

Minn., Minn.

AMERICAN CANCER BREAKFAST KICKOFF SPEECH BY HUBERT H. HUMPHREY ON APRIL 9, 1970

Introduction by F. J. Dresser

Our main speaker today certainly needs no introduction to the citizens of Minnesota for he is well known and a great friend of Minnesota, the nation and the world. Mr. Humphrey started his career as a professor at the University of Minnesota. He was elected mayor of Minneapolis and went on to the United States Senate, where he became a very influential world figure. During his past administration he served as Vice President, the highest political position ever obtain by a Minnesotan. Mr Humphrey is now a professor at the University of Minnesota and at Macalester College where he is helping to develop the young minds of today.

Ladies and gentlemen, Minnesota's number one national citizen, The Honorable Hubert Humphrey.

Good morning. I want to repeat what I said, good morning. I think I should say Dr. Barr and other members of the medical profession that are here as well as my fellow citizens and friends.

I am a night man. There are two kinds of people: day people and night people. I really don't try to carry on any conversation with anybody before 10 o'clock in the morning. Mrs. Humphrey and I have been happily married for some 34 years and I don't recall that we really visited at all in the morning. I mean she feeds me and gets me out, gets the monster out of the house, and then somewhere during the day I start to come alive. I used to do most of my by-partisan politics before 10 o'clock in the morning because I didn't have to worry to much about whether or not I was going to be on time for those circumstances.

Well, I want first to express my thanks to Fred, Mr. Dresser, to Rudy Boschwitz and to others here that have permitted me to join this morning with the volunteers of our Cancer Society here from Hennepin County, of course, our state organization. I am very pleased to once again share a platform with one of my closest friends, one of the finest men of this community, Pastor Youngdahl.

I think we all know we have a job to do and we didn't come here to get any big or powerful message. If you did, I am afraid you got the wrong man to talk to you today. I frightened Fred a moment ago. I said, well lets get going, I said, I got about an hours speech here I want to giveto everybody and he thought we ought to declare an emergency and I thought that is what was happening when that call came in. Then I took a different view of it when I heard Rudy say that he felt like a politician. Its been so long since I felt that way, Rudy, I was going to talk to you about how that was too. I have noted that it has been recalled that I started out around this community being a teacher and I was over at Macalester College and the University of Minnesota. I want some of my republican friends to note here I hear people from time to time say, "well, old Humphrey he has had the whole circle now, he's been all the way around, that finishes him." I think I might tell you that this might be just the second light, you can't tell it could be the third. So, now having upset you this morning and injected all kinds of non-secretors into this mornings gathering, let me just get down to business.

I want to tell you why I am here, because ever since I have been old enough to know anything about medicine, to know anything about the human body and to know anything about man kind I have been interested in health. I have been blessed with a good deal of it myself, which is by the way the greatest blessing that you will ever get. Make no mistake about it and if you are in public life there is no other like health. Health will be better than money. Even though together they're invincible, I might add. But there is an old saying from the middle east, "he who has light, has hope. And he who has hope has everything." The symbol, of course, of the cancer crusade is the sort of hope, and it is hope. It is the difference between being alive in the sense the full meaning of life, and just being dead, even if you are walking around as a physical being.

I want you to know that my family has been stricken with this dread disease. I lost a brother, who was very dear to me, quickly, very rapidly from cancer. I have never seen a braver man in my life; the pain and the suffering that he went through. I am sure that had he followed advice that he would have still been with us because early detection maybe could have made the difference. I really believe that, but he was so bust and like most of us, I am sure was so filled with fear that it might be that he put it off. I just mentioned this to you because I don't think anybody appreciated any of these things until it hits you closely. You have got to come right at you. My father once told me that you will never know what it is, son, to be in sorrow until you have suffered great pain and grief and tragedy and that is really what it amounts to. You can't really talk to people about anything meaningfully unless you have in some way experienced it.

I will never forget on that day in June in 1964. Thank God it's almost six years ago now. I was the floor leader in the United States Senate for the Civil Rights Act of 1964. We had been in debate since the 10th day of February, the longest filibuster in the history of the American republic. I can recall that when I was asked to take on that job of being floor leader, which means to manage the legislation, I was called to the White House by the President within the majority leader of the Senate. At that time, as you may recall, it was right after President Kennedy's death and President Johnson had come into the White House and said to me "Hubert, I am going to give you the toughest assignment of your life, but," he said, "I am going to be very frank with you, I don't think you are going to make it because I don't believe that you and your liberal friends have the statutory power to stay with it." He said, "you are always getting up and giving these emotional pleas to the country but when it's right there for the real acid test, why some of your folks leave you," he said, "I am afraid you will not stay with it either but you can win if you stick with it and it means that you have got to be there 24 hours a day if need be until you win this fight and you have to organize and you have to out-organize and you have to know your job and never give up. But this was a test in many ways in my legislative career, you have never broken a filibuster, 76 years and Civil Rights legislation had little or no chance of passage. We have 290 some amendments and we have never dared to break a debate off from the beginning from the early part of February until the 26th day of June. I recall that I never had the chance to even once lead the nation's capitol and only once during that entire period of time did we lack a quorum and to lack a quorum this means a sufficient number to do business, you have to start all over again under the rules of the Senate, this doubles your work. On the very day, on the last day where the day before we pass the bill and I shall never forget it. I got a telephone call from my

