



ADA TORCH RUN CELEBRATION

Georgia Hall Quadrangle

Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute

for Rehabilitation

6391 Roosevelt Highway

Warm Springs, Georgia

Wednesday,

July 19, 2000

3:00 p.m.

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. RUZYCKI: It is indeed a pleasure to welcome all of you to this wonderful celebration of the ADA Torch Run.

It is my pleasure to ask that we have the presentation of the colors by the 11th 77th Transportation Company, Georgia Army National Guard Color Guard led by SGT Arthur Avery.

(Presentation of Colors)

MR. RUZYCKI: Ladies and gentlemen, our Pledge of Allegiance led by our own Joe Lyttle, Director of Recreation Services and also Co-Coordinator of the local Torch Run. The Pledge of Allegiance.

MR. LYTTLE: Thank you, sir. If you're covered, please

uncover and place your hand over your heart and join me in the pledge.

(Pledge of Allegiance.)

Thank you.

MR. RUZYCKI: Ladies and gentlemen, our National Anthem by Ms. Teresa Moore. Ms. Moore.

(The National Anthem was sung by Ms. Moore.)

MR. RUZYCKI: Thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen, do remember in your prayers the Coverdell family on our recent loss of Senator Paul Coverdell, and keep that close in your heart, please.

It is my pleasure to call upon our own Reverend Jan Tolbert now for our invocation. Reverend.

REV. TOLBERT: Let us pray.

(Invocation.)

MR. RUZYCKI: If there is a seat, you may sit down, or stand and enjoy this wonderful day.

I always run the risk of missing someone, but it is my pleasure to introduce to you, certainly on our platform, Attorney General Janet Reno; Senator Danny Lee of the 29th District of Georgia; Mr. Andy Imperato, the CEO of the American Association of People with Disabilities, which is our national host organization of the ADA Torch Run, seated over here on my left; Representative Carl Von Epps; extreme right, Bruce Williams, Chairman of our Board -- please wave now at folks -- Donna McNeilly, the torch bearer who received the torch from her son Thomas McNeilly on your left, folks; Mr. Saul Mendoza, an athlete training here from Mexico; Andy Fleming -- please wave -- our U.S. ADF Chief Executive Officer of Blaze as well; Darla Coltenhoven from Rehab Services Administration; Ted Jones representing

Mac Collins' office; I think Shirley Gillespie is on her way and Ted may or may not be here already; Mike Denkins with Senator Cleland's office -- there you are, Mike.

I want to thank Volkswagen of America, the national sponsor of the ADA Torch Run; our own Horizon Medical Products here in Manchester, Georgia; the merchants of Warm Springs, the local chapter of the Georgia Rehab Association for their support in making this torch run possible.

Before I go further with the program, it is my pleasure and privilege indeed in representing the Roosevelt Institute to proclaim:

WHEREAS, children and adults with disabilities are participating as full members of their communities in greater and greater numbers; and

WHEREAS, more and more children with disabilities are successfully integrated into their neighborhood school; and

WHEREAS, more and more children and adults with disabilities are playing, worshipping, working and shopping alongside their neighbors; and

WHEREAS, more and more communities are becoming inclusive and free of physical and social barriers; and

WHEREAS, the year 2000 is the 10th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the 25th anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Frank Ruzycki, Executive Director of the Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation, Warm Springs, Georgia, do hereby proclaim the Institute's support of the Initiative 2000 and the spirit of the ADA campaign, a call for individuals, communities and leaders to renew their commitment to an America that works for everyone.

I call to actions individuals, communities, service and advocacy organizations within our state to organize

activities, programs and resources during this coming year to promote full citizenship for people with disabilities.

I encourage all citizens to work together and alongside others across our nation to promote equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency for all people.

Signed by me on this day of July 19, 2000.

I thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. RUZYCKI: Our next speaker again is Mr. Andy Imparato. Andy.

MR. IMPARATO: Thank you, Frank. I am Andy Imparato, I'm the President and CEO of the American Association of People with Disabilities. We're the national host organization for the Torch Relay. We were founded on the 5th anniversary of the ADA to promote political and economic empowerment for all 56 million children and adults with disabilities in the U.S.

I want to just say this is my eighth torch event out of a 24-city relay. It has been very exciting. It is particularly exciting to be here today with Attorney General Reno, and I want to thank Frank Ruzycki and Joe Lyttle and the folks at the Roosevelt Institute and everybody on the Warm Springs host committee for organizing this event today.

Let's give a hand for the local organizers.

(Applause.)

