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Record Group/Collection: George H.W. Bush Presidential Records
Collection/Office of Origin: Speechwriting, White House Office of
Series: Grant, Mary Kate, Files
Subseries: Subject File, 1988-1991

OA/ID Number: 13879
Folder ID Number: 13879-004

Folder Title:
Congressional Gold Medal [to Mary Lasker], 4/21/89

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**REMARKS: PRESENTATION OF CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL
TO MARY WOODWARD LASKER
THE ROSE GARDEN
FRIDAY, APRIL 21, 1989
2:45 P.M.**

**WELCOME, MRS. LASKER. I AM PLEASED ALSO TO GREET
CONGRESSMEN EARLY AND CONTE AND MY OTHER FRIENDS FROM
THE CONGRESS... A VERY SPECIAL WELCOME TO FORMER
SPEAKER -- TIP -- AND OUR GUESTS.**

- 2 -

YOU HAVE HEARD ME TALK ABOUT "A THOUSAND POINTS OF LIGHT," A METAPHOR I'VE USED TO CELEBRATE THE EXTRAORDINARY SELFLESSNESS OF AMERICANS WHO GIVE SO MUCH TO THE SERVICE OF OTHERS.

WE ARE HERE TODAY TO HONOR A VERITABLE BEACON OF LIGHT, A WOMAN WHO HAS FOCUSED AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF ENERGY ON FINDING SOLUTIONS TO LIFE-THREATENING DISEASES.

- 3 -

MARY LASKER IS PRESIDENT OF THE ALBERT AND MARY LASKER FOUNDATION, WHICH SHE STARTED WITH HER HUSBAND IN 1942 TO ENCOURAGE MEDICAL RESEARCH AND TO RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF MAJOR DISEASES WHICH CRIPPLE AND KILL. TODAY THE LASKER FOUNDATION'S MEDICAL RESEARCH AWARD IS ONE OF THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS HONORS IN AMERICAN MEDICINE.

MARY'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO MEDICINE HAVE NOT STOPPED WITH THE IMPORTANT WORK OF THE LASKER FOUNDATION.

- 4 -

DOCTOR JONAS SALK SAID "WHEN I THINK OF MARY LASKER, I THINK OF ... A MATCHMAKER

-- BETWEEN SCIENCE AND SOCIETY." BUSINESS WEEK MAGAZINE CALLED HER "THE FAIRY GODMOTHER OF MEDICAL RESEARCH."

SHE HAS WORKED EXTENSIVELY IN MANY DIVERSE CAUSES - FROM SUPPORTING CANCER RESEARCH ... TO PREVENTING HEART DISEASE ... TO WORKING WITH THOSE WITH CEREBAL PALSY ... BELIEVE ME, I'M ONLY NAMING A FEW.

- 5 -

THE LIST IS SO LONG -- BECAUSE HER GOOD WORKS AND TIRELESS EFFORTS ARE LEGION.

AND I CANNOT RESIST A SPECIAL WORD OF THANKS AND PRAISE FOR MARY'S LEADERSHIP HERE IN WASHINGTON. SENATOR CLAUDE PEPPER CALLS MARY "THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND THE CREATION OF THE NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE, THE FIRST OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH" AND OF SUBSEQUENT INSTITUTES. HER GENEROSITY AND ASSOCIATION WITH NIH CONTINUES TODAY.

- 6 -

HER WORK IN URGING LEGISLATION TO EXPAND FEDERAL CANCER RESEARCH CULMINATED IN A 1971 BILL THAT MADE THE CONQUEST OF CANCER A NATIONAL GOAL. IN 1984, CONGRESS HONORED MARY LASKER BY NAMING A CENTER FOR HER AT NIH, THE MARY WOODARD LASKER CENTER FOR HEALTH RESEARCH AND EDUCATION.

- 7 -

NOT ONLY IS MARY LASKER WELL KNOWN FOR ADVANCING MEDICAL RESEARCH, BUT FOR HER CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ARTS, AND FOR HER MANY PUBLIC PLANTINGS THAT ALLOW OTHERS TO SHARE HER LOVE OF FLOWERS. THROUGH THE SOCIETY FOR A MORE BEAUTIFUL CAPITOL SHE HAS DONATED EXTENSIVE PLANTINGS IN WASHINGTON, INCLUDING OVER A MILLION DAFFODIL BULBS FOR ROCK CREEK PARK AND LADY BIRD JOHNSON PARK.

- 8 -

MARY, YOUR GIFTS OF HEALTH AND BEAUTY HAVE LEFT THE COUNTRY VERY MUCH IN YOUR DEBT.

IN 1987, WITH GRATITUDE AND GREAT PRIDE, THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS VOTED TO HONOR YOUR "HUMANITARIAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE AREAS OF MEDICAL RESEARCH AND EDUCATION, URBAN BEAUTIFICATION AND THE FINE ARTS."

- 9 -

IT IS MY PLEASURE NOW TO THANK YOU ON BEHALF OF THE NATION AND TO PRESENT YOU WITH THIS TOKEN OF OUR GRATITUDE, THE MARY WOODARD LASKER CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.

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