NRC NEWS

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Edward McGaffigan, Jr., Commissioner
U. S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission

Presentation of the
American Nuclear Society's
Distinguished Public Service Award

May 15, 2007
NRC Headquarters
Rockville, MD

Left to Right: Commissioner Lyons, James Reinsch, ANS, Commissioner McGaffigan, Chairman Klein, Commissioner Merrifield, Admiral Bowman, NEI

MODERATOR REYES: I think we're ready. It is my privilege today to welcome Chairman Klein, Commissioner McGaffigan, Commissioner Merrifield and Commissioner Lyons. Welcome all to the NRC.

You know Commissioner McGaffigan has now been on the Commission for almost eleven years. We recently recognized him as the longest serving commissioner here. I've only been EDO for three years. It actually feels like eleven. So I can somewhat sympathize with that.

But I just want to reflect for a moment here. It really takes a unique individual to work in such a demanding position for such a long time. He is an advocate of the NRC. He's an advocate of the Commissioners and the staff. I think the Commissioner has been one of the contributors who built the NRC to what it is today being recognized as the best place to work in the government, and I'm glad to see Commissioner McGaffigan being recognized by such an elite organization.

Let me just introduce Chairman Klein for some remarks before we make the formal presentation. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN KLEIN: Thanks, Luis. This is one of the those happy days where you get to recognize a colleague who has contributed so much and thanks, Jim, on behalf of the American Nuclear Society for this award and, Skip, thanks for coming and fellow Commissioners.

This is a day where we get to acknowledge 31 years of public service. I think when you look at Commissioner McGaffigan he really reflects what it means to be a public servant in having done this for so many years. Obviously he came to the best agency for those last eleven years of public service. So we certainly appreciate that. But he's really contributed a lot not only to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission but for the public-at-large where he has really ensured that we have high standards, we do the right thing and it really ensures the public's health and safety. So on behalf of all of us, it's been a pleasure to be both a friend and a colleague. Thank you.

MODERATOR REYES: Thanks Chairman. I would like to make the official presentation here. On behalf of the American Nuclear Society, we have Jim Reinsch going to be making the presentation to the Commissioner.

MR. REINSCH: Thank you, Luis. Thank you. In 1963, the American Nuclear Society created the Distinguished Public Service Award and I'm pleased to be able to present that today to Commissioner Edward McGaffigan, Jr.

The Distinguished Service Award was established to recognize and honor a public servant who has demonstrated leadership in energy policy formulation and public enlightenment and has made significant contributions for the betterment of mankind in the national and international sphere of public service and I cannot imagine an individual more worthy of such an award than the Commissioner. For a second, what I'd like to do is just to read the plaque if I may. It says –

> "Presented to Edward McGaffigan, Jr. in recognition of the outstanding leadership he has provided in effective regulatory and security policy formulation and implementation. During his distinguished government service, he has also made significant contributions to nonproliferation and export control policies and to international scientific cooperation."

On behalf of the American Nuclear Society, congratulations.

COMMISSIONER McGAFFIGAN: Thank you very much. A couple of months ago, I told the NRC's Regulatory Information Conference that in nine out of eleven years speaking at that conference I had spoken from notes, not a prepared text. Today you get McGaffigan talking from notes. So bear with me. Today is going to be one of those talks where maybe you'll get some insight as to what makes me tick.

I'm also going to be receiving the ANS/NEI Smyth Nuclear Statesman Award, for which I taped a video this morning to be shown at NEI's meeting in Florida later this month. I said in that video that I did not feel completely worthy of that award, given the roster of giants who preceded me. But I do feel grateful and worthy of this award, and thank the ANS for recognizing me.

I know that only two people have previously received the ANS Distinguished Public Service Award, Mike McCormack and John Conway. John Conway is one of my heroes. I think he did a remarkable job as Chairman of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (DNFSB), serving longer there than I have served at NRC. With $20 million a year, DNFSB does a tremendous job of ensuring safety and high standards at DOE nuclear facilities, and as I said, he's one of my heroes. Obviously, Congressman McCormack was a little early for me although he is a legend. So I'm delighted to join them. Like them, my career has been devoted to public service, and like them I believe I have built a record of accomplishments throughout it.

I'm going to tell you a little bit about my roots. When I first was in this room in August 1996 to be sworn in as a Commissioner, I talked a little bit about why I was here, how I got here, and a lot of it comes down to being the son of an Irish immigrant who passed away a long time ago, when I was a junior in college.

