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**Folder Title:**  
Fire Service Dinner, Washington D.C., 4/12/89

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Stack:	Row:	Section:	Shelf:	Position:
<b>G</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>

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Bill Roper

(Smith/Dooley)  
March 31, 1989  
Draft Three  
FIRE

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: FIRE SERVICE DINNER  
SHERATON WASHINGTON HOTEL  
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12, 1989

Members of the fire service community, ladies and gentlemen,  
friends.

Thank you for that warm introduction, and for your generous  
reception. It is a great privilege to be . . . and please  
forgive me . . . with such extinguished company. Indeed, you  
might say that I'm all fired-up for the occasion.

Let me, first, congratulate some of those responsible for  
this evening.

I'm referring, of course, to the International Associations  
of Fire Chiefs and Fire Fighters, the International Society of  
Fire Service Instructors, the National Fire Protection  
Association and National Volunteer Fire Council, and the  
Volunteer Firemen's Insurance Services.

I want to also salute the more than 2,000 representatives  
here of the fire service community, and the members of the  
Congressional Fire Service Caucus -- now, the third-largest  
congressional caucus on all of Capital Hill. And let me say a

special thanks to the fire fighter's best friend, Congressman Curt Weldon.

Finally, I want to say that you've chosen a wonderful time of year to hold this first annual Congressional Fire Services Institute Dinner.

After all, just think of it. Spring is in the air . . . Millie has had her puppies . . . Washington is alive with visitors . . . and baseball's Orioles are still in the pennant race. Of course, the season is one week old.

We meet, together, in a special week. For this is Volunteer Week, a time which celebrates the selfless character of the American people.

Looking toward tonight, I was struck by the fact that 85 per cent of our Nation's fire protection is supplied by volunteers. And it occurred to me that both you and your paid colleagues -- for both give of your time, and of yourselves -- provide the definition of a successful life.

For a successful life, it seems to me, must include serving others. A successful life states that we are partners, not islands unto ourselves -- the sum not of our possessions, but of how we treat our neighbors.

Well, for more than 200 years, fire fighters have been this Nation's neighbor -- in word and deed, "the backbone of America." You have met local emergencies through volunteer and paid fire and emergency service networks. And today, you meet them still -- 3 million members strong.

You know, being here reminds me of a story that I heard which happened back in Prohibition days.

It seems that 25 of Boston's top bootleggers were rounded up in a surprise raid. And as they were being arraigned, the judge asked the usual question about occupation.

The first 24 men were engaged in the same profession -- each claimed to be a "fire fighter." Well, naturally, the judge asked the last prisoner, "And what are you?" "Your honor," he replied, "I'm a bootlegger." Surprised, the judge laughed and asked, "How's business?" "It would be a lot better," he answered, "if there weren't so many fire fighters around."

See what I'm getting at? Even back in Prohibition, your numbers turned the tide! And so they can today, and must too in the future. We've come a long way since Benjamin Franklin founded one of the first volunteer fire companies in 1736. Now, let us go forward, and help achieve your goal: a better, more secure, more fire-safe America.

Toward that end, let me share some thoughts.

First, this Administration believes the fire service network deserves a Federal government which understands and values its place in the American family.

Almost every municipality has some sort of emergency fire organization. At the 4th of July centennial, or Memorial Day parade, the fire service is there. At senior citizens centers and service clubs, the fire service is there. When fire raged at Yellowstone, the fire service was there. And so, too, when you become the "first responder" not only to fire, but to accidents, floods, cave-ins, and collapsed buildings. You deserve the government's respect. In my Administration, you have it.

Second, this Administration believes you deserve the government's support. Fifteen years ago, the National Fire Prevention and Control Administration was created. Finally, you thought, your concerns would be heard by every level of government. Well, too often that didn't happen, and you felt shunted to the sidelines. My friends, under this Administration, we're returning -- together -- to the center of the field.

Tonight, I call for restoring the U.S. Fire Administration to its rightful role as the fire service's Federal advocate. And for a national clearinghouse to deal with fire service issues. We want the National Fire Academy to regain its identity and

prominence as a "national training center." And for the Federal Fire Act of 1974 to be restored to its original intent.

You know, few professions display that special brand of skill and heroism that is found in the fire service. I'm thinking, for example, of how last May, Richard Shiah [SHY-a], an off-duty Battalion Chief, arrived at the scene of a burning pickup truck that was overturned in a ditch. With no protective clothing on him, he risked his life, and suffered second-degree burns on his face and wrists, to save a father and two sons.

Battalion Chief Shiah shows that heroism, American-style, is not going out of style. Tonight, let us pledge that it never will. And to achieve that goal, let us act, specifically, to help the fire services in protecting our citizens from loss of life and property.

Each year more than 6,000 lives are lost in fires, and over \$10 billion lost in property damage. And, last year, as part of the Omnibus Drug Act of 1988, we raised the death benefit for fallen fire fighters from \$50,000 to \$100,000. No, it's not enough. It can never be enough. For no price can be attached to the life of a heroic American.

