATE INTERESTS
OF DISABLED VETERANS.●

THIS NEW BUILDING IS A MONUMENT TO THE
SACRIFICES MADE BY THOSE VETERANS, AND TO THE SERVICES
YOU HAVE RENDERED THEM. BUT IT IS MORE THAN THAT.
IT IS A LIVING, VITAL, DYNAMIC HEADQUARTERS WHERE
YOU WILL CONTINUE THOSE SERVICES.

HERE IS A BUILDING THAT HAS BEEN DESIGNED
WITH SENSITIVITY TO THE NEEDS OF DISABLED VETERANS.
LIKE YOUR ORGANIZATION, IT IS ONE HUNDRED PERCENT
ACCESSIBLE TO THEM, WHATEVER THEIR INFIRMITY.

WE MUST CONTINUE TO ELIMINATE THE CRUEL
BARRIERS THAT PREVENT DISABLED VETERANS - AND TOO MANY
OTHER DISABLED AMERICANS - FROM LEADING THE RICH LIFE
THEY HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO ENJOY IN OUR GREAT COUNTRY.

MANY OF THESE BARRIERS ARE PHYSICAL•

YOUR EFFORTS AND THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO TRAIN

AND REHABILITATE THE DISABLED ARE TRAGICALLY UNDERMINED

IF THE DISABLED INDIVIDUAL CANNOT ENTER AND USE PUBLIC

BUILDINGS OR PLACES OF BUSINESS•

I AM WELL AWARE OF THE SAD FACT THAT MANY
THINGS THE REST OF US TAKE FOR GRANTED -- LIKE A NARROW
DOORWAY OR A FLIGHT OF STEPS -- CAN BE LIKE SIGNS
SAYING "DISABLED -- KEEP OUT." WE MUST WORK
TO REMOVE THESE SIGNS -- AND WE ARE.

WE ARE MOVING STEADILY TOWARD MAKING

FEDERALLY OWNED AND LEASED BUILDINGS PHYSICALLY

ACCESSIBLE TO EVERY AMERICAN.

A RECENT MEETING AT THE WHITE HOUSE

ON THE SUBJECT OF ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS, EXPLORED

THIS PROBLEM WITH ARCHITECTS, BUILDERS AND CONTRACTORS•

BY REMOVING PHYSICAL BARRIERS, WE CAN ALSO HELP REMOVE REMO

THE SOCIAL BARRIERS WHICH ALL TOO FREQUENTLY CONFRONT

THE DISABLED•

AS WE DEDICATE THIS BUILDING, LET US
DEDICATE OURSELVES TO PROTECTING THE FREEDOM FOR WHICH
VETERANS GAVE AN IMPORTANT PART OF THEIR LIVES.
LET US ALSO DEDICATE OURSELVES TO UNDERSTANDING AND
RESPONDING TO THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF DISABLED VETERANS.

A FREE SOCIETY OWES AN ENDURING DEBT TO THOSE WHO FOUGHT

TO KEEP IT FREE. LET US MATCH THAT SACRIFICE WITH

OUR DETERMINATION THAT ALL VETERANS SHALL INDEED,

LIVE A LIFE THAT IS SECURE, SATISFYING AND TRULY

INDEPENDENT.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

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