My father was one of my heroes. He came here from Ireland with fourth grade education. He served in WWII when he was 36 years old at the start of the war and had very bad knees because he had fallen badly while building the first Boston Garden. Despite very severe injuries to his legs, he served his nation, served in the Army in Europe. My grandfather, my mother's father, lived with us. He was also an Irish immigrant, first cousin of Michael Collins, the founder of the Irish free state, and a terrorist in the eyes of the British government. So I'm first generation on one side and second on the other.

And we're a nation that's been enriched by immigrants of all races and creeds. We're a nation that uses the patriotism instilled in me by my father and my grandfather, and their devotion to this country. The old country was great, but they had no desire to go back to it. This was the nation of opportunity.

We were poor, not really poor, but we were not wealthy. We were not even middle class. My mother worked as a bookkeeper. Obviously she had a tremendous impact on me, but it was a different influence, a more maternal influence, an influence of unquestioning love.

Because my father's union at the Boston Gas Company, where he worked after the war, was the United Mineworkers Union, I found out early on about people giving up their lives to dig coal out of the ground. And we still sacrifice too many coal miners' lives. I grew up reading the diatribes of John L. Lewis on the evils of big coal. My father was a person who fixed main gas lines when trouble arose. A big man. A strong man. I know that we have to have coal to produce electricity. I'm not against coal because 50 percent of our electricity generation comes from coal. But nuclear by every measure has been safer than coal, by every measure, enormously safer. In a global warming world, it's unfortunate that that is not the perception of nuclear among parts of the public.

So I grew up in Boston. I'm the son and grandson of Irish immigrants. I went to Boston Latin School, and while there found out I was pretty smart. I ended up valedictorian, with a Joseph Kennedy Scholarship, and the Ben Franklin Medal. And I was heavily influenced by the son of Joseph Kennedy, who entered the White House my first year at Boston Latin. How could you not be influenced by John Kennedy? How could you not be? Seventh grade is when President Kennedy gave his inaugural address and asked us to serve the country. "Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country."

I took that seriously. I also had the dream of being a Nobel Laureate in Physics, which I pursued first. That dream wasn't totally worked out of me until I got to Caltech for graduate school, and met Murray Gell-Mann and Richard Feynman and discovered that I'm not in their class and that I should probably look for other things to do. So I did that. I'm probably the only person in the history of Caltech to take the Foreign Service exam and pass it.

Why the Foreign Service? I had never been out of New England until I graduated from Harvard. Never been out of probably a 50 or 60 mile radius of Boston until I graduated from Harvard. Then I got this fellowship to go to Europe, the Sheldon Travelling Fellowship. Harvard gives two a year and I was lucky enough to get one of them. I flew to Europe on the first plane I had ever been on, and traveled in Western Europe. My fellowship lasted as long as the $3,000 could be stingily spent, which was about ten months. It was a tremendously broadening experience.

Then I went to Caltech. As I said, I discovered I was in a different class from their two Nobel Laureates, but I had this other thing I wanted to do, inspired by John Kennedy and inspired by my father and my grandfather, and by my year abroad.

I take seriously this notion that we are the greatest country on earth, and that the American Nuclear Society is really an international society. American is in its title, but we are a nation that

absolutely has benefited from immigrants of all nations and creeds. That's what makes us great.

I spent a couple of years at the Kennedy School after leaving Caltech. I needed to wait until the Foreign Service could process all the paperwork, although in my oral exam, I think my examiner didn't know what to do with me honestly because here's this guy that could actually pass the written Foreign Service exam with its emphasis on the social and political sciences but also could talk about science and public policy. My examiners pretty much guaranteed me that I'd get into the Foreign Service when I wanted to get in, but the clearance process would take time. So I spent two years at the Kennedy School, and did learn a tremendous amount, particularly in one course taught by John Steinbruner and the late Richard Neustadt.

Steinbruner had written a book called *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision*. I mentioned it at this year's Regulatory Information Conference back in March. Steinbruner teaches at the University of Maryland now, and what he wrote about in his book was how different people make decisions, and his book contains a warning. It's a warning that we must beware of people who are theoretical or ideological thinkers. It's a warning against ideological thinking. He tells a story and I'm not going to go through it here, but the heart of it is that we wasted vast amounts of money on a theory that the West Germans wanted to have access to nuclear weapons in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It's a story of how people in various Federal bureaucracies managed to resist the facts for many years and how in the end President Johnson and Prime Minister Wilson in 1964 cancelled this ill-conceived program that had been kept alive by theoretical thinking for so long. That book taught me to embrace rational fact-based analysis and to beware of theoretical thinkers who avoid facts that don't serve their theories.