MR. IMPARATO: I also want to thank Senator Lee for being here today as well.

I think it's important to recognize that what we're celebrating today are two anniversaries; the 10th

anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the 25th anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. And they're both laws, they're civil rights laws, and it's very appropriate that we have with us the head law enforcement official in the country, Attorney General Janet Reno, whose leadership at the Justice Department has been unparalleled in terms of her promotion of disability rights and civil rights in general.

Let's hear it for Attorney General Reno.

(Applause.)

MR. IMPARATO: The Torch Relay has stopped at a lot of historic sites. We started -- and Andy Fleming was there with me when we lit the torch from Martin Luther King's Eternal Flame in Atlanta, and we'll be going back to the King Center tomorrow, and that's going to be exciting. But it was very appropriate that Martin Luther King III was the person who lit this torch in Atlanta.

The disability rights movement is a continuation of the civil rights movement that came before us. The torch has been to Montgomery, Alabama; it's been to Jackson, Mississippi; it's been to Memphis; it's been to a lot of historic sites in the struggle for civil rights and the struggle for disability rights.

And President Roosevelt, as we all know, was an advocate for real people that had real people issues; people with disabilities, people from any disenfranchised group in society. And I feel this is an especially appropriate location for the Attorney General to come and carry the torch and participate in the relay.

I just want to acknowledge the support of our national sponsors -- Volkswagen of America donated over half a million dollars and all of the relay vehicles to enable us to do a 24-city national torch relay. We have six additional national sponsors -- the Presidential Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities, which is working hard to promote better employment outcomes for people with

disabilities; the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities; the Shepherd Center, a specialty hospital in Atlanta; Continental Air Lines; Microsoft; and AccessLife.com, which is a new internet site focused on people with disabilities.

Let's hear it for all the national sponsors.

(Applause.)

MR. IMPARATO: As I mentioned, AAPD is the national host organization for the Torch Relay. We do have an ability for people to purchase memberships in the association here today in the air conditioned room off the Quadrangle. I encourage people to stop by our booth on the way out.

And I want to close on a more personal note. I'm a person with a psychiatric disability. I graduated from law school in 1990, the year that the ADA became law. And for me, the ADA gave me a way to think about my disability as a source of strength, as a source of identity, as a source of pride and not as something to be ashamed of or something to be hidden. And I think that's one of the most powerful legacies of the ADA and that's something we've tried to encourage with the Torch Relay -- to build community and to have people feel that they're part of something powerful, a diverse group that has lots of strength and lots of abilities and that is on the cusp of achieving great things and making America a better place for everybody to live.

I want to close with a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King, which I think sums up what the relay is all about. He said, "Anybody can be great because everybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve, you don't need to make your subject and verb agree to serve, all you need is a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love."

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. RUZYCKI: Thank you, Andy, good to have you here.

I always, like I said, run the risk of forgetting folks, but all of the work wouldn't have happened without Mary Dickens and all the yellow shirt torch carriers and volunteers. All these folks with yellow shirts, we thank you for making it happen.

(Applause.)

MR. RUZYCKI: I am proud to now present to you a real advocate for persons with disabilities, our own Senator Danny Lee. Danny.

SENATOR LEE: Thank you, Frank.

I want Attorney General Janet Reno not to go back to Washington with the idea that this ought to be Hot Springs instead of Warm Springs.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR LEE: I commented as she sat down on this dark brown chair that this truly is a hot seat today.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR LEE: It's great to be in Warm Springs and I thank Frank and the Institute for the opportunity to be here. Warm Springs is the heart of the 29th Senate District and I want to tell each and every one of you how proud I am to be the state senator for this area.

This Institute means so much, not just to Meriwether County, but to the entire community. As we stand here today, this Institute has reached a point where it's reputation for taking care of people has surpassed the reputation of its great founder, President Roosevelt. And I'd like for you to think about that just a minute. As wonderful and great a man as the person that founded this place, what goes on here and what has gone on here has truly marked this place for all time.

The tenacious work that goes on by the employees at this Center -- and I want to tell you, each and every one of you, as a representative of the state government -- I'm proud to have my colleague from the House, Carl Von Epps with me here today and I'm sure he echoes this -- this place would not be what it is today without the hard work of the employees and all the volunteers that make this thing go. We'd have this beautiful building, but the compassion and concern that goes on here would be non-existent. And I want to tell you how much your state government appreciates it, and how much your county where most of you live, appreciate having you here.

