

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Metropolitan Police Department

Traffic Division

Remarks made by Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey on the Presentation of the "E" Awards to the Traffic Division, on June 24, 1965, at the Municipal Center.

W. Norman Reed: Even though the Chairman of the Citizens' Traffic Board cannot have a parking ticket fixed, he does enjoy certain privileges such as the one offered me here today, namely The Official Presentation of The Annual "E" Award on behalf of the Citizens' Traffic Board.

Ladies and gentlemen, as some of you probably know, from time to time, I break out in verse, some of it bad, and the rest of it worse. But seriously, on behalf of the Citizens' Traffic Board, we are honored to be here to make an award. We are glad to see each visitor and guest as we honor the Division chosen as best.

This marks the third year that this award has been made for outstanding service our police have displayed. For '62, Precinct 14 won the coveted "E". It went to Precinct #9 for 1963 and for the year '64 it was the judges' decision the award should go to our Traffic Division. While every Precinct deserves praise and glory for the record they made in each category, for overall performance in all parts of our city, it was the opinion of the Citizens' Traffic Board Committee that the Traffic Division should win this "E" banner for their service through our community in such an outstanding manner. Now during the year, the Traffic Division and every Precinct can be seen, so we are automatically honoring Precincts 1 thru 14. Theoretically, the whole Police Department deserves an "E" for helping to keep Washington SAFE, but the Traffic Division, to be quite specific, did a job that could best be described as terrific.

During a portion of the year, the men were fired by the leadership of Deputy Chief Livermann, now retired. And then to make sure they continued doing right, the Traffic Division was headed by Deputy Chief Charles L. Wright.

This morning we have with us one of the nation's truly greats, the distinguished Vice President of our United States, and forsaking the poetry, at this time are going to call on the Honorable Hubert H. Humphrey, Vice President of the United States, to present the official "E" plaque to the Traffic Division and Deputy Chief Charles L. Wright and then to favor us with a few remarks.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Vice President of the United States.

Thank you very much Mr. Reed. I am not a poet and every one here knoweth. So I shall just confine myself to a few words, selected words of prose, rather than poetry. First of all, may I express my good wishes and greetings to the distinguished Commissioners of the District of Columbia, Commissioners Tobriner and Duncan and Duke, gentlemen that have given exemplary leadership to our beautiful capitol city, and I surely do want to express the thanks of the people of this great community and of the official men of this city, to the Traffic Board and to Mr. Reed, who is chairman of the District of Columbia Citizens' Traffic Board, but we are here for another purpose. We are here to express both thanks and congratulations to the Traffic Division of this great Metropolitan Police Department and to do so to the person of the Deputy Chief, Charles Wright.

The congratulations that we express today, and that I am privileged to express for you, comes as a result of outstanding performance of duty. It is an award of excellence in the performance of duty and it is an award that has been richly deserved and justly earned. I used to be the Mayor of the city of Minneapolis, Minnesota, about 20 years ago and as the Mayor of that fine city it was my privilege to be sort of the head of the Police Department, because I appointed the Chief of Police and the Inspector of Police, the Inspector of Detectives, the Deputy Inspectors and the top senior officers of that Police Department, and I was very proud of our Police Department. I had as one of my objectives during that early period of public service, the elevation of the standards of police work, the improvement of the working conditions, and the compensation for police officers and the improvement of the appreciation or the encouragement of the appreciation of a community, the citizens of a community, for the work of our Police Department. I remember when we organized the auxiliary, the ladies, the wives of our police officers, and I can recall that day when I said to them that it is my objective that this Police Department will be so respected in this community that when your children go to school they will be able to say proudly that my daddy is a police officer. And that in so doing and saying that all the little other children will applaud and will appreciate the importance of that public service. I can tell you that this dream and this hope came true, because in our city we did have a considerable improvement of police duty and performance. The community does respect and honor its Police Department, it is clean, it is honorable and it is efficient. And the churches and the civic clubs, and the trade unions, and the business organizations would regularly have what we call honor night, to honor the outstanding policemen, officers and men for performance of duty over and beyond the call of duty. That started 20 years ago and it still is the pattern. Now I move to the scene of the nation's capital. When I entered this building today I saw a fine honor guard. I know many of the police officers in this city and I am happy to say I have gotten to know them under the most friendly of conditions. I said to Commissioner Tobriner that this is quite a line up we have in here and he said I suppose they do have your picture Mr. Vice President. But I couldn't help but be impressed with both the appearance of the officers and I have been

impressed for a long time by the performance of each and every one of your officers insofar as I've been able to know of that performance.