I pulled out something last night. It's my first efficiency report in the Foreign Service written by George Vest who was one of the great Foreign Service officers of the post-World War II generation. He was Director of the Political Military Bureau and he selected me in June 1976 to be his staff assistant. It was the perfect first Foreign Service assignment for me and I was so lucky to get it.

What Mr. Vest wrote about me in December 1976 was very laudatory. In his cover letter where he's trying to get me an early promotion he wrote, "Every once a while I run into someone extraordinary among our Foreign Service officers." But the interesting part in the efficiency report is where he is forced to write something negative as well. So Mr. Vest in his inimitable way wrote the following. It starts even in this section with a compliment. "This is an exceptionally capable officer who demands (and habitually produces) perfection of himself. As he rises to positions of supervisory responsibility, he will have to guard against those barely perceptible flashes of impatience of those who are less gifted or less committed." I don't think I ever solved that problem. And I think Luis Reyes will probably be the first to confirm that.

Then the second point Mr. Vest made, which I do think I solved, was this. "As well, Ed has an unusually engaging, quiet and low key personality. Eventually, there will be circumstances where people mistake this for weakness and will try to take advantage of him. He may find it necessary to raise the decibel count of his personality from time to time." I think everyone would agree that although I am an introvert, I did take that warning to heart and solved it in the remainder of my career.

The other fact about me that I'm going to mention is something I learned very late in my service to Senator Bingaman, something about me which I didn't know. I took the Myers-Briggs exam together with the Senator and his entire staff. It was probably in 1995. Senator Bingaman likes to read about management theories sort of like everybody else goes through bacon at breakfast. But this was one time I really appreciated his bringing the technique to the office. I turned out to be a very strong Introverted Sensing Thinking Judging (ISTJ) in all four categories. The opposite categories were Extraverted, Intuitive, Feeling, and Perceiving.

I'll read you what the Myers-Briggs worksheet says about ISTJs: "Serious, quiet, earn success by concentration and thoroughness. Practical, orderly, matter-of-fact, logical, realistic and dependable. See to it that everything is well organized. Take responsibility. Make up their own minds as to what should be accomplished and work toward it steadily regardless of protests or distractions."

And I discovered upon getting those results a bit about my role for Senator Bingaman. Having

learned that rule at the Kennedy School from John Steinbruner to deal with facts as they are and not as you wish them to be, to not be a theoretical thinker, I now knew that that was probably embedded in my personality. I also learned that Senator Bingaman was an intuitive. And the great thing about intuitives, former Chairman Diaz was definitely an intuitive, is they need people like me to talk them out of things that are not fact-based.

And that explains part of my role here at NRC, as it was my role with Senator Bingaman. I think I have intuition, I will say defensively, because I really understand the processes of government and read voraciously in a broad number of fields that have touched my life. But that is a "sensing" personality. Intuitives can make leaps with far less data or no data at all, and sometimes they are right, but often they have gone too far. Intuitives need sensors. They need people like me. So that was my role with Senator Bingaman. I think it has been part of my role here at NRC.

I can accept this award with great gratitude and the feeling that perhaps I deserve it. I love this place. I love the career that I've had in government with the very, very fine people with whom and for whom I have worked. I think the American people don't understand how great our government is. We have a remarkable government, remarkable people. I'm glad that some of the NRC staff who are ANS members are here today. I particularly wanted to have some of you here, although the turnout may be less because we gave you so little notice.

We are a great institution. Government is a great place to serve. And the American people are well served by government on a daily basis despite the constant harping in news headlines about the misdeeds of the few. We have people in government who cheat, who try to take advantage of purchasing arrangements and those sort of things. But there are laws to punish the few who mis-serve and we enforce those laws vigorously. But the vast, overwhelming, 99.9 plus something percent of government employees are truly dedicated, work their hearts out and yet usually do not receive enough notice. So I accept this award on behalf of all the folks who are unknown and who serve their nation with distinction to their greatest ability.

I happen to have been born with a few things that set me apart intellectually, perhaps emotionally that have allowed me to get to this level. But there are lots of people in government who the American people should get to know other than by reading the *Washington Post* or *New York Times* for whatever scandal they're covering each day.

Thank you very much. I appreciate your presence at this ceremony. My understanding is that we will now move across the hall to the Commission dining room for some cookies and soft drinks. Thank you again.

MODERATOR REYES: For the record, Commissioner, I agree. You are well deserving of this award. Let me thank the American Nuclear Society for taking the time and recognizing Commissioner McGaffigan and his glowing career. Now we go to the official part. We would like to have a picture of the Commissioners. So I would like you to join us here and then after that, we invite everybody for some carbohydrates and something to drink.