But in other ways, prices can be attached. For example, I believe that funds appropriated by Congress for "fire programs" at the Fire Emergency Training Center should be used for that

2. program and not for non-fire related programs. We need increased Federal help concerning regulations which govern the transportation of hazardous materials. And we must must foster greater public awareness of fire problems by supporting the Federal fire safety program.

All this, we can, and must, achieve. And as we do, we'll show how volunteerism can join hands with government to renew the promise of America.

That is why I have opened the Office of National Service. This Office is leading my Administration's community and national service programs. Next month, I will send legislation to the Congress proposing our Administration's Y-E-S or YES Program -- Youth Entering Service. And yesterday, I saluted the 18 recipients of the 1989 President's Volunteer Action Awards.

I have said I like what works. Volunteerism works. In a recent Gallup Poll, nearly 50 per cent of those interviewed were involved in community service -- that's up from 31 per cent in 1984. Today, millions of people are lending a hand, tending a wound, and helping the less fortunate -- in a homeless shelter, an inner-city school, and in our fire and emergency services.

As some of may know, Teddy Roosevelt is among my favorite Presidents. And recently I came across some words spoken on the eve of his 16th birthday. "All that gives me most pleasure in

the retrospect is concerned with others," said Theodore Roosevelt, Sr. And then Teddy's father went on to add, "We are not placed here to live exclusively for ourselves."

My friends, you, as well as anyone, embody those words. By saving lives, you have defined a successful life. You have truly "Done Unto Others."

For that, I thank you -- and yet I challenge you, too. Yes, let us achieve a fire-safe America. Let us weave the social fabric of America. And as we do, Americans will say what I do tonight: "The horizons of America have no limit. The best for America still lies ahead."

Thank you for this evening, and for inviting me. God bless you, and God bless America.

# # # #

(Smith/Dooley)  
April 5, 1989  
Draft Four  
FIRE

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: FIRE SERVICE DINNER  
SHERATON WASHINGTON HOTEL  
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12, 1989

Members of the fire service community, ladies and gentlemen,  
friends.

You know, it's been said that politicians, like fire  
fighters, are often misunderstood. Well, let me observe that I  
resemble that charge. It is a great privilege to be . . . please  
forgive me . . . in such extinguished company. Indeed, you might  
say that I'm all fired-up for the occasion.

Seriously, I want to thank you for that warm introduction,  
and for your generous reception. And let me, first, congratulate  
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I'm referring, of course, to the International Associations  
of Fire Chiefs and Fire Fighters, the International Society of  
Fire Service Instructors, the National Fire Protection  
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here of the fire service community, and the members of the

Congressional Fire Service Caucus -- now, the third-largest congressional caucus on Capital Hill. And let me say a special thanks to the fire fighter's best friend, Congressman Curt Weldon.

Finally, I want to say that you've chosen a wonderful time of year to hold this first annual Congressional Fire Services Institute Dinner.

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We meet, together, in a special week. For this is Volunteer Week, a time which celebrates the selfless character of the American people.

Looking toward tonight, I was struck by the fact that 85 per cent of our Nation's fire protection is supplied by volunteers. And it occurred to me that both you and your paid colleagues -- for both give of your time, and of yourselves -- provide the definition of a successful life.

For a successful life, it seems to me, must include serving others. A successful life states that we are partners, not

islands unto ourselves -- the sum not of our possessions, but of how we treat our neighbors.

Well, for more than 200 years, fire fighters have been this Nation's neighbor -- in word and deed, "the backbone of America." You have met local emergencies through volunteer and paid fire and emergency service networks. And today, you meet them still -- three million members strong.

You know, being here reminds me of a story that I heard which happened back in Prohibition days.

It seems that 25 of Boston's top bootleggers were rounded up in a surprise raid. And as they were being arraigned, the judge asked the usual question about occupation.

The first 24 men were engaged in the same profession -- each claimed to be a "fire fighter." Well, naturally, the judge asked the last prisoner, "And what are you?" "Your honor," he replied, "I'm a bootlegger." Surprised, the judge laughed and asked, "How's business?" "It would be a lot better," he answered, "if there weren't so many fire fighters around."

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Toward that end, let me share some thoughts.

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You know, every profession has its ups and downs. Perhaps former hockey coach Harry Neale put it best: "Last season we couldn't win at home and we were losing on the road," he said. "My failure as a coach was that I couldn't think of anyplace else to play."

But the difference is that few professions display that special brand of skill and heroism that is found in the fire service.

I'm thinking, for example, of how last May, Richard Shiah [SHY-a], an off-duty Battalion Chief, arrived at the scene of a burning pickup truck that was overturned in a ditch. With no protective clothing on him, he risked his life, and suffered second-degree burns on his face and wrists, to save a father and two sons.

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My friends, you, as well as anyone, embody those words. By saving lives, you have defined a successful life. You have lived, as much as possible, by the tenets of the Golden Rule.

For that, I thank you -- and yet I challenge you, too. Yes, let us build on our beginnings. Let us achieve a fire-safe America. And as we do, Americans will say what I do tonight: "The horizons of America have no limit. The best for America still lies ahead."

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