The Traffic Division, of course, has gained a fine reputation for its many services. I sometimes wonder if the people of this community appreciate the skill of the traffic officers and may I add, also, his patience, his forbearance. It's not easy to be a traffic officer in the nation's capital where you are dealing with people of every walk of life, where you must be considerate of people from other lands, for you must be an information officer as well as a police officer, where you must be almost a social worker as well as a law enforcement officer, where you have to exercise the qualities of judgment as well as discipline and a good police officer has to do all of that. It was always my view, if it didn't take a great deal of intelligence to enforce the law, it does take quite a little bit to get people to observe the law. And the duty of those of us that are civilians is to encourage the observance of the law and, also, to encourage those who are entrusted with the responsibility of the enforcement of the law that they through their intelligence and through their understanding, seek the observance of the law. And many is a time when I have witnessed a police officer in this city, talking to a citizen that may have transgressed the law, sometimes unknowingly transgressing the law, but at all times the police officer is trying to be helpful to a person that would be reasonable and would be considerate.

So may I personally thank the entire department for its good service, to Chief Layton, and then may I thank especially the Traffic Division for the manner in which it takes care of the duties relating to foreign dignitaries, to high public officials, and to the Vice President and to the President of the United States. I would surely be most--well I would be an ingrate if I didn't thank you for what you did during the Inaugural. My goodness, we wouldn't have been able to have moved around through this community at all without you, masses of people, huge crowds, and yet your department and your Traffic Division is particular saw to it that the Governors, the Members of the Inaugural Committee, the high public officials, the foreign dignitaries, the Vice President and the President of the United States were given every courtesy and every possible cooperation. I want you to know that I am extremely grateful for that. I believe I sent a letter to the Department afterwards, but if I didn't I should have and my life has been filled with that sort of thing. Many things I should have done but I didn't get around to doing, but I want you to know how much I do appreciate it. I understand even tonight that we may have a little extra help from the Police Department. There seems to be a few people gathering in the city for a civic purpose, and may I add a very worthy one.

If I can have just another moment of your time, I want to say one other thing to you on one or two other little matters. I don't often get a chance to talk to you as citizen to citizen and public official to public official. Washington, D. C. is one of the most

beautiful cities in the world and its beauty is not only in its buildings and its parks but in its spirit. It is our part to help, of course, to keep this city beautiful in terms of its architecture and its design, constantly improve it and in terms of its parks and its boulevards and playgrounds, these are matters that the citizens of this community must take seriously. But above all the Congress of the United States and the Executive Branch must consider most seriously, that this is the Capitol of the United States, this is not merely the District of Columbia. It is in a sense the center of the world with all the responsibilities and duties that come with that high praise. Every official in this community, therefore, must be a more understanding, and a more tolerant, and a more responsible official than in any other community. We must know of the customs of other people and respect them. We must know, indeed, the ethnic origin and the backgrounds of other people and have high regard and respect for them. This is a city of many tongues and many faces and many nationalities and many purposes and problems, and we must make it a most wonderful city in all of our land and, indeed, all of the world.

Now you can't do that through the Police Department, alone, but a Police Department surely does help. What I am about to say is not to be interpreted as criticism or even admonition, it is to be interpreted only as a goal. Courtesy, consideration, friendliness, and yet when need be, firmness without arrogance, should be the standards of every public official and surely of every law enforcement official. I'm sure you would agree with me on that. But you men in blue, you are the real front line representatives of this community. You may not want it that way and you may not at times always feel that way, but you out there on the beat or in the squad car or wherever your duty may take you, you represent authority, you represent the city, you are dressed differently, if only that sets you apart from others, and it is the symbol of the city. And I have always believed the Police Department should not only have the strength to apply the law if need be, that is the will and the means and the man power, but above all, it should have the understanding and the training and the background to encourage people to want to live within the law so you don't have to use your strength, and you can do that by a kind and friendly word, which turneth away wrath. A kind and friendly word at times is more effective than any instrument of discipline or authority. If you need the authority and the power you have it; by that badge you represent the Government. If you need it, you have it in the tools of your trade. A strong country is one that restrains the use of its power and a good police officer is one that restrains the use of his power. He is one that can use it if need be and will use impartiality, honestly, but above all he should be a friend of the people and let the people know it by his deeds and his words and his actions. Now we need in this community of Washington to inculcate that spirit amongst the citizens as well. And I am sure you would agree with me, one of the things that Washington needs above all is

a great community spirit. It is more difficult here because it is in many ways a transient community. It is a community of public officials and we have ways of occasionally changing the residency of public officials and their families.