wife and I had known that Robert had a little growth on his neck and he would be going to Mankato State College and we had talked about it at Christmas time and I had said "Robert, that seems to be enlarged a bit" and he said, "well, I have had it checked and it doesn't seem to be anything in particular...it seems like it's a cyst so to speak" and I said "well, I think you ought to double check it again because it seems to have grown." So he said "well, as soon as school is out". He went as soon as school was out and checked with a very prominent surgeon in this great city, to one we are ever indebted. He had the tests made and he had some, what we thought would be minor surgery. Mother called me and said, "dad, Bob has had his operation and he is over at St. Barnabas and they made a preliminary examination of the glands that were removed and they appeared to be malignant." Well, she said "I will call you back just a little later, sometime today, and they will give us further information.

Now you men and ladies here know what this meant. I was exhausted to say the least, literally hours and hours of attention to the debate because we were then in session as much as 18 and 20 hours a day. The majority leader or the floor leader didn't dare to leave the floor one minute, and that is literally true. When I got that call it was as if someone had taken me and struck me right between the eyes. I couldn't believe it on the one hand and I was paralyzed, literally paralyzed. Here was my son whom I loved much. Robert was just finishing his college. That is an attractive looking young man and all at once, bang, down came the blow.

Well, I had to go back to that Senate floor. I wanted to leave immediately, not that I could do any good but it is the immediate reaction of a parent. I had to struggle with myself to know what to do. Were I to leave, I was the one man in that instance, if I can be of modest, that knew all of the amendments, knew what had to be done and could not afford to let that bill unravel because once they touched it, as I was told that once they draw blood on you Hubert, those that wanted to keep this legislation will be at it and tear it apart, you must never let them touch it. We had to defeat every amendment and there had to be organization to do it.

I can still remember those amendments being call up and I can still remember that I stood there almost like a stone. My heart broken, wondering what to say and what to do and yet knowing that we had to go through this panel.

Well, as the day passed, two days passed, I called my son the next day and I said, "well, Robert you are going to be alright" and I talked to him and tried to give him a little pep talk and I will never forget what this boy said at that time. He said "dad, don't kid me, I know what I have", and he said "I am not going to be alright", and I just literally couldn't take it. Well, fortunately, because of medical care and early detection and early surgery and because of the amazing skill of people in this community who are associated with our Mayo Clinic and our universities with our cancer console system here in our medical association, this young man has gone six years now without any reoccurrence, which of course hallelujah. I used to every year as each year went by, I would kick it off because I knew he would have to go and get these checkups every three months and then another checkup and a little later six months. Each year I would say "how was it" and I would call his doctor and check

it out and now when I know it's the six years, and most of us know if you can get by those five years afterwards, you have a fighting chance.

Now I tell you this because it is important what you are going to do. You are going to maybe save a life. You are life savers this morning. And it is as it was said from this platform, when you walk out and call at that door you maybe will not get a contribution but you surely should, you ought not walk away until you do get one. If anybody wants to contribute to the National Committee for the Democratic Party, why you can pick up that too. We are in a desperate situation. Don't solicit, but honest in all sincerity I had to break this spell of tention from myself if not from you.

In all sincerity, when you go on out as a volunteer you are in a real sense like a public health officer. You're alerting that family to take care of themselves, to go get a checkup. We have the means here in this community, it isn't as if we are impoverished, it isn't as if we do not have the medical facilities. The Twin Cities have the greatest medical center of almost any area of the world and we ought to have the highest degree of personal public health in this community. So when you go there to make that call wherever you are, as you work with others of the thousands of volunteers that we have just think of yourself today in the sense of a medical technician, think of yourself as a really great civil defense force because what good is it to have all the resources in the world, all the wealth and all the prestige and all the title if you are going to be stricken and have no chance to even enjoy what could be the blessing of life. By the way I want to compliment those who put the material together, it is so persuasive.

Just think of this, 9 out of every 10 homes uou visit will be affected by cancer. Everytime I look at an audiance, believe it or not, when I go out, and I go out and do alot of speaking, I look at them justing thinking of it...one out of five in that audiance will be stricken and die from cancer. When you take a look at the fact sheet, which you will have in your folers and you find out for example that there will be 52 million cases of cancer in our country. More than 52 million americans now living will eventually have cancer...one out of ever four. Two out of every three families will be stricken with cancer. Nine out of 10 homes, houses that you visit affected with cancer. 960 thousand americans will be under medical treatment this year for cancer. One out of every six deaths for any cause in the United States from cancer. Thank God for what the American Cancer Society has been doing about smoking. Of course now I get on my favorite kick. Boy you ought to hear my family. I quit you know, I mean there is nothing like a reformed addict, you know, and I did this, however, I am happy to tell you in 1956 and I know that it has given me a new sense of health and well-being. I know that, of course, I am sympathetic with anybody who goes through this probelm because it really was something. My wife once said to me "why don't you just continue to smoke, you won't live as long but we will be happier," you know, because I was so mean and so miserable when I was breaking, kicking the habit so to speak.

