

I am delighted to be here tonight for this "Old Timers Rally".

I can see by your very presence that you do not adhere to the philosophy of General MacArthur that "old soldiers fade away". Although I am a great admirer of General MacArthur, I do not agree with this philosophy, nor do I really believe he did since he was in his seventies and going strong when he made this statement. I believe rather that those of you here today adhere to the philosophy that after retirement the "rest of your life can be the best of your life".

Too often, our senior citizens will not lend their talents. But it is obvious that you want to participate, to be involved, to accept responsibility, to be a voice, and by your action to be heard. I hope the Democratic Party is giving you that opportunity.

And, there are enough of you to be heard. At the time of the 1970 census, there were approximately 20 million people 65 years of age and over. Twenty million is enough to populate the 21 smallest states combined, and life expectancy keeps climbing. Imagine during the Revolutionary Period the age expectancy was 37 years old for men and 35 for women. Now, a man 37 years old is in his prime.

So, you see, if because of retirement at 65 you suddenly decide that you are old and useless and have nothing else to contribute and you are merely going to "fade away", you are not living out your entire life - you have lived just a portion of it.

And we need you - we need you to jog us to the fact that you are there and a force that should be listened to. We need to listen to you just as we need to listen to the youth of our nation. The Democratic Party has a great tradition of doing just that.

[Mention Social Security, Medicare, etc.]

In recent years our nation seems to have been preoccupied with the demands of our young people - perhaps simply because of their loudness and exuberance, and I would be the first to admit that they should be listened to; however, you, too, have a voice.

While it may not be quite as loud, it can be forceful, and it can carry enthusiasm.

Frederick Williamson expressed the conviction that "The longer I live, the more certain I am that enthusiasm is the most important of all traits or qualifications."

An excellent example of combined effort and force was the passage of the Mass Transit Bill through Congress last October. There was an amendment attached which reads as follows:

"It is hereby declared to be the national policy that elderly and handicapped persons have the same right as other persons to utilize mass transportation facilities and services; that special efforts shall be made in the planning and design of mass transportation facilities so that the availability to elderly and handicapped persons of mass transportation which they can effectively utilize will be assured; and that all federal programs offering assistance in the field of mass transportation should contain provisions implementing this policy."

We profit by experience - let us profit by your experience as active retired persons. As the Roman philosopher Cicero so aptly put it:

"People who declare that there are no activities for old age are speaking beside the point. It is like saying that a pilot has nothing to do with

sailing a ship because he leaves others to climb the masts and run along the gangways and work the pumps, while he himself sits quietly in the stern holding the rudder.

"He may not be doing what the younger men are doing, but his contribution is more significant and valuable than theirs.

"Great deeds are not done by strength or speed or physique; they are the products of thought and character, and judgment. And far from diminishing, such qualities actually increase with age."

Work together. A good example of "old timers" doing this is the bill passed by the 1971 General Assembly to grant property tax relief to certain aged and indigent persons.

The day the public hearing was held on this bill, the Legislature was brimming with interested elder citizens. The bill in question concerned property tax relief on the first \$5,000 in appraised value of real property held and used as a principal place of residence and the owner has a disposable income of not more than \$3,500. I had an opportunity to talk with a lady who was interested in this bill. Though she was one of our older citizens, the bill had no effect on her as her financial position disqualified

her, but she wanted to become involved - to participate - to help those of her group who were not quite so fortunate.

There is nothing new in this philosophy of keeping active. Grandma Moses, who began painting at 79, was the most outstanding primitive artist of our time. At 90, Mary Baker Eddy founded the world-famous Christian Science Monitor. Stradivarius made his finest violins between 60 and 70 and continued making them up to his 93rd year.

Michelangelo painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in his late eighties.

While all of us are not blessed with the talents of these individuals, we all have talents. It may take a little imagination to find them after you have retired from directing all your talents toward one field, and you may have to compromise if you are faced with a limited situation, but we need you - don't retire. If the young forget you are there, maybe you haven't reminded them.

In my last quote of wise Cicero, he was probably rapping the knuckles of the young for discounting the experience of the old; in a later statement he reminds the "old timers" of his day:

"Age will only be respected if it fights for itself, maintains its own rights, avoids

dependence, and asserts control over its own  
sphere as long as life lasts."