

Teleconference Remarks With World War II Veterans November 11, 1995

The President. Hello. Grace?

Ms. Ellen Grace Forgey. Yes, this is Grace Forgey.

The President. Carl Crabtree? Are you there?

Ms. Forgey. This is Grace Forgey. Hello?

Carl Crabtree. Yes, sir.

The President. Yes, I hear you, Grace.

Ms. Forgey. Oh, Mr. President?

The President. Yes. And is William Frizzell there?

William Frizzell. Yes.

The President. And John Byrnes?

John Byrnes. Yes, Mr. President. John Byrnes of New York City.

The President. Well, you're all on the line, and you sound like you're next door.

Ms. Forgey. That's the wonderful telephone company. There's one thing that we're—

Mr. Frizzell. We're on the line, and you can get us.

The President. That's great. Well, I'm just calling to wish all of you a happy Veterans Day and to say to you and veterans like you in the hospitals all across our country that we're thinking about you, we're pulling for you, and we're very excited about these phones in your room now, thanks to the PT Phone Home project.

Ms. Forgey. Yes, it's wonderful.

The President. And I'm here with Frank Dosio, who came up with the idea, and also with the leaders of the groups that implemented it, the Communications Workers of America, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Bell Atlantic, and NYNEX Corporation and the Telephone Pioneers of America. They have done a wonderful job, and they have saved our Government literally millions and millions of dollars because of the volunteer work and the contributions they have made to make this opportunity available to all of you.

Ms. Forgey. And I want to say that it's made life—

Mr. Frizzell. Well, I put in 4 years—something.

Ms. Forgey. It's made life at the veterans hospital the last word, you know, in contact with the outside. It's wonderful. The hospital is wonderful.

The President. Well, I'm very glad, and I know you're grateful to all of these folks that

are here. That's why I wanted to tell you they were here.

Ms. Forgey. I certainly am.

Mr. Byrnes. It's a blessing, Mr. President, it really is.

Ms. Forgey. Yes. You should be very proud of your employees.

The President. You know, within an hour I'm going to leave the White House here and go dedicate the memorial to the veterans who fought in World War II 50 years ago.

Ms. Forgey. That's me.

The President. That will join the similar tributes to the Korean war and the Vietnam war veterans that we have on The Mall in Washington. I know that three of you, I believe, were in World War II. Grace, you were a nurse. Isn't that right?

Ms. Forgey. That's right, yes.

The President. And I think you have a son in the—and a grandson in the Army now.

Ms. Forgey. My grandson's in the Army, yes.

The President. Where is he?

Ms. Forgey. Fort Riley, Texas. Where is it?

The President. Kansas.

Ms. Forgey. That's right. I don't know one State from the other. It's wonderful to talk to you. How nice of you to do this.

The President. Thank you.

Ms. Forgey. It makes you feel like you belong to the right country.

The President. Mr. Frizzell? You're from Chillicothe, Ohio?

Mr. Frizzell. No, I'm from Columbus, Ohio.

The President. Oh, you're at Chillicothe?

Mr. Frizzell. I'm at Chillicothe.

The President. Yes. I visited that community once, and I went running around the city park. It was three degrees.

Mr. Frizzell. Yes.

The President. They thought I needed a mental examination for doing it, but it was a great morning. [Laughter]

Mr. Frizzell. I walked over to the 9 building, and ended up in the 31 building, and I'll never tell you how in the hell I did that.

The President. You were at Pearl Harbor, weren't you?

Mr. Frizzell. Yes.

Ms. Forgey. My husband was at Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Frizzell. Camp Cameron—about a mile and a half from Pearl Harbor.

The President. Well, good for you.

Mr. Byrnes?

Mr. Byrnes. Yes, sir.

The President. You were in the Navy in World War II, isn't that right?

Mr. Byrnes. U.S.S. *Alaska*, CV-1. The best battleship the United States Navy ever had.

The President. Otherwise, you don't have strong feelings about it. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Byrnes. No, I—a little more than strong, sir.

The President. And you were at Iwo Jima, weren't you?

Mr. Byrnes. Iwo Jima, Okinawa, Japan, all through the Pacific.

The President. Well, we thank you for what you did.

Mr. Byrnes. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Mr. Crabtree?

Mr. Crabtree. Yes, sir.

The President. You were in—I'm told that you were in the military police.

Mr. Crabtree. Yes, sir.

The President. I wonder if that means you still have the power to arrest the rest of us if we don't behave. [*Laughter*]

You were on duty in Japan?

Mr. Crabtree. Yes, sir.

The President. After the war, right?

Mr. Crabtree. Yes, sir.

The President. I'm grateful to all of you, and I hope the VA has taken good care of you.

Ms. Forgey. It has.

The President. I wish you the best of health. We're doing everything we can to try to preserve the quality of health care in the veterans' network, and it's for people like you. We know on this Veterans Day that we owe our freedom to people like you who have served our country, and I just wanted to say how grateful I am to you for your service and how grateful I am to all of these people who are here with me for providing this PT Phone Home project. We're expanding it just as rapidly as we can, and I look forward to the day when every veteran like you in every hospital in this country has access to it.

Ms. Forgey. It's wonderful. They did a wonderful job.

The President. I hope you'll all have a good day. Grace and Carl and William and John, you have a wonderful day and know that we're all thinking about you.

Mr. Byrnes. Thank you, Mr. President.

Ms. Forgey. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. God bless you.

Mr. Frizzell. God bless you, and you have a wonderful day, too.

The President. We'll do it.

Ms. Forgey. Take care of yourself.

Mr. Byrnes. Have a good Thanksgiving and a good Christmas.

The President. Thank you. Bye-bye.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. from the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks he referred to Frank Dosio, coordinator, PT Phone Home.

Remarks in a Telephone Conversation With Gaetano Maggio November 11, 1995

The President. Hello.

Mr. Maggio. Hello, Mr. President.

The President. Mr. Maggio?

Mr. Maggio. Yes, sir.

The President. Happy birthday.

Mr. Maggio. Thank you, sir.

The President. I heard you're in Tampa with a big group of family members and friends.

Mr. Maggio. Right. That's my home in Tampa. Been in Tampa—my home since 1903.

The President. That's great. And this is your actual birthday, on this Veterans Day, is that right?

Mr. Maggio. Actual birthday, November the 11th at 11 o'clock at night.

The President. That's amazing. And you were among the first group of people from Tampa to volunteer for World War I, weren't you?

Mr. Maggio. Yes, sir. I sure did.

The President. Well, I really appreciate you.

Mr. Maggio. Thank you.