Something has to be said about the Warm Springs Development Fund, the private side of the private-public partnership that has been responsible for the construction of almost \$17 million worth of buildings on this property that the state and all of its residents -- last year, this hospital was one of only two in the state that saw a patient from all 159 counties in this state. That's a record that we can all be proud of and that public-private partnership is due in large part of members such as Bruce Williams, and I thank you, Bruce, for the hard work that that group has done.

It's fitting today that our keynote speaker be Janet Reno and I'm going to tell you why, and then without further ado, I'm going to let her share with you a minute. Janet Reno is the first woman attorney general in the United States, believe it or not, in year 2000. She's been there since 1993, which is I think a major accomplishment. Standing here as a man, I can admit that to you. She is the first attorney general in my lifetime -- which is very short -- that's another joke.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR LEE: The first attorney general in my lifetime that has withstood the slings and arrows that that job holds for the entire two terms of the same President -- a major, major achievement.

Many people don't know it, she's a graduate of Harvard Law School, at a time when women were not found to be at Harvard Law School very much. Unlike many that have held the office that she has now -- and that is, as alluded to earlier, the number one law enforcement officer in this United States -- she held, elected four times, what we would call district attorney, in Dade County, Miami, Florida -- not an easy job. And again, she was returned to that office four times, held it from 1978 until she took the job as the top law enforcement officer in this country.

Many things can be said about the Attorney General, and the bio that I've gained from different sources and from her office, is so impressive. Her strong defense of the law of this land and her compassionate spirit to see that the right thing is done makes her the perfect person to appear here in our county at an institute founded on the sole principle that we are all equal and that we can participate, we should participate, in this life and that that spirit fully commemorates the Americans with Disabilities Act.

I am very proud to stand here as a Meriwether Countian, as a Georgian and introduce to you our Attorney General Janet Reno.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Thank you, Senator Lee, and thank you all for making me feel so welcome. My mother was from Macon, Georgia and I feel like I have come home.

I have come home to a state who sent to Washington a wonderful public servant -- Paul Coverdell reminded us all of the importance of public service and he accomplished that public service with a courtliness, a gallantry that was refreshing and wonderful. He treated everyone with such respect, regardless of whether they disagreed, and he represents to me what public should be about in civility and grace. He will be sorely missed.

The subject of people coming together to recognize that in

every single person there is a spirit, a strength, a determination and a capacity somehow or another to achieve and to do, if they are given only half a chance, is one of the things that I think carries me on. I look at people do some terrible things and then I think how can we change this, how can we make a difference. And I see the spirit that's here today, I see the spirit of those with disabilities, and I say yes, we can make a difference. And the way you have come together today -- Mr. Mendoza, Mr. McNeilly, walking with me and riding with me with the torch -- was something that I'm not going to forget. The spirit that's through this crowd as I came in is almost contagious, you can almost feel it. That is what we should be about, coming together as a community, to find the best in everyone and to give everyone equal opportunity.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I remember the day Franklin Roosevelt died. We were waiting for my daddy at the bus and people began to weep -- Republicans and Democrats. He was very special, and to come here to see the room he sat in, to see the places he went, has meant so much to me, because that man represented again a person who believed in people -- not just some people, but all people of the United States.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: He believed we could overcome a depression, he believed we could overcome two wars fought halfway around the world from each other at the same time, he believed in the courage, the strength and the magnificence of the American people, and indeed all people. And he believed in himself, he believed that he did not have to go home to Hyde Park and stay there, as so many people had for so long. He believed he could go out and be President of the United States. And just think about it -- we can go serve our country, we can support our family, we can be the best businessman going, we can be the most wonderful artist, we can be the county commissioner, with the spirit that is here today.

It has been so exciting to see what has happened. The ADA is a wonderful law, it's a simple law -- and if anybody gives you any trouble and tells you that it's complicated, terrifying or has too much regulation in it, tell them to call me at 514-2002.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Because of the tireless work of everyone here and people all across the country, both those with disabilities and those who care, doors are being opened. I have traveled this country and in the seven and a half years I have been in office, I have seen people gain access to the courthouse that they never had before. I have seen people gain access to the drugstore that they never had before. I've seen a shrewd young man or heard a shrewd young man describe how he told the druggist, "you want my business, then widen the aisles."

