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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT
CONGRESSIONAL CHRISTMAS BALL

THE EAST ROOM

9:55 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Before I say anything, I would very much like to have the Speaker, Senator Mansfield and Senator Scott come up and join Betty and myself. We can wait just a minute. Sorry to interrupt the music and the good time.

Speaker McCormack, come up here.

Now that we have all of the dignitaries here, let me say a word or two on behalf of Betty and myself. We are greatly honored to have the privilege of recognizing the Speaker, the Majority Leader in the United States Senate, Mike Mansfield, Minority Leader in the United States Senate, Hugh Scott, and as an added attraction, a former Speaker of the House of Representatives, our dear friend John McCormack.

I was looking over the record of service of the three people who are being honored tonight and I noticed that when I came to Congress on January 3, 1949, Congressman Carl Albert from Bugtussle, Oklahoma, was a senior Member of the House. He had come two years before me.

Then I noticed that Senator Mansfield, who was also a Member of the House at that time, was quite senior. He had come four years before I did.

Then the record shows that Hugh Scott was very, very, very senior because he had come to the House of Representatives six years before I was honored to take the oath.

So if you add up all of their seniority, Hugh Scott with 34 years, Mike Mansfield with 32, and Carl Albert with 30, the total is 96 years of seniority in the Congress of the United States. So I think we have with us three of the most distinguished, most experienced and most honorable and dedicated people that I have known in the House and/or the Senate during my time of service in the Federal Government.

But I think it is appropriate to recognize the wives of the people that we honor as Members of the Congress. I know that Mary Albert did a super job all the time that Carl has been in the House of Representatives. I know that Maureen Mansfield did the same for Mike when he was in the House as well as in the Senate, and Marian Scott did as well for Hugh as the others did for their husbands.

So Betty and I are just pleased and honored to have the privilege of recognizing these three very distinguished statesmen for their long service and effective service as far as our Government is concerned. They are personal friends of both Betty and myself. They have done a superior job, whether I agreed with them or not, or whether they agreed with me or not.

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I might add parenthetically, I have found that it is great to be a part of a government where all of the troops, without hesitation or qualification, follow whatever the leaders tell them to do.

I know that is true on the Democratic side, and I know it is true on the Republican side. But regardless of the problems that come as a result of a lack of political and party uniformity, it is a great institution, the Congress. Betty and I had the privilege of serving there for almost 26 years. It was, without a doubt, the most enjoyable time of our lifetime. We missed it. We miss it now and we wish you all, each and every one of you, a very, very Merry Christmas and the best wishes for a Happy New Year. We will be thinking of you and we will be wishing you the very best. And I think all of us can now join in giving the proper recognition to three very distinguished Members of the Congress of the United States, Carl Albert, Mike Mansfield and Hugh Scott.

Let's enjoy ourselves. That is why you are here.

She wanted to make a speech and I told her she couldn't.

Let me have one of my special friends and one of the great, great people in the Congress, John McCormack, come up here. You don't have to make a speech but some of you don't know him. Those who didn't serve with him don't know how tough he could be on Democrats and Republicans. Isn't that right, John?

SPEAKER McCORMACK: No, it is wrong.

THE PRESIDENT: We love you, John, and it is an honor for us to have you here.

SPEAKER ALBERT: All I want to say is it is only in America that this could happen.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, John.

Let's have fun. Thank you all.

END

(AT 10:05 P.M. EST)