But let it be quite clear that this is a remarkably fine city. It gets much criticism that it does not deserve, but it can even be a better one and we can make it a better one as we emphasize the good life, education, recreation, health, training, respect for one another, and equal opportunity. This is the way you build a great city, encouraging people to keep this city beautiful in terms of its appearance and I might add gentlemen and ladies that it's just as wrong, just as much a violation of the law to litter the streets as it is to double park. It's just as much a violation of the law to leave your property in total disarray as it is to cause disturbance in the neighborhood. When I was Mayor of my city we used to have what we called the Clean Up Campaign and I reminded the officials that there were health laws that could be enforced as well as traffic laws, that there are laws related to order and cleanliness and health that were just as important as laws that are related to burglary and you need to have people understand that. We need to ask people to do a little better and I hope when some of you men are out there on the beat and you're talking to the people you know so well that you will tell them that we are on the spot, the eyes of the world are upon us, and as the President has said, he wants America a more beautiful country. We have this beautification campaign and everybody can make some contribution to it. A beautification of our city, yes by the flowers and the shrubbery, its cleanliness and orderliness and it ought to be done, it ought to be done and you ought to help get it done. But the other beautiful part of our city should be in its human relations so that there is respect for individuals, and individual rights, and individual opportunities in this city. This is a city of many races, creeds and nationalities, and if we can live here peacefully together we will set an example that will bear us well throughout the world, because remember most of the world is to be found at least in miniature, right here. People of every religion, of every faith, of every creed, of every ethnic origin are right here and if we can live peacefully in Washington, D. C. as a little United Nations, so to speak, at work, at play, on the job, we can then demonstrate that democracy is sound and is true and is the better way. I think we can do it. That's the only reason that I wanted to be in public life, because I think we have to learn how to work together. We don't have to worry about dying together, that can happen any day. We have to learn how to live together, we have to learn how to play together, we have to learn how to build together because it is easy enough to destroy and to tear this world apart. The example of constructive living here at home will have more effect than all the speeches, and the foreign aid, and all the diplomacy that the high officers of this government can possibly give or perform.

So I ask you to take this message to the people of the community and I speak here today to the people of this community. I ask them to be more law abiding and I ask those of us that have the responsibility

for government, to provide you with the manpower and the means to do the job. I served as Mayor when I had too small a Police Department and I want to tell you it's not a very happy set of circumstances. And I served as a Mayor of a city when we had too few resources to do the job that we needed, but it was my pleasure to go to my people and ask them to help themselves and I think that the people in the Congress of the United States and in the administration have a special obligation to help you, to help yourselves, and to help this community to help itself. I believe we can get the job done, too.

Well, you didn't come here for a long speech and you almost got one. I just wanted to come here and express to you thoughts that are close to my heart and on my mind. This is the first chance I have had to do that. There is really nothing I would rather do than to be able to encourage you, to encourage you by commendation, as well as by suggestion, to do an even better job to get an "E" Award for every division of the department. I can't imagine how anybody ever made this selection in the first place, because I have a feeling this a pretty good Police Department.

Now where is that plaque, right here?

This happens to be the plaque that we are suppose to give to the Deputy Chief, and Chief I just want to congratulate you.

Deputy Chief Wright: Thank you, sir.

Vice President Humphrey: Well deserved and well earned. You're a fine police officer and your men are superior.

Deputy Chief Wright: It's a pleasure to have you, sir. It's been an honor. Thank you very, very much.

Vice President Humphrey: It's pretty nice. They don't give Vice President's any. I haven't had a plaque since I was Mayor. I surely want to congratulate you too, Mr. Reed.

Mr. Reed: Thank you, sir.

Vice President Humphrey: I want to suggest to you traffic officers when you give out tickets, you get Mr. Reed to give you some poetry to give along with it. You'll be surprised how much easier it will go that way.

Say, I would be derelict if I didn't say that the members of our Secret Service Detail are mighty, mighty appreciative of the manner in which the Police Department of this city cooperates. I want you police officers to know you make this Secret Service look pretty good.



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