We have seen what the spirit here today can do when people come together and care. Indeed, all the opportunities this nation has to offer are becoming more accessible each day. What do we have to do? You've got to work harder, I've got to work harder. Somebody just asked me, "Are you satisfied with the Justice Department's response to date?" For as long as there is anybody with disability that doesn't have access to something they want access to, I want to make sure that we continue to try harder.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: The U.S. Supreme Court heard the voices of two Georgians -- Lois Curtis and Elaine Wilson both have developmental disabled and psychiatric disabilities, both were institutionalized even though they could have lived in the community with the right support services. We were proud to join their struggle and to appear in the United States Supreme Court to support them, and we were delighted last year when the United States Supreme Court declared that unjustified segregation of people with disabilities in institutions violates the ADA. We can use this as an example for others as well. This

landmark ruling is bringing hope of greater freedom and dignity to millions of people with disabilities and their families and friends across this country.

And think, as Americans' life expectancy increases, we can give hope to so many people, keep them out of nursing homes, keep them in their homes, keep them so that they can be strong and thrive and contribute. Have you ever seen an 85-year-old person teach her grandson how to use the computer? It's usually the reverse, but it's happening today.

One of the basic freedoms of every American is to have access to the institutions of government. Too often, you can't go to the county commission because you can't hear what's going on; you can't get in the courthouse; you can't get to the courtroom. Last fall, we began Project Civil Access. Our goal is to make sure that the ADA's promise of equal access to civic life be fulfilled. We sent investigators to a city or town in each of the 50 states. We found in many places that some changes had been made to provide access, but in many, they were not comprehensive enough to ensure the accessibility of town programs. But we found a willingness to get on with the job of reaching ADA compliance -- they just needed to know how, in some instances.

As a result of this initiative, today I'm pleased to announce that we are signing 10 agreements and we're in the process of negotiating 15 others. These agreements are comprehensive, they address the entire range of ADA issues such as accessibility of town halls, parks and polling places and effective communication in city hall, meetings, court proceedings and other government activities. They are models for towns and cities across the country to follow in complying with the ADA.

We also created two user-friendly guides to help in this effort and we have distributed them far and wide.

I don't want to do it just a case at a time, I want to see America open its doors for all our people.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Unfortunately, some people say that the ADA's requirements for state and local government are unconstitutional. We think there is nothing unconstitutional about a law ensuring the equal right of all Americans to access to their government. We have fought this battle in over 40 courts nationwide, winning in almost every case, and we will proudly defend the ADA this October before the United States Supreme Court.

(Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: But there is more to do and we have a long way to go, and we know it. President Clinton has asked Congress for a 35 percent increase for Justice Department ADA enforcement. These new funds are critical for the vigorous and comprehensive effort that we want to undertake.

This past Saturday, I stood at Runnymede in England, where King John met the Barons and the Magna Carta was signed. It put people first. In those days, it was just the Barons. Let us go forth from this place today and put all the people of America first. Let us understand the strength of the human spirit and let us, as we watch the torch being carried in today, carry that spirit throughout America and around the world until every single door is open.

God bless you all.

(Applause.)

MR. RUZYCKI: You all heard the challenge and we heard it from the Attorney General. We can't thank you enough, Ms. Reno, for continuing the advocacy on behalf of persons with disabilities and sharing your important time.

I can assure you that all of the people here, particularly the people here who braved this wonderful heat, will also go forth and be advocates even more so in the next several years, as we move forward in making things even more

independent.

I wanted to ask now if we might be able to call upon SGT Avery for the retiring of the colors. SGT Avery.

(Pause.)

MR. RUZYCKI: Well, if something could go wrong, it will go wrong.

(Laughter.)

MR. RUZYCKI: This gives me an opportunity again to thank Andy Imparato for being with us and for all of the folks involved in the torch. We may have been the smallest city of the twenty-something cities, but we sure did give a good show here in Warm Springs, and I thank all of you for coming out.

(Applause.)

MR. RUZYCKI: I want to thank Nancy Duncan and Carolyn Moreland for the symposium this morning that was held. That is very much appreciated, many attended that. Thank Joe Lyttle and his staff and, of course, our own Danny Lee, for making this all happen.

If I might call upon now SGT Avery for the retiring of the colors.

(Pause.)

MR. RUZYCKI: You would think I'd be able to retire the colors. I'm sorry. We might just retire them ourselves.

By the way, Ms. Reno only has a few moments, but she does want to visit with the patients and students, so please hang around, and the folks from the outdoor therapeutic camp. She wanted to say hello to you, so please stay for a few moments.

And now, we'll have the retiring of the colors.

(Applause.)

(Retiring of colors.)

MR. RUZYCKI: Thank you, Sergeant.

There are refreshments on the left. You know the challenge.
Thank you for being part of this special day.

(Whereupon, the ADA Torch Run Ceremony was concluded at
3:35 p.m.)