I am not here to give you an impeachment about it, I just simply say that you have such a message to tell and it's all right here, it's all right here in this little book.

May I just suggest to those of you that are so very practical, and we need to be practical, what we do here in this work. Where the money goes; thirty-seven cents out of every dollar that you collect goes to research and there is no substitute for research. By the way we are making breakthroughs. I am a pharmacist in case things go really bad, I can go back to selling those pills. Chemotherapy, particularly in leukemia and certain forms of leukemia is coming through now. This combination of surgery and chemotherapy and what we have learned in terms of radioisotopes and other things, there is so much that's happened lately, so much more hope. I saw a figure I thought was very very important to us that there are 1½ million people alive today who have in a sense been cured from cancer and that is because you cared or someone ahead of you cared because somebody was alerted soon enough.

I remember when I was in the Senate, we had a group come on down, there you have an organization, a society of people that have had cancer that have been cured of their cancer through medical care and they worked to get funds. Now we have public funds through the National Institute of Health, public funds that are granted to great laboratories, universities and medical schools, eminent physicians, microbiologists, etc. across this country to do the search work and the treatment of the many different forms of cancer, so much that we need to know. We know so little about the human cell, and of course, if we knew more we could possibly have the answer, but we are getting some breakthroughs. For the first time, we have been able to dissect the cells, so to speak, to even create synthetic forms of life; we are beginning to get breakthroughs.

Now public funds for cancer research, my fellow Americans, have been cut. I think it is ridiculous but they have been cut and if that is the case then part of the funds have to be increased, because you cannot retreat in this war on disease. One of the greatest needs today in America is disease prevention, preventive medicine. It is possibly the one major effort that we need to make for the good of our economy as well as our bodies. American industry, the amount it has to pay because of sickness, the increase in the costs of goods because of sickness, the unbelievable loss of income to families because of sickness. Of all the wastes in the world none is greater than sickness. Everytime we prevent a disease, everytime that we are able to attack the so-called incurables, it is not only that which gives us the blessing of health, which is of course, the great blessing, but it also adds to economy and it adds to well-being.

I want to compliment the Cancer Society on doing such an extraordinary good job at such little administrative cost. When I look to see that thirty-seven cents of that dollar goes for research and only four cents goes to the National American Cancer Society, twenty some cents 21 cents for public education and awareness and service to patients thirteen cents, professional education training of more technicians, more medical personnel five cents of this dollar. This is money well spent. So let us go on out now and try to do a job today.

One of the characteristics or attributes of our country, and we ought to kind of always think about that these days because there are plenty of people who are thinking what's wrong, is the fact that we have the blending of in this nation between public and private action. I think this made this country really a part of what it is, is the volunteers.

My favorite political scientist, the one I frequently quote, is not a contemporary. He is Alexis de Toupville in the early part of the 19th century who knew more about America as a Frenchman in the early part of the 19th century than any contemporary American does in the last third of the 20th century. It is an amazing insight in the character of the American people. Many of our people today only look at what people do, not what people are. They don't get any insight into what the character of the people is. But de Toupville did and he said "the one characteristic of the American people is that there is a job to be done, they seem to have a way of getting together as individuals, voluntarily to do it". Now, no other country on the face of the earth has that. There is all kinds of countries, all sorts of them have public medicine, public this, public that but one of the things that we have preserved in this country which I think has given character and given a sense of humanity and a sense of personality, optimism, all of which is so vital to all of these great efforts of health and social welfare, is the fact that we have had voluntary organizations. Volunteerism and the fact that you are willing to go on out and contact people and ask for their help is within itself a commendable effort. Plus the fact you are going to learn, you are going to meet some nice people, you are going to learn something about neighborhoods, you are going to learn something about families and you are going to learn something about your country.

So gear up this morning. I didn't come here with any great big prepared speech. I just came here to tell you that the life you save maybe your own. I could very well be that right out of this meeting someone may decide "I think I will go have myself checked out"...and you should. You don't want to get in an airplane that isn't checked out, why do you want to get in a body that isn't. You like to make sure that the maintenance out here in the aircraft is pretty good, why don't you go make sure the maintenance of health amongst our fellow citizens is very good. We are going to do it ourselves. We don't need to be directed, we don't need to have compulsion, we don't have to have somebody order us to line us up, to cue us up to go get a physical. We can go out and just ask people to exercise our degree of self-discipline and self-respect and be sure you get the check. I spent a lot of my life trying to get people to do things they ought to do, including myself. I have more trouble with myself than I do with you. But I thought it was very clever this morning that when you get a check, people don't like to write checks for fifty cents they will write one for a dollar and if you see someone who looks full of compassion, don't hesitate to give them a chance to exercise it by helping out because our goal is close to \$900,000.00 or more and we need it and we need it desperately.

So soldiers of health..forward march..go